



THE GREEN EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT

Evaluation and Transferable Learning

Final Report

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Preface

This report was prepared on behalf of *The Green Employability Project* by the UK Work Organisation Network (UK WON). UK WON is a not-for-profit coalition of employers, organisations, trade unions, public agencies and researchers concerned with sharing good practice in the workplace.

UK WON's role was to conduct a formative and summative evaluation of the project, and to capture transferable learning of relevance to other organisations concerned with hard-to-reach groups in Europe's labour markets. This report represents the final fulfilment of those objectives.

The views expressed in this report are therefore those of UK WON alone and cannot be attributed to any other organisation or individual.

Electronic copies of this report, together with background information on *The Green Employability Project*, are available in English, French and German at <http://uk.ukwon.eu/green-employability-project>.

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Introduction

The Green Employability Project is funded under the EU's PARES programme to provide an integrated pathway into employment in the green sector for ex-offenders. UK WON's role was to conduct a formative evaluation throughout the life of the project, providing opportunities for partners to reflect on progress, recognise achievements and identify opportunities for improvement. Our role also enabled us to share learning and experience between project partners. Finally the evaluation identifies transferable lessons relevant to the wider PARES programme.

This, our final report, reflects UK WON's focus on four priorities within the project:

1. To identify and analyse the existing evidence base in order to inform the detailed design and delivery of *Green Employability Project* actions.
2. To deepen partner insight into how *The Green Employability Project* could add value to the existing work of the Probation Service in relation to the employability of ex-offenders.
3. To understand and track *The Green Employability Project* actions in the three participating regions (Devon & Cornwall, Merseyside and Wales). Critically we enabled partners, individually and collectively, to reflect on progress and make appropriate adjustments.
4. To capture cases which exemplify value added by *The Green Employability Project* and to draw out lessons for other organisations concerned with employability and labour market inclusion.

We addressed these priorities by means of:

- A review of published evidence relating to ex-offender employability, intervention design and partnership working, including recommendations to *The Green Employability Project* partners.
- Three meetings with key Probation Trust representatives in each of the three regions, including visits to in-house workshops and partner organisations where appropriate.
- Three action-learning set meetings for Project Co-ordinators in each region.
- Feedback and discussion at each of *The Green Employability Project* Board Meetings, including an Initial Report (November 2012) and a Mid-Term Report (March 2013).
- A UK WON facilitated workshop/study visit hosted by NOMS and the Department for Work & Pensions in November 2013. The event brought together representatives of public agencies, NGOs and other PARES funded projects concerned with labour market inclusion, enabling *The Green Employability Project* outcomes and conclusions to be tested against wider experience.

Our focus has therefore been on the qualitative aspects of *The Green Employability Project*; quantifiable project deliverables are addressed in other project reports. Based on the above priorities, the remainder of this report comprises four sections:

1. The baseline: our findings at the outset of the project.
2. Defining good practice: a summary of the evidence.
3. How the project sought to add value.
4. Conclusions.

Summary of *The Green Employability Project Objectives*

Based on the PARES Call for Proposals, *The Green Employability Project* was designed to achieve the following:

Objective 1: Collaboration

To forge new forms of collaboration between public employment services, social enterprises and private sector employers:

Bringing together employment services to enable long term unemployed and low skilled offenders to access placements and employment in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Arrangements with private sector employers to provide offenders with green work experience, training and placement opportunities that divert waste from landfill and so provide financial and environmental benefits.

Objective 2: Employability

To enhance offenders' employability and inclusion into the labour market by:

Joining up work experience and training for offenders in prisons and in the community to provide consistency and continuity.

Drawing on Jobcentre Plus evidence of employer recruitment needs.

Focusing such provision on employability specific to jobs in SMEs and in green employment.

Integrating action by Prisons and Probation Trusts to overcome individual offender's barriers to employment through accredited intervention programmes to address behaviours.

Evidencing employability through certification in:

- Workplace behaviours
- Lifestyle behaviours
- Ex-offender behaviours

Objective 3: Service

To provide a high quality, effective and value for money service through:

Collaboration between employment services and other agencies to combine different fields of expertise, providing specialist and well-targeted capability to move long term and low skilled offenders into SME and green placements and sustainable jobs.

Bridging and enhancing existing professional resources and programmes to deliver specific outcomes.

Saving money from the service's work experience activities through the diversion of waste from landfill to make a financial contribution to the costs of the service.

Objective 4: Sustainability

To secure sustainable income beyond the life of the project by creating a social franchise model.

Objective 5: Knowledge

To analyse and disseminate methodologies and outcomes to other EU Member States through monitoring and evaluation, and by capturing transferable learning.

<i>The Green Employability Project Partners</i>	
Partner	Role
NOMS	Project management
Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust Merseyside Probation Trust Wales Probation Trust	Establishing an integrated pathway to enhanced employability in the green sector, including behavioural interventions.
Green Reparation	Development and coordination of the UK Green Reparation franchise, establishing the Green Employability service, and developing international learning and transferability for the franchise model.
Social Pioneers	Thought leadership and project conception, supporting the Project Co-ordinators in each Trust through training and mentoring, production and delivery of learning materials, leading the dissemination of project outcomes at national and EU levels.
UK WON	Formative and summative evaluation. Capture of transferable learning.
Devon & Cornwall Business Council	Promoting project concept and outcomes to the green business community.

1. The baseline: our findings at the outset of the project

1.1 *The Green Employability Project's* intervention logic

Most of the offenders supported by *The Green Employability Project* were serving sentences based on *Community Payback* (CP). According to the CP website¹:

“Courts are given the power to sentence offenders of certain crimes to undertake between 40 and 300 hours of Community Payback. This work is unpaid and demanding work that is aimed at giving something to local communities and forcing offenders to repay the community for the wrong they have done.

The aims of the Community Payback scheme are twofold. As well as being a means to punish offenders for their crimes against community without serving a prison term, Community Payback literally forces offenders to pay the community back for the crimes they have committed.”

Programmes for offenders on CP also include “help with problems that led you to commit crime in the first place”² including addiction, mental health issues and lack of basic skills.

The Green Employability Project's intervention logic appeared to embody two important propositions: firstly that offender programmes within CP were insufficiently integrated and lacked adequate content to enhance employability significantly; secondly that growing employment opportunities in the green sector were not being adequately tapped. These formed the starting point for our inception visits to the three Probation Trusts.

1.2 The initial partner meetings

The UK WON team's inception meetings in the three *The Green Employability Project* partner regions generated valuable insights into the drivers, challenges and opportunities associated with employment-related interventions in each Trust. Each meeting provided an important opportunity for partners to review plans for the implementation of *The Green Employability Project* and, in particular, for shared reflection on how to ensure that it adds substantive value to existing activities. In combination, the insights generated by the evidence review and the visits to the three partner regions identified several themes and questions that informed UK WON's future work on the project.

Probation Trusts in Devon and Cornwall, Merseyside and Wales were already providing work placements under Community Payback. These placements, essentially designed as punishment rather than as development opportunities, include activities such as litter picking which provide a valuable community service. Placements of this sort may help participants to acquire basic work-related behaviours such as attendance but are unlikely to build either the vocational or self-efficacy skills associated with employability.

In Wales we were able to visit two well organised workshops which provided placements involving products mainly using recycled timber. These placements provide greater opportunities for skills

¹ <http://www.communitypayback.com>

² <https://www.gov.uk/community-sentences/treatment-and-programmes>

development as well as for basic level Open College qualifications, though we understand that they were largely restricted to participants with existing carpentry knowledge or experience. There was considerable potential for the expansion of these workshops but they were caught in a double bind. On the one hand they were constrained by Treasury rules from competing in the open market. On the other they were forced to pay rents based on a calculation of public sector investment return and which were well above those available in the private market. Launching the workshops as independent social enterprises was considered a possible option following the then current Review of Probation Services.

In Merseyside we visited Elixir, a social enterprise established in 2008 to provide jobs in recycling largely for people disadvantaged in the labour market. More recently Elixir offered Community Payback placements which, it argued, offer concentrated work experience designed to build confidence and self-esteem, and provide relevant skills and experience. We noted that the leadership team Elixir were qualified life coaches with an understanding of participant backgrounds and motivations, and their aim was to work with the CP supervisor to build an appropriate work ethic.



Work at Elixir was organised in teams with an emphasis on co-operation, shared learning and continuous improvement. This was likely to enhance the quality of work experience considerably. In some cases Community Payback participants were offered additional 12 week placements and a few subsequently gained permanent employment at Elixir.

Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust had developed an entrepreneurial portfolio of placements which include market gardening, flood prevention, vegetation removal, farming and recycling. Each provided opportunities for skills acquisition and were based on long-term partnerships with external organisations wherever possible. The Trust also ran a workshop in Torquay but its future was under review at the time of our first visit. Recycling was recognised as a development opportunity but the Trust needed an external partner to build capacity and share risks.

1.3 Analysis

Overall the UK WON team gained an impression from our inception visits that several high quality work placement activities were already taking place in each of the three Trusts, though we stressed in our November 2012 Initial Report that the evidence gathered to date had been preliminary and informal. Nonetheless this emphasised the need for the Project Board to consider, as a matter of some importance, how *The Green Employability Project* could add significant value to existing activity in each region. In the Description of the Action which forms part of the original proposal to the PARES programme, Objective 2 (Employability) places considerable emphasis on developing and delivering an integrated approach to employment support for offenders and ex-offenders which addresses:

- lifestyle and workplace behaviours;
- employability skills;
- relevance to local labour markets, especially in relation to employment in green sectors.

Ideally the Trusts would have been able to measure outcomes relating to these factors *ex ante*, both as a means of targeting *The Green Employability Project* resources in ways that added real value and to create the baseline data against which added value could be measured. However available data was extremely limited.

We also recognised that Probation Trusts were operating in an environment characterised by significant policy discrepancy. On the one hand the Ministry of Justice Green Paper *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders*³ put work for offenders at the centre of punishment and rehabilitation. *Making Prisons Work: Skills for rehabilitation*, the joint review of offender learning conducted by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Ministry of Justice, unveiled plans to boost skills training and target occupational training in prisons more effectively⁴. It seemed therefore that Prisons and Probation Trusts were expected to improve their employment service offerings, albeit at a time of major cuts to their budgets. On the other hand however, Trusts reported “no expectation” of enhanced employability as an outcome from Community Payback. In public, national policymakers seemed keen to stress the visible punishment aspects of CP. Trusts felt obliged to downplay its potential role in enhancing employability, in the words of one senior official “for fear of a bad headline in the Daily Mail.”

In defining the scope for *The Green Employability Project* to add value to existing practice, our inception visits enabled us to identify the following issues as the basis for formative evaluation during the remaining life of the project:

Progression data was described to us as “at best anecdotal and at worst non-existent”. There was no systematic mechanism for tracking the progression of CP graduates into further work experience, education and training, or employment. In consequence, as our Evidence Review indicated, it has long been impossible to undertake a robust analysis of ‘what works’ and subsequently to upscale evidence-based practice across and between Trusts. This also had serious implications for measuring the added value of *The Green Employability Project* interventions. We therefore recommended that the Project Board should consider ways in which a sample of baseline data on progression could be collected but Trusts commented on the difficulty of following up ex-offenders once their sentences were discharged and no practical solutions were found.

There was no comprehensive mechanism for measuring the quality of work experience and its contribution to employability. More motivated participants were encouraged in some placements to register for basic OCN accredited qualifications during their CP and this provided tangible evidence of progression towards employability. However there was no measure or guidance on how to design tasks and work organisation in ways that build self-efficacy skills most effectively. As part of the Evidence Review we examined some of the literature on task design and produced a separate

³ MoJ (2010) *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders*. Ministry of Justice Green Paper. London: HMSO.

⁴ BIS/MoJ (2011) *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*. London: Department for Business Innovation and Skills and the Ministry of Justice.

document to guide supervisors in shaping work experience to maximise the acquisition of employability-related skills and experience.

The offender's journey through the probation system was fragmented rather than an integrated pathway. Work placements, training and support for offenders were typically managed and delivered in different silos with little overview of the offender's progress or lack of progress. As one member of staff put it: "you do your hours and there's no follow-up".

Trusts report that the quality of supervision received by CP participants is of variable quality. While we gained an impression of excellent supervision during our workplace visits, it was made clear that this picture is not universal and that some traditional supervisors have an inadequate understanding of their role in building confidence and self-efficacy amongst CP participants. The need to upgrade the roles, competencies and qualifications of supervisors to include a greater emphasis on motivation and mentoring was recognised by Trusts and deserved high priority, though we did not become aware that this was being addressed systematically at any time during the life of *The Green Employability Project*.

Selection poses dilemmas. CP participants may in general be "less motivated and more truculent" than ordinary employees, but there are exceptions and it is these who were generally selected for the higher quality placements. The reasons for this were easy to understand, not least in a project such as *The Green Employability Project* with its challenging numerical targets. However this missed a potential opportunity to test the ability of high quality lifestyle support and work experience to add value to the employability of hard-to-reach participants. We raised this with the Project Board purely as an issue for reflection and discussion.

Engagement with the green sector was patchy. Each Trust had some links to green businesses that were providing CP placements and, occasionally, further work experience. However the green sector itself was not being explored systematically as a source either of CP placements or of employment for ex-offender. Likewise none of the Trusts incorporated green lifestyle awareness within its CP programmes for offenders.

Partnership was still an emerging concept. Each of the three Trusts was forging a different route in terms of its engagement with external partners. While there were some well-established relationships at the outset of the project, the three Trusts were all at an exploratory stage in building a collaborative environment with external partners. In addressing Objective 1 ("Collaboration") in *The Green Employability Project* proposal, our Evidence Review outlined a framework for successful partnership and collaboration as well as identifying potential dilemmas.

Probation Trusts faced an increasingly volatile future as providers. While arrangements for the future of probation services remained unclear during much of the life of the project, Trusts will have wished to defend existing achievements and to protect the knowledge, expertise and experience of their staff. Turning these assets into a marketable commodity within a new competitive environment became an increasingly pressing challenge.

2. The evidence

2.1 Introduction

An extensive review of published evidence was included within UK WON's Initial Report to the *The Green Employability Project* Board in November 2012. It is worth extracting the principal findings since these helped to shape the formative evaluation and influenced project outcomes. The full Review and Bibliography can be found in Annexe I to this report.

The aims of the Evidence Review were to:

1. Identify the nature of labour market disadvantage for ex-offenders.
2. Identify the skills and experience which enhance the employability of ex-offenders.
3. Review evidence of what works in terms of interventions by the Probation Service and other actors.
4. Examine the importance of partnerships and social enterprises in delivering outcomes and identify key elements of successful partnerships.

The analysis helped to provide the grounding for UK WON's approach to formative evaluation throughout the project.

2.2 Overview

A high percentage of former prisoners or ex-offenders subject to statutory supervision by the probation services share the same labour market disadvantages as long-term unemployed and low skilled people (Mair and May, 1997). Research evidence suggests that this is exacerbated by substantial levels of employer bias against ex-offenders (Cosgrove and O'Neil, 2011; McEvoy, 2008). An increasingly competitive labour market poses new challenges given that the majority of traditional ex-offender labour markets (low skilled, manual and construction) are experiencing high unemployment and hence higher levels of competition (Owens, 2009; Hurley, Storrie and Jungblut, 2011). Whilst work experience *per se* is a particularly important dimension of employability it is unlikely to be sufficient in conditions of labour surplus. *It is therefore particularly important for The Green Employability Project to focus on those aspects of work experience that develop the skills placed at a premium by prospective employers.*

Employability matters because the European Union and the UK government have set ambitious targets for active labour market participation as a means of increasing wealth and reducing welfare dependency. In the case of offenders it also matters in terms of crime reduction. Ex-offenders recorded as unemployed are significantly more likely to be reconvicted than those who were employed (May, 1999). However it is not merely the fact of having a job that is associated with reduced re-offending, but the stability and *quality of that employment along with the level of satisfaction expressed toward it* (Motiuk & Brown, 1993; Farrington, 1989). In other words it is not sufficient to get ex-offenders into work but the task is to provide them with the skills, aptitude and experience that will enable them to get and sustain *good jobs*.

2.3 Labour market disadvantage and the ex-offender

Researchers broadly agree on the four major barriers to the employment of ex-offenders (Hurry, Brazier, Parker and Wilson, 2006):

1. Offenders tend to have lower levels of education, qualifications vocational skills and work experience than other members of the community.
2. Offenders may have psychological problems, including drug abuse, which mean that employment interventions alone are unlikely to succeed.
3. Living circumstances, in particular insecure housing and living in areas of high unemployment can act as a barrier both to gaining work and keeping it.
4. Employers are reluctant to hire people with a criminal record due to perceived risk to customers and to other staff posed by an ex-offender. Employers also expressed concerns about trustworthiness, and some employers raised issues about dependability and reliability. This also creates a law of anticipated reaction, deterring some ex-offenders from applying for jobs, while others applied for less senior positions than they were qualified for or only applied for vacancies they thought would be difficult for the employer to fill.

2.4 What employers want

According to the CfBT/YouGov survey (CfBT, 2011), the reasons employers give for having hired an ex-offender in the past commonly relate to their skills and attributes ('most appropriate candidate' 43 per cent; 'they filled a skills gap' 20 per cent; 'more likely to be hard working' 8 per cent).

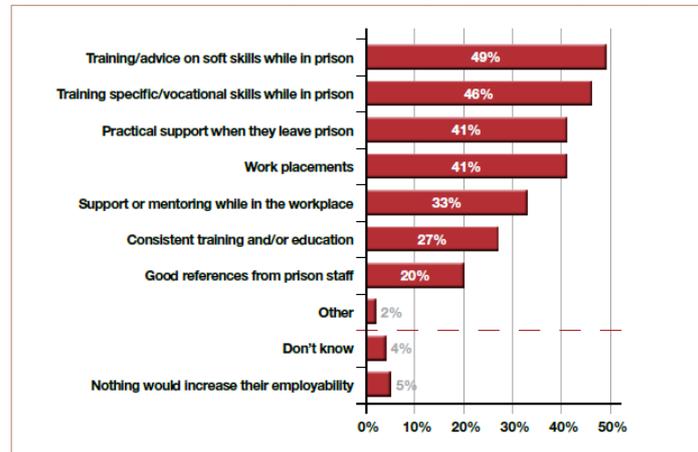
There is also a sense of social responsibility with nearly a third (32 per cent) answering that the applicant deserved a second chance. Larger organisations are more likely to mention the positive impact hiring ex-offenders have on their corporate social reputation (14 per cent compared with 7 per cent of medium-sized organisations and just 3 per cent of small organisations).

Employer experiences of employing ex-offenders are almost always positive (Cosegrave and O'Neil, 2011) and employers become more positive towards ex-offenders if they have made efforts to improve their level of education and skills whilst in prison and on parole (Albright and Denq, 1996). One-third (33%) of employers consider that prison education makes ex-offenders more employable (CfBT, 2011). Employers wanted to understand more about the offender: what happened to them in prison, how had they progressed, what had they learned? Employers may also want to see more than a generic Record of Achievement, documenting the rehabilitative journey during sentence through personal statements and character appraisals from tutors, personal officers, mentors and other professionals. They also want help managing risk through, for example, mentors or work buddies and a telephone helpline (Haslewood-Pocsik et al, 2008).

Research findings suggest that generic skills relating to self-efficacy are of more immediate value to offenders and ex-offenders than job-specific skills partly because these are what many lack but also because their transferability between occupations improves an individual's resilience and versatility within a volatile labour market (CfBT, 2011; Fabiano et al., 1996; Metcalfe et al, 2001). Amongst the generic skills sought by employers, basic attributes such as literacy and reliability are likely to an entrance factor for the consideration of ex-offenders by a growing percentage of employers (Metcalfe,

2001). In the CfBT/YouGov employer survey nearly half of respondents (49%) mentioned soft skills such as communication, appearance, attitude and time keeping. Personal skills such as ‘a positive attitude’ (44 per cent), communication skills (37 per cent), and reliability (34 per cent) are highlighted as the type of skills or attributes applicants most need to demonstrate to prospective employers. Indeed, a positive attitude is deemed as important as having the technical skills to do the job (44 per cent compared with 43 per cent).

Figure 12: Factors that would help ex-offenders get a job once they leave prison



Base: All employers n=1051

Source: CfBT (2011)

However these qualities may not be sufficient to secure employment. There is increasing emphasis on thinking and learning skills, personal management skills (such as responsibility and adaptability) and teamwork skills such as shared responsibility, co-operation and joint problem solving (Fabiano et al., 1996). Haslewood-Pocsik et al (2008) suggest that employers want people with clear basic skills, but more importantly they wanted people with the social skills to work in a team. Such skills are transferable, increasing a prospective employee’s adaptability and resilience within an organisation as well as their employability in the wider labour market, even in quite different occupations.

2.5 Which types of intervention work?

Employment interventions work

The results of an in-depth review (Hurry, Brazier, Parker and Wilson, 2006) suggest that those interventions which target employment directly significantly improve the employment rates of offenders. This includes working and receiving vocational support/training in prison as well as community employment programmes which start for the offender before release and bridge the gap into the community. Further evidence that participation in some work-related activities during custody can benefit prisoners can be found in Lipsey’s (1995) meta-analysis of nearly 400 studies of juvenile offender programmes which demonstrated that employment-focused prison programmes had a greater impact on recidivism than other types of intervention. Offenders themselves consider that assistance in getting into employment is critical in helping them stop re-offending (Gillis et al, 1996).

Community programmes: the evidence is mixed

Suggestions that community-based programmes may be more effective than those that are prison based can be found in the literature, though there is a significant lack of comprehensive evidence especially due to methodological issues and a lack of randomised control trials (Harper and Chitty). Others argue that community programmes are less effective because drop-out rates are higher (Hurry et al, 2006) suggesting that a primary objective must be to understand what will motivate participants and tailor programmes to reflect their needs and circumstances (Bushway and Reuter, 1997).

Although the Probation Service in England and Wales has had a long history of employment-related work, there is little evidence of effectiveness with few published evaluations of probation-led initiatives and even fewer high quality evaluations. There is also little evidence of systematic targeting according to need. Thus there is no evidence of greater provision for unemployed probationers, suggesting that this might be due to sequencing other interventions before employment work (Harper and Chitty, 2005).

Targeting the development of appropriate skills is essential

As we have suggested above, research evidence indicates that generic skills relating to self-efficacy are of more immediate value to offenders and ex-offenders in the labour market than job-specific skills (CfBT, 2011; Fabiano et al., 1996; Metcalfe et al, 2001). Research by Hamlyn and Lewis (2000) focusing on female prisoners' work and training during and after custody found little relationship between the vocational work experience and skills developed in prison and the jobs obtained by offenders after their release. Any new vocational skills acquired in prison were generally not found by respondents to be transferable to the outside workplace (Webster et al, 2001). Arguably work experience and training should be carefully targeted at local labour market demand (Webster et al, 2001), at areas of employment growth such as the green sector (Owens, 2009; Forest Research 2008) and, as we have suggested above, at transferable self-efficacy skills.

There is little literature on how self-efficacy skills and "desistance" can be built through work experience in a prison or probation context, but we can draw on a wider body of research on the relationship between task design, work-based learning and engagement. Work experience can offer an important means of building these generic skills, but only when tasks are designed in such a way that enables participants to develop and use them in practical settings. Likewise poorly designed jobs can deskill and demotivate those exposed to them.

Hacker, a German psychologist, argues that work tasks need to be "complete" and form an integrated whole if they are to provide the basis for intrinsically rewarding jobs, learning and employee wellbeing:

1. The task must comprise a coherent combination of preparation, organisation, control, correction and communication. Feedback is also important.
2. The task should demand different levels of cognitive or mental effort at defined intervals (thinking before execution, thinking during execution, routine actions).

A task can be regarded as complete only if it meets both these criteria. Hacker's research shows that incomplete tasks result in low levels of wellbeing, poor mental health, low job satisfaction and lack of motivation as a consequence of stress and insufficient learning opportunities. Job design should

therefore seek to achieve “complete” jobs both in the interests of employees and for the performance of their organisations (Hacker, Iwanowa and Richter, 1983).

Karasek and Hacker offer important insights into the evaluation and improvement of job design (Karasek and Theorell, 1991; Hacker, Iwanowa and Richter, 1983). In countries such as Denmark and The Netherlands, job quality as a means of promoting learning and well-being has been an important part of legislation since at least the early 1990s. Job design has therefore achieved a much higher profile than in the UK. For example TNO (the Dutch national research organisation) developed the *WEBA Model* from the work of Karasek and Hacker as a practical resource to help practitioners introduce better job design (Dhondt and Vaas, 2001). This body of literature can be of particular value to initiatives such as *The Green Employability Project* in ensuring that work experience focuses on enhancing the skills associated with sustainable employment.

2.6 Working in partnership

Social welfare in the twentieth century was dominated by bureaucratic and programmatic modes of policy intervention. Bureaucratic procedures were designed to ensure consistent and transparent decision rules in resource allocation, and were adequate in addressing well-understood and relatively stable policy arenas. In the post-war era increasing awareness of the complexity of policy issues such as multiple deprivation or labour market exclusion was matched by the development of new and more technocratic models of public management. Programmatic policy interventions were often problem-driven with a defined timescale and governed by measurable performance targets. Governments of all political colours enthusiastically adopted programmatic interventions in labour market policy, health care, urban renewal, crime prevention and a host of other policy arenas. This trend reached its climax in the UK through the dominance of centrally-driven targets that infused every area of public life since the mid-1990s.

Latterly, especially in countries such as the UK and The Netherlands, the emergence of the New Public Management paradigm led to the separation of public service commissioning from service provision; this allowed private firms and the not-for-profit sector to compete for service provision contracts against traditional state providers but critically within a framework in which delivery is micro-managed by government through detailed target setting and external audit in an attempt to secure accountability and cost effectiveness. Yet while such approaches are effective in focusing resources on clearly defined targets they are widely criticised for oversimplifying complex problems, inhibiting creativity and creating perverse incentives to ensure compliance with targets at any cost (Hunter, 2003; Wanless, 2004; Totterdill et al., 2010).

Social innovation is seen by its advocates as a means of overcoming these limitations, suggesting radical potential for the emergence of different models of intervention and provision. While the state has a unique role to play in ensuring for example equality of access, quality of provision, cost effectiveness and accountability, complex socio-economic problems may often respond more effectively to diverse but overlapping forms of intervention and provision characterised by entrepreneurial behaviours, innovation and the ability to respond flexibly to individual needs. Unlike the blanket, universalist provision which often characterises state programmatic intervention, such diversity can enable provision to be tailored to the needs of different client groups. Consequentially it

also requires radically different ways of working and different competencies from those which have traditionally characterised public agencies (Exton, 2010).

Social innovation is therefore a qualitatively enhanced approach from simple competitive tendering based on service level agreements. An overview and analysis of the broader literature on inter-organisational partnerships in social policy suggests the need to make clear distinctions between outsourcing, commissioning and partnership (Callaghan et al, 2000; Hardy et al 1992; Hills, 2012; Hudson et al, 1997; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Huxham and MacDonald, 1992; Kenmore, 2011; MacGregor, 2007; Mattesich and Monsey, 1992; Ray, Hudson, Campbell-Barr and Shutes, 2008; Social Enterprise UK, 2012). Outsourcing and commissioning established through competitive tendering and service level agreements are, on their own, no more than short-term contractual relationships based on delivery and monitoring of specific targets by the respective parties. 'Partnership' indicates a qualitatively different relationship, one in which immediate targets are achieved through mutual reciprocity and as a by-product of collaborative working towards longer-term goals. Partnership-based relationships:

1. *Are strategic, not transactional.*
2. *Represent convergence between partners' strategic goals.*
3. *Build capacity within the social enterprise/third sector.*
4. *Are grounded in wide-ranging and visionary dialogue between partners.*
5. *Are characterised by deepening appreciation of each partner's competence and contribution.*
6. *Demonstrate inter-organisational teamworking involving staff at all levels in the partner organisations including trust, active co-operation and reduced demarcations.*
7. *Work towards open and unconstrained knowledge sharing.*
8. *Embed regular spaces for productive reflection and feedback by partners, leading to collaborative improvement and innovation.*

In practice public procurement requirements tend to undermine partnership because of short-term horizons, staff insecurity leading to mistrust, restrictions on knowledge sharing resulting from commercial considerations, and the failure to include intangibles such as shared learning and continuous improvement as 'deliverables'.

3. How *The Green Employability Project* sought to add value

3.1 Introduction

Bringing together *The Green Employability Project's* original intervention logic with findings from UK WON's inception visits (Section 1 of this report) and the Evidence Review (Section 2), we identified six major challenges facing the project, each of which provided opportunities to enhance existing practice:

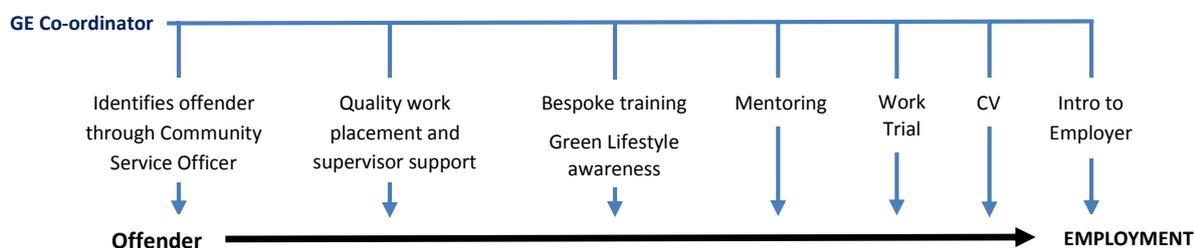
1. Overcoming the fragmentation of unpaid work, training and support, and its negative impact on employability.
2. Improving the acquisition of employability-related self-efficacy skills in unpaid work placements.
3. Enhancing direct avenues to employment opportunities in the green sector for ex-offenders.
4. Strengthening partnerships between Probation Trusts, Job Centres, NGOs and other stakeholders.
5. Aspirations for a sustainable social enterprise as an outcome from the project.
6. The need for effective project design, management and leadership.

Following our Initial Report to the November 2012 Project Board, partners gave deeper thought to *The Green Employability Project's* potential for added value under each of these six themes. This subsequently provided the framework for UK WON's formative and summative evaluation.

3.2 The themes

1. Providing a seamless pathway for the offender through mentoring and the establishment of stronger internal and external partnership working

PARES funding enabled each Trust to establish new working practices that provide a more seamless journey for offenders and which hold the promise of better long term outcomes including enhanced levels of employment and reduced re-offending. The integrative role of *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinator lay at the heart of this, enabling guidance and support for offenders to be part of the work experience rather than a separate function. In Merseyside it was argued that the offender's journey was being looked at "with a new set of eyes", knitting together work placements, training and the proactive identification of opportunities for paid employment. The potentially transferable model from Merseyside's experience is represented in the following diagram:



Evidence of a "new working model" can be found in different ways in all three Trusts. In Wales it was demonstrated that mentoring by *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinator provided cohesion and

meaning to an offender's journey through the probation system, reflecting the specific needs and potential of each person. For example:

Jack was helped to see his work placement as a stepping stone towards rehabilitation and eventual employment. He is acquiring valuable skills and experience linked to accredited qualifications. Through collaboration with the local Work Programme provider (which required careful negotiation), The Green Employability Project Co-ordinator is establishing a bespoke pathway towards a potentially sustainable job.

Jack will also become a volunteer Green Mentor, trained to Level 2 mentorship and subsequently "buddying" a client for a six month period.

The integration of training and qualification is a critical dimension of this emerging pathway. In one of the Trusts, over 50% of unemployed offenders were not referred for training or support in the past, allegedly because "this creates too much work" for Offender Managers.

Wales Probation Trust's relationship with the YMCA College exemplifies the benefits of a strategic partnership that helps both parties achieve their own targets by enabling the acquisition of basic, vocational and lifestyle skills qualifications to be integrated within CP work placements. This relationship was used to good effect by *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinator in Wales.

We were initially impressed by the partnership between Merseyside Probation Trust and Rotunda College, funded by Achieve North West (a consortium of five Probation Trusts) through its Stepladder programme. As an independent charity, Rotunda appeared remarkably free of the bureaucracy characteristic of the FE sector; it works in an entrepreneurial way with deep roots in its local community. Its partnership with the Trust aimed "to give people something more" with a strong emphasis on mentoring, motivating and realising individual potential. Bespoke action plans enabled offenders to take ownership of their pathway, and shape the provision of learning. A personal mentor helped with job search, CV writing and lifestyles, while volunteer projects promoted "sly learning" for those anxious about traditional teaching environments. Rotunda aimed to "create an environment that people want to attend", though it also faced criticism that the learning was inadequately structured. Critically *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinator provided continuity throughout the offender's pathway.

However external funding for the partnership between Rotunda College and Merseyside Probation Trust ceased during the course of *The Green Employability Project*, underlining the vulnerability of partnerships to short-term funding cycles. It appears that Stepladder failed to achieve sufficient referrals from Offender Managers in the Trust suggesting that they had not taken full ownership of this opportunity to improve outcomes for offenders.

Funding uncertainties were also reflected in the collapse of Devon & Cornwall Probation Trust's proposed partnership with Initiative South West, a social enterprise focused on training and support to hard-to-reach groups. Where they involve partnerships between different organisations, sustainable pathways also require sustained commitment from funders.

The Green Employability Project's drive towards the creation of integrated pathways in each of the Trusts has highlighted the fragmentation of traditional practice in which work placements, training and support for offenders are managed and delivered in different silos. As one Co-ordinator argued, the integrated pathway should "become a blueprint for the way we work".

However achieving pathway integration required proactive and entrepreneurial behaviour by the Co-ordinator and their colleagues in each Trust, and it is clear that this would not have happened without *The Green Employability Project*. In some cases this innovation took place in the face of inertia and hostility from other staff within the organisation. Some Offender Managers were overtly resistant to “selling” participation in *The Green Employability Project* to offenders. The project revealed instances of organisational resistance and counter-productive cultures, including the disengagement of probation staff that needed to be addressed through effective senior leadership. Clear lessons for senior Trust management can be identified from this experience, emphasising the need to create organisational cultures more conducive to innovation and change. The roles and types of entrepreneurial behaviour demonstrated by *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinators will be of increasing importance in the volatile policy environment that faces probation services in the near future, and new ways of working may offer a significant competitive advantage.

The Green Employability Project Co-ordinators

The experiences of the three Co-ordinators lie at the heart of the transformational learning generated by *The Green Employability Project*, firstly because of the integrative role that they played in the offender’s journey towards employability and employment, but also because of their (actual and potential) role in driving organisational change within their respective Trusts.

As observers new to the world of probation and criminal justice, the UK WON evaluation team’s initial discussions with a wide range of stakeholders painted a picture of a fractured system characterised to a significant degree by staff working in separate silos with separate targets and divergent value systems. Even if punishment was delivered effectively, the consequence was that valuable opportunities to use Community Payback as a means of rehabilitating offenders, integrating them into the labour market and reducing re-offending was woefully missed. Nowhere is this clearer than the Probation Trust cited above which reported that over 50% of unemployed offenders were not referred for training or support, allegedly because “this creates too much work” for Offender Managers.

The Green Employability Project Co-ordinators were appointed to discover and pilot ways of healing this fracture, in addition to providing offenders with potentially life-changing insights into environmental values and ways of living. This was an ambitious brief, made realistic by the appointment of three experienced and able Co-ordinators. Each had insight into what worked and didn’t work within the probation system and each was willing to challenge existing practices.

Working between silos was an integral part of the Co-ordinator’s role in providing offenders with a seamless journey between Community Payback, learning and development, and guidance into employment. **The first and most important lesson generated by the project is that such an integrative role plays a vital part in building offender employability – a lesson validated by other initiatives focused on hard to reach groups in the labour market (see section 3.3 below).**

Continued . . .

The challenge of the Co-ordinator's role

Addressing dysfunctional work practices and cultures is rarely a comfortable experience. Apart from appointing the right person to the task, much depends on the level of senior management understanding and buy-in to the change agenda.

In this sense the support that the three Co-ordinators received from their respective organisations varied in nature and level. All were granted a degree of autonomy in undertaking their day-to-day roles, and enjoyed support from their immediate line managers. In none of the Trusts did we see evidence that senior management was fully engaged in realising the transformational potential of *The Green Employability Project* despite initially endorsing participation in the initiative. One consequence was a failure to explain the project or the role of the Co-ordinator to other Trust staff, resulting in lack of understanding and even suspicion.

The most visible symptom of this lay in the difficulties that each Co-ordinator experienced in gaining referrals from other probation staff, and to varying degrees they received indifference and hostility from colleagues for a combination of reasons relating to divergent values ("Community Payback is about punishment") or inertia ("too much work"). One Co-ordinator was the target of bullying by colleagues resistant to the values and aspirational nature of *The Green Employability Project*, an issue that was only partially addressed by the Trust concerned. Personal resilience proved to be an indispensable quality.

The Co-ordinators' mission was not helped by lack of seniority. Each was appointed at Band 3, a level interpreted by some colleagues as not endowing sufficient authority to challenge custom and practice in the absence of continuous reinforcement by messages from senior management.

Over many years the UK WON team has worked with diverse organisations, public and private, which demonstrate sustained commitment to continuous innovation and improvement. During the course of the project we were impressed by the commitment and passion of many probation staff, some of whom achieved high standards of excellence. However none of the three Trusts were characterised by the type of transformative leadership and culture that we have seen elsewhere. We make no judgement on this because the wider policy environment leading up to privatisation was volatile and led to considerable uncertainty at Trust level. Nonetheless future leaders will need to create a very different organisational culture if they are to create and sustain the integrated pathways that lead to ex-offender employability and reduced re-offending.

The Green Employability Project shows that the creation of roles not bound by silos is central to achieving this end. In each case the Co-ordinators demonstrated a tangible return on investment, but they did so in conditions that were often less than ideal.

"You're there because you want to make a difference . . . changing people's lives and their family's lives" (Co-ordinator, *The Green Employability Project*).

The achievement of integrated pathways by *The Green Employability Project* has been a noteworthy achievement, but Trusts must ensure that these new working practices are sustained now that the

project is finished. It is understood that the case for sustaining and extending the integrated pathway is being considered by each Trust Board. Nonetheless it is far from clear how these lessons will be transmitted into the post-privatisation landscape, and there appears to be a serious danger that knowledge capital will be lost.

2. Enhancing employability by ensuring that job design in work experience placements leads to the development of appropriate skills

Whilst work experience in itself is a particularly important dimension of employability, the Evidence Review makes clear that it is unlikely to be sufficient in the current labour market. It is therefore particularly important that *The Green Employability Project* focused on those aspects of work experience that develop the skills valued by prospective employers. Self-efficacy skills such as thinking and learning, personal management (including responsibility and adaptability) and teamworking (including co-operation and joint problem solving) are of more immediate value to offenders and ex-offenders in the labour market than job-specific skills. Work experience can offer an important means of building these skills, but only when tasks are designed in such a way that enables participants to develop and use them in practical settings.

According to one ex-offender in Devon:

I have progressed my team work and communication skills and I have more awareness of how others interact together. My next step is paid employment. I have secured a small private gardening job and will stay on as a volunteer with Grow@Jigsaw in the future. Grow lifts the soul whilst helping the community.

Prior to *The Green Employability Project* there was little evidence that any of the three Trusts systematically considered the quality of unpaid work placements or related them to employability beyond simple behaviours such as attendance and punctuality. While there had been some centres of relative excellence, for example in the Cardiff and Torquay workshops, much of the unpaid work was unskilled and repetitive with little opportunity for discretion or problem solving. Allocation of people to tasks largely depended on “whatever happened to be on that day.”

In contrast *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinators spent time looking through the lists of offenders to identify those likely to benefit from the learning and development that comes from higher quality work experience.

While there is a need actively to source good quality work, much depends on the quality of the work placement supervisors and there was an admission in each Trust that this tends to be highly variable. Selection and training of supervisors based on their commitment and ability to deliver employability outcomes for offenders appears to be essential.

Close partnerships with external bodies who understand the type of work experience needed to enhance offender employability is essential. Identifying and establishing such relationships requires a level of proactive and sustained effort that Trusts find difficult to accomplish without additional resources. Merseyside’s experience with Elixir demonstrated the need to reduce risk by spreading the net as widely as possible. Devon & Cornwall used PARES funding particularly effectively to broaden the range of providers and to work with them in ensuring the right quality of work placement.

One example is the Grow@Jigsaw initiative cited above:

- ❖ Jigsaw is a social enterprise project providing quality placements in North Devon. Established by Westcountry Housing, it provides a safe and supportive environment for marginalised people in which to learn new skills, increase confidence and promote self-worth. Jigsaw has partnerships with Probation, Job Centre Plus, the local NHS Mental Health Trust and other support agencies. People referred to Jigsaw often have learning and/or physical difficulties, are recovering from addiction, at risk of homelessness and/or are excluded from school.
- ❖ Grow@Jigsaw offers a space for individuals to develop skills and take control of their lives through horticulture. Produce is grown on site and is on sale to the public at low cost. It provides a supported training environment, offering AQA training to give people skills for personal development and to progress into employment. Grow@Jigsaw has also established a relationship with Bicton College to deliver certification in gardening skills on site.
- ❖ Jigsaw Furniture Project uses furniture repair and restoration for sale to the public as a vehicle to up-skill people and improve employment prospects.
- ❖ Both projects opened up placements to all participants registered to *The Green Employability Project* regardless of sentence.

We also visited Probation Trust workshops in Cardiff and Torquay where it was clear that supervisors understood the importance of self-efficacy skills in building offender confidence and employability and this was reflected in some types of work being undertaken by offenders. Likewise offenders undertaking placements for Liverpool Mutual Homes were engaged in a complete work cycle including clearance, chipping and garden redesign, often involving contact and “empathy building” with residents. However these examples stand in contrast to traditional types of work placement such as painting park railings or picking up litter.

To improve awareness and practice, UK WON created a practical *Job Design Assessment Tool* (see Annexe II) to help project partners deliver work experience which generates the transferable skills and competencies most valued in the labour market. In particular it was designed to:

- assess the quality of jobs provided within work placements against evidence-based standards;
- identify examples of good practice in job design that can be used to inspire and inform other work experience providers;
- stimulate improvement and innovation in the quality of work placements.

This was distributed to the three Trusts, including the Cardiff and Torquay workshops and Elixir, and we understand that it has been used extensively in some of these settings.

3. Proactively opening up sustainable green employment opportunities for offenders

The final stage of the integrated pathway described above in 3.2 represents a particularly important source of added value for *The Green Employability Project*. In Wales the Co-ordinator was particularly proactive in making contact with potential employers in both the public and private sectors. Unpaid work trials, undertaken after Community Payback work placements are completed, are seen as offering a “filtering system”, allowing employers to “try before they buy” as well as providing offenders with experience of real working environments.

In Merseyside the search for sustainable employment opportunities initially focused on Elixir, which had previously provided subsequent work trial placements and occasional employment for offenders following their work experience at the plant. However financial difficulties and relocation to a smaller site limited this potential. Contacts with a wider range of employers in the green sector were being established towards the latter stages of the project.

In Devon & Cornwall the creation of employment opportunities in the green sector after unpaid work is seen as a principal source of added value from the project, and this formed the focus of attention during the project. As early as September 2012 the Devon & Cornwall Project Co-ordinator reported a growing portfolio of recycling and horticultural ventures, which expanded throughout the project.

There were suggestions from Co-ordinators that the project's green focus limited the ability to recruit potential employers. Our recommendation to the March 2013 Project Board was to return to the broader definition of the green sector specified in the initial proposal, one which goes well beyond recycling, and to provide further guidance on the scope and range of opportunities relating to green employment.

4. Building effective partnerships

Establishing seamless pathways for offenders also involves partnership building with external agencies, potentially including Job Centres, training providers, NGOs and other stakeholders. *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinators had a key role to play in establishing or strengthening relationships, providing a dedicated resource for partnership building that had not previously existed in the Trusts despite the importance of inter-agency collaboration for offender outcomes.

However the results of partnership building were variable depending on the willingness or ability of the external partner to co-operate. In Llanelli, for example, an energetic and sustained approach by the Wales Co-ordinator eventually led to close co-operation with Job Centre Plus based on a recognition that co-operation on the ground could help both agencies to achieve their own targets. Taking part in JCP team meetings played a critical role in breaking down barriers and building relationships, and eventually Job Centre Plus staff recognised a change in the attitudes of clients participating in the programme ("they saw the spark in their eyes").

Elsewhere, despite a positive reception from Job Centre management teams, close co-operation on the ground failed to materialise. According to one Co-ordinator there was "no nominated individual within JCP sites dealing with Probation clients therefore no link except the JCP team manager", and there were a series of problems in "breaking down organisational barriers".

This reinforces the findings from the Evidence Review (Section 2.6) that effective partnerships must be based on a clear articulation of converging interests and on multi-agency teamworking that reaches every level of partner organisations. One example of good practice emerged in Merseyside as a result of *The Green Employability Project* through the creation of multi-partner team meetings and case conferences. A relatively small but important gain was that the Co-ordinator was able to exempt offenders on the project from Job Centre Plus attendances if these interfered with work placements. These meetings proved to be important mechanisms for strengthening relationships and ensuring the seamlessness of pathways, providing an example for wider adoption within the probation service.

Based on our evidence from the ground, a much stronger role for national policy leadership appears to be needed. Different agencies driven by separate targets will inevitably lead to the fragmentation of provision unless an expectation of partnership and collaboration infuses the entirely regulatory, performance management and governance framework. Policymakers should also recognise that building sustainable, trust-based partnerships needs a dedicated resource such as that represented by *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinators.

5. Supporting green lifestyles

Green lifestyle training and assessment was integral to the design of *The Green Employability Project* in part because it provides preparation for potential employment in the sector and show real interest and motivation to prospective employers, but also because it can lead to greater self-awareness and responsibility. A modular course of 10 sessions, leading to the award of a Green Employability Certificate, was initially designed by Green Reparation and put into place by the three Co-ordinators.

The course covered subjects including climate change, landfill issues, energy, water, and impact on local communities. It was to be delivered through the recruitment of volunteer Green Mentors who were to receive appropriate training. They could be existing probation volunteers equipped to work with offenders but not engaged in any green agenda, or environmentally expert volunteers yet to work with offenders. Success in recruitment of volunteers varied between different areas. In Merseyside only one new volunteer was successfully recruited; existing offender mentors were recruited to the training programme but there was a high rate of attrition. Devon & Cornwall and Wales managed to recruit a number of highly effective volunteers, in some cases ex-offenders. They were all trained by Green Reparation.

With hindsight it appears that the course content for the volunteers could have been grounded more effectively in experience of working with offenders. Volunteers and Co-ordinators also acknowledged that the green lifestyle training modules contained valuable and relevant content but the style and presentation were difficult to use in practice with offenders. In consequence a volunteer in Devon rewrote the modules, and the new versions were subsequently adopted by all three Trusts. This represents a very positive example of learning and horizontal collaboration within *The Green Employability Project*.

There is no doubt that, for some individuals, the focus on climate change and environment issues was both inspiring and empowering, though it was also suggested that those most engaged were already knowledgeable about many of the issues.

One offender actively supported the development of green business opportunities in the Torquay workshop and continues to pursue a career in the sector:

My own experience on The Green Employability Project has given me renewed optimism and confidence in working on a business start-up within the green industry and I have enrolled on a Green Deal Energy Advisor course with South Devon College.

Another wrote:

I would like to hope that participating in the project will give an insight into the range of job opportunities available . . . What a pleasure it was to work with Jonathon Madge, his depth of knowledge and enthusiasm for all things associated with climate change never ceased to amaze me.

And again:

Signing up for GE and completing the lifestyle module whilst attending Community Payback has helped me understand the differences we can make. It has increased my understanding of climate change. My next step will be to use the changes in my day to day life. My future relies on my present life and the choices I make within it. The children of my children's children need a future.

6. Creating sustainable green social enterprise

Green Reparation CIC is a new specialist social enterprise generating innovative synergies by integrating the environment and justice agendas. It was the initial promoter of *The Green Employability Project* and devised much of its content.

Independent of the trading constraints faced by Probation Trusts and other public sector organisations, Green Reparation was established as a trading vehicle for green work with offenders and ex-offenders, including under the Community Programme. The aim was to grow income generation from green Community Payback activities such as recycling, reclaiming materials and manufacture of items from recycled wood, typically uncommercial operations due to labour intensity and costs. Surpluses from trading would be directed to provide sustainable resourcing of green employability training, and support for offenders and ex-offenders, once PARES funding had expired. This business model was to have been developed during the pilot phase, and to be replicated and scaled up through a social franchise business model.

The proposal to enable aspects of CP to operate within a not-for-profit Green Reparation social enterprise had been supported by the three Probation Trusts following local feasibility studies conducted prior to the award of the PARES contract. The key motivation had come from the national competitive tendering framework for CP proposed by NOMS, which would have required a low cost and high outcome formula for successful bidders.

It subsequently became clear that the whole future of Probation Trusts was in doubt and the preoccupation with the competitiveness of CP *per se* disappeared. Constructing a commercial CP model was no longer seen by the Probation Trusts as important or relevant to the emerging policy landscape. They focused instead on ensuring that *The Green Employability Project* became a successful pilot for enhancing future Offender Management and probation service effectiveness. In these changed circumstances, Green Reparation could not begin trading through those Trusts and so the model of a sustainable social enterprise solution could not be pursued.

7. Project design, management and leadership

We did not undertake a formal survey to measure partner perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of project design, management and leadership within *The Green Employability Project*. Rather we initiated and maintained open dialogue with partners throughout the project, enabling us to identify the following learning points for the future:

- A. Project design must incorporate adequate provision for travel and subsistence. This is especially important for frontline project staff in geographically dispersed areas such as Devon & Cornwall or Wales, and to support networking activities such as action learning.

- B. Financial administration arrangements need to be made clear, and be understood by all partners at the outset, especially where the lead organisation has rules and procedures in addition to those required by the EU. Cash flow is important to NGOs and social enterprises and this must be taken into account within these arrangements.
- C. Further thought should be given to the capture of baseline data at the design and inception stages. We recognise the practical problems involved in capturing ex-offender destination data but such evidence (even on a sample basis) would have been especially valuable in measuring *The Green Employability Project's* impact and potential for wider dissemination.
- D. The role of the three Project Co-ordinators lies at the heart of the project's success and is, rightly, central to the design of the project. The roles were demanding and dependent on recruiting staff capable of entrepreneurial behaviour, self-sufficiency and personal resilience. They would also be supported by the training and mentoring provided by Green Reparation throughout the project and the action learning provided by UK WON. *The Green Employability Project* clearly demonstrates the value of individuals with a specific remit to drive improvement and innovation, including network building within organisations and between organisations. Without funding from sources such as PARES, there is a danger that spaces and opportunities for improvement and innovation are driven out of organisations by managements overly focused on short-term targets.
- E. Co-ordinators' meetings and action learning sessions led by Green Reparation and UKWON were well received by participants; they made an important contribution to shared learning within the project and provided valued peer support.
- F. Board meetings provided valuable opportunities for middle management in the three Trusts to share experiences, though some felt that there should have more chances to discuss substantive issues arising from the project.
- G. Attempts to bring senior managers together from the three Trusts were unsuccessful, missing an opportunity to enhance their understanding and commitment to learning the lessons from *The Green Employability Project*.
- H. PARES projects are concerned with the introduction of innovative practices; this can often challenge established cultures and ways of working and may meet resistance. In the worst cases such resistance may leave project staff exposed and can pose a risk to project outcomes. Partner organisations such as Probation Trusts need to ensure the complete understanding and commitment of senior management to the transformational aspects of the project, and ensure that they are active in monitoring progress and addressing obstacles.
- I. Likewise partners should create clear "learning loops", enabling lessons from project activities to be embodied in continuous improvement and innovation across the whole organisation. Partners should create plans at an early stage for sustaining innovative practices beyond the life of the project
- J. A lead partner should recognise that its role involves more than project administration and contract compliance. It requires thought leadership to inform project activities and to draw out the wider implications of project experiences and outcomes. In the case of an initiative

such as *The Green Employability Project*, it should also involve active engagement with partners on national policy implications and the dissemination of transferable practices.

- K. In the March 2013 Board Report we recommended that an economic analysis be undertaken of *The Green Employability Project's* integrated pathways, measuring the costs of mainstreaming the approach in each of the three Trusts against potential savings generated by enhanced employability such as reduced welfare benefits, lower re-offending rates and wealth generated by ex-offenders in employment. Although an economic analysis was not envisaged within *The Green Employability Project's* project design, we believe that the dissemination of project outcomes would be enhanced by the availability of such data.

3.3 Comparing *The Green Employability Project* with wider experience

On 4th November 2013 a dissemination workshop/study visit hosted by NOMS and the Department for Work & Pensions brought together representatives from public agencies and NGOs concerned with labour market inclusion, allowing *The Green Employability Project* outcomes and conclusions to be tested against a wider body of experience. Its stated aim was “to share ideas and experiences of partnership and innovation in the delivery and funding of employability initiatives, demonstrating the principles of Social Justice in action.”

In addition to keynote presentations from NOMS and Social Pioneers, the morning session shared learning and experiences from *The Green Employability Project* during a facilitated panel discussion with the three Project Co-ordinators. Key themes included the creation of integrated offender pathways, the importance of job design in enabling offenders on unpaid work placements to develop employability-related self-efficacy skills, and the role of the Co-ordinators as change enablers.

These themes were echoed in an afternoon panel discussion involving representatives from three other organisations involved in innovative actions to address labour market disadvantage, two of them PARES beneficiaries:

- **Open Field / SWAN** (www.open-field.org.uk/about-us) provides employment support including counselling, job search, training, work experience and business start-up advice to people experiencing labour market disadvantage in Bradford.
- The **Essex Coalition for Disabled People** (www.ecdp.org.uk) provides training, work experience and job placements for people with disabilities.
- The **Beyond Food Foundation** (www.beyondfoodfoundation.org.uk/about.html) helps people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to work towards employment through work placements, training, mentoring and apprenticeships in the hospitality sector.

Each is an example of social innovation, working with public agencies to meet the needs of hard-to-reach groups in ways that are both entrepreneurial and highly targeted.

All three organisations provide the individual support which mirrors the role of *The Green Employability Project* Co-ordinators in helping clients address often complex needs and obstacles to employment. Coaching and mentoring are vital in guiding people through the multiple issues and institutional challenges they face during the journey. Likewise each organisation recognised the need to be proactive in establishing close and open relationships with employers.

Emphasis is also placed on *meaningful* work rather than “just a job”, and this reflects. The Beyond Food Foundation, for example, focuses on the “emotionally, economically and intellectually fulfilling employment” associated with food preparation and service; the development and use of self-efficacy skills in the workplace is embedded in the design of its work placements and apprenticeships as a prerequisite for intrinsic job satisfaction.

Despite their clear record of achievement, non-governmental organisations such as these work in a volatile funding and policy environment in which relations with public sector agencies require continuous renegotiation, often falling short of the definition of “partnership” discussed in Section 2.6 of this report.

The workshop closed with an insightful analysis of lessons for national policy by Kirsty Scholefield (Department for Work & Pensions), followed by open discussion. Many delegates left with the view that policy fragmentation at government level was responsible in large measure for the sometimes fractured nature of provision for hard-to-reach disadvantaged groups in the labour market. At the same time local managerial autonomy and the lack of structured opportunities for shared learning inhibits the spread of good practices from the islands of innovation that exist in some areas.

In the probation service at least, radical new thinking will be required if this issue is to be addressed in the largely privatised new landscape that will emerge in 2014.

4. Conclusion

Close involvement with *The Green Employability Project's* partners through our role as formative evaluators has convinced the UK WON team that the project was generally well conceived and well executed, though there are clear learning points that should be recognised in the design and implementation of future initiatives. Delivering a pilot project of this nature is inevitably a learning process, and partners proved more than willing to engage in reflection, adaptation and improvement throughout the life of the project.

The Green Employability Project has much to demonstrate in terms of transferable learning. Whether the UK's probation services will choose to secure a return on its investment by incorporating that learning is much less clear. Neither NOMS nor the Trusts themselves have been able to add clarity.

The project took place against a background of politically-driven upheaval in probation, and for much of its life staff were kept in a state of uncertainty about the future shape of the service let alone the consequences for their own careers. It is to their credit that this did not weaken their commitment to the project and its aims.

As we now know, the restructuring of probation will lead to the privatisation of many areas of service delivery. One of the key outcomes from *The Green Employability Project* is to identify the need for a seamless offender pathway that integrates punishment, education and training, work experience, lifestyle mentoring and coaching, and showing how it can be achieved within a single framework. This involves real teamwork, challenging traditional silos and, in some cases, dysfunctional cultures. It is not clear whether privatisation will help to achieve this new way of working or whether it will add to the fragmentation. Experiences of such New Public Management approaches in other sectors suggest that commissioners of public services will need to become much more sophisticated in procurement and regulation if they are to ensure the qualitative gains for offenders and society demonstrated by *The Green Employability Project*.

Key messages

Achieving an integrated pathway for offenders can lead to real gains in personal development and employability, with probable consequential gains in reduced re-offending and welfare dependency, and the creation of additional economic value through productive labour. While a full economic analysis is not available, there could be a substantial Return on Investment for the additional cost of the Co-ordinators salary (and of course the appointment of Co-ordinators may also save on staff costs elsewhere). The November 2013 Workshop (see 3.3 above) demonstrated the importance of the seamless pathway in addressing other areas of labour market disadvantage.

However *The Green Employability Project* has shown that the full realisation of these gains is far from simple.

Firstly the Co-ordinators themselves are required to be highly entrepreneurial in forging customised routes for clients through the varied dimensions of punishment and support. This, as we have seen, requires both creativity and personal resilience. It is important that employing organisations see Co-ordinators as change leaders with a remit to drive organisational improvement and innovation rather than defining their role purely in transactional terms.

Secondly there is a requirement for transformational leadership, grounded in a clear understanding of work organisation and organisational culture, both by senior management at service level and by policymakers and politicians. We have found less evidence of this than we consider desirable (which is not to say that it doesn't exist elsewhere in the probation service); a common view expressed to us is that senior management teams are too preoccupied with short-term targets and lack understanding of how to create innovative and responsive organisations. As we have seen in the NHS this can lead to dysfunctional cultures and inertia. It is not clear whether privatisation of probation services will address or further ingrain this problem, but a widespread fear is that it will achieve the latter.

Inter-organisational partnerships are central to the integrated pathway and it also unclear how these will fare in the post-privatisation landscape. Partnerships between agencies, and the involvement of NGOs, need to be based on a strategic convergence of interests, policy stability and predictable funding, not on short-term transactional arrangements.

Apart from organisational challenges, *The Green Employability Project* has also cast light on the importance of green issues and opportunities. Researchers have long pointed to the need to target industries with potential as sources of jobs for ex-offenders (See Annexe 1) and the green sector clearly falls into this category. However the project shows that proactive measures are required to identify, engage with and build long-term partnerships with such enterprises. Once again this highlights the value of the Co-ordinator's role in forging such relationships.

Green lifestyle mentoring has a contribution to play, not just because it may prepare offenders for eventual employment in the sector but also because it appears to foster a greater sense of citizenship, at least amongst some probation clients. The challenge is to widen its appeal to those less receptive and this will require continuing experimentation, learning and development.

Although each of these topics can be considered as separate dimensions of transferable learning, they formed a fairly tight bundle of mutually reinforcing practices within *The Green Employability Project*. This was ultimately the project's strength and its challenge, both to the probation community as a whole and to others concerned with hard-to-reach groups in Europe's labour markets.

ANNEXE I The evidence review

1. Overview

A high percentage of former prisoners or ex-offenders subject to statutory supervision by the probation services share the same labour market disadvantages as long-term unemployed and low skilled people (Mair and May, 1997). Research evidence suggests that this is exacerbated by substantial levels of employer bias against ex-offenders (Cosgrove and O'Neil, 2011; McEvoy, 2008). An increasingly competitive labour market poses new challenges given that the majority of traditional ex-offender labour markets (low skilled, manual and construction) are experiencing high unemployment and hence higher levels of competition (Owens, 2009; Hurley, Storrie and Jungblut, 2011). Whilst work experience *per se* is a particularly important dimension of employability it is unlikely to be sufficient in conditions of labour surplus. *It is therefore particularly important for The Green Employability Project to focus on those aspects of work experience that develop the skills placed at a premium by prospective employers.*

Employability matters because the European Union and the UK government have set ambitious targets for active labour market participation as a means of increasing wealth and reducing welfare dependency. In the case of offenders it also matters in terms of crime reduction. Ex-offenders recorded as unemployed are significantly more likely to be reconvicted than those who were employed (May, 1999). However it is not merely the fact of having a job that is associated with reduced re-offending, but the stability and *quality of that employment along with the level of satisfaction expressed toward it* (Motiuk & Brown, 1993; Farrington, 1989). In other words it is not sufficient to get ex-offenders into work but the task is to provide them with the skills, aptitude and experience that will enable them to get and sustain good jobs.

The aims of this review are to:

1. Identify the nature of labour market disadvantage for ex-offenders.
2. Identify the skills and experience which enhance the employability of ex-offenders.
3. Review evidence of what works in terms of interventions by the Probation Service and other actors.
4. Examine the importance of partnerships and social enterprises in delivering outcomes and identify key elements of successful partnerships.

The analysis will provide the grounding for UKWON's approach to formative evaluation throughout the project.

2. Labour market disadvantage and the ex-offender

Researchers broadly agree on the four major barriers to the employment of ex-offenders (Hurry, Brazier, Parker and Wilson, 2006):

1. Offenders tend to have lower levels of education, qualifications and vocational skills than other members of the community and this may act as a barrier to employment (Parsons, 2002). This includes high levels of illiteracy and lack of basic skills – 27% of prisoners score below level 1 (corresponding to National Curriculum Level 4, the target for 11 year olds) in

basic skills tests, 39% in writing and 35% in numeracy. Approximately 40% left school before the age of 16 compared with 11% of the general male population. The 2001 Resettlement Survey found that two-thirds of prisoners were unemployed before they entered custody and that 12 per cent of prisoners aged over 17 years had never had a paid job. As a consequence of their lack of work experience and imprisonment, many prisoners have difficulty arranging employment on release (Niven & Olagundoye, 2002). In a CfBT/YouGov survey 'lack of work experience' (38 per cent) and lack of hard and soft skills such as 'the right qualifications' (24 per cent), 'a positive attitude' (16 per cent), and 'confidence' (16 per cent) are mentioned most often by employers as barriers to recruiting offenders (CfBT, 2011).

2. Offenders may have psychological problems, including drug abuse, which make keeping a job difficult (May, 1999; Gendreau and Ross, 1980). Given the wide range of other social and personal problems offenders face, employment interventions alone are unlikely to succeed (Webster et al, 2001).
3. Living circumstances, in particular insecure housing and living in areas of high unemployment can act as a barrier both to gaining work and keeping it (Nelson et al, 1999; Webster et al 2001).
4. Employers are reluctant to hire people with a criminal record (NACRO, 1997; Hamlyn, 2000; Haslewood-Pocsik et al, 2008; Metcalf et al, 2001). Employers' most common concern was the possible risk to customers and to other staff posed by an ex-offender. Employers also expressed concerns about trustworthiness, and some employers raised issues about dependability and reliability (Haslewood-Pocsik et al, 2008; Metcalf et al 2001). Metcalf et al also found that decisions on the recruitment of ex-offenders can be based purely on judgments made on the nature of the individuals past offence(s) rather than their current risk, or their capacity to do the job. They suggest that employers simply discriminated against ex-offenders and paid little regard to their ability to do the job.

This also creates a law of anticipated reaction. Many ex-offenders expect potential employers to react negatively to their record, fearing that they would re-offend or would be untrustworthy. This deterred some from applying for jobs, while others applied for less senior positions than they were qualified for or only applied for vacancies they thought would be difficult for the employer to fill (Metcalf, 2001).

Arguably surveys of employer willingness to recruit ex-offenders present an overly optimistic view, since there is evidence of a real gap between what employers say and how they behave in practice (Pager and Quillan 2005).

Given current labour market conditions this is not a good time for anyone to be seeking work especially in the low skilled, manual and construction sectors which have traditionally been a significant source of jobs for ex-offenders. Ironically, the recession may actually support the desistance efforts of some offenders by adjusting the value they place on employment. Ex-offenders may assign greater value to education and training than they did during more prosperous economic times because of the collectively understood shortage of employment opportunities. This means that offender engagement with training and employment opportunities may increase as the supply decreases (Owen, 2009).

3. What employers want

According to the CfBT/YouGov survey (CfBT, 2011), the reasons employers give for having hired an ex-offender in the past commonly relate to their skills and attributes ('most appropriate candidate' 43 per cent; 'they filled a skills gap' 20 per cent; 'more likely to be hard working' 8 per cent).

There is also a sense of social responsibility with nearly a third (32 per cent) answering that the applicant deserved a second chance. Larger organisations are more likely to mention the positive impact hiring ex-offenders have on their corporate social reputation (14 per cent compared with 7 per cent of medium-sized organisations and just 3 per cent of small organisations).

Employer experiences of employing ex-offenders are almost always positive (Cosegrave and O'Neil, 2011) and employers become more positive towards ex-offenders if they have made efforts to improve their level of education and skills whilst in prison and on parole (Albright and Denq, 1996). One-third (33%) of employers consider that prison education makes ex-offenders more employable (CfBT, 2011). Employers wanted to understand more about the offender: what happened to them in prison, how had they progressed, what had they learned? Employers may also want to see more than a generic Record of Achievement, documenting the rehabilitative journey during sentence through personal statements and character appraisals from tutors, personal officers, mentors and other professionals. They also want help managing risk through, for example, mentors or work buddies and a telephone helpline (Haslewood-Pocsik et al, 2008).

Research findings suggest that generic skills relating to self-efficacy are of more immediate value to offenders and ex-offenders than job-specific skills partly because these are what many lack but also because their transferability between occupations improves an individual's resilience and versatility within a volatile labour market (CfBT, 2011; Fabiano et al., 1996; Metcalfe et al, 2001). Amongst the generic skills sought by employers, basic attributes such as literacy and reliability are likely to be an entrance factor for the consideration of ex-offenders by a growing percentage of employers (Metcalfe, 2001). In the CfBT/YouGov employer survey nearly half of respondents (49%) mentioned soft skills such as communication, appearance, attitude and time keeping. Personal skills such as 'a positive attitude' (44 per cent), communication skills (37 per cent), and reliability (34 per cent) are highlighted as the type of skills or attributes applicants most need to demonstrate to prospective employers. Indeed, a positive attitude is deemed as important as having the technical skills to do the job (44 per cent compared with 43 per cent).

However these qualities may not be sufficient to secure employment. There is increasing emphasis on thinking and learning skills, personal management skills (such as responsibility and adaptability) and teamwork skills such as shared responsibility, co-operation and joint problem solving (Fabiano et al., 1996). Haslewood-Pocsik et al (2008) suggest that employers want people with clear basic skills, but more importantly they wanted people with the social skills to work in a team. Such skills are transferable, increasing a prospective employee's adaptability and resilience within an organisation as well as their employability in the wider labour market, even in quite different occupations.

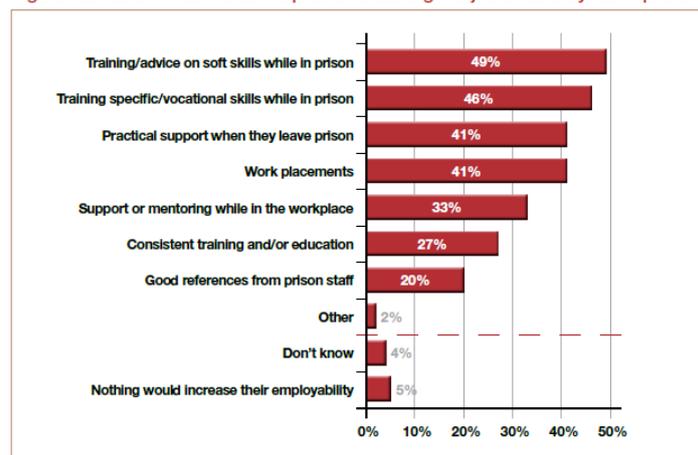
4. Which types of intervention work?

Employment interventions work

The results of an in-depth review (Hurry, Brazier, Parker and Wilson, 2006) suggest that those interventions which target employment directly significantly improve the employment rates of offenders. This includes working and receiving vocational support/training in prison as well as community employment programmes which start for the offender before release and bridge the gap into the community, though the latter can only be described as ‘promising’ because of the shortage of studies. Further evidence that participation in some work-related activities during custody can benefit prisoners can be found in Lipsey’s (1995) meta-analysis of nearly 400 studies of juvenile offender programmes which demonstrated that employment-focused prison programmes had a greater impact on recidivism than other types of intervention. Offenders themselves consider that assistance in getting into employment is critical in helping them stop re-offending (Gillis et al, 1996).

Employers agree (CfBT, 2011) that work experience would increase their confidence in employing an ex-offender whether that be through a work experience trial (46 per cent positive response) or through voluntary work (32 per cent). Furthermore ‘support from the government/probation service’ and ‘guidance on risk assessments/safeguards’ are cited in equal measure by employers with and without experience of employing ex-offenders (27 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).

Figure 12: Factors that would help ex-offenders get a job once they leave prison



Base: All employers n=1051

Source: CfBT (2011)

In their study of the Post- Release Employment Project (PREP), Saylor and Gaes (1997) evaluated the impact of prison work and vocational and apprenticeship training on post-prison rates of employment and offending. The study attempted to control for selection bias by using a propensity score matching procedure. A comparison group of subjects were matched to the study group on the basis of factors predictive of participation in the scheme and a range of demographic and background variables.

The study group was 35 per cent less likely than the comparison group to violate the terms of their supervision or to be re-arrested during the first 12 months after release. During the same period, the study group was 14 per cent more likely to be employed.

Longer-term outcomes (between 8 and 12 years after release) showed that those who had undertaken prison work or had participated in vocational or apprenticeship training were less likely to have returned to prison.

Community programmes: the evidence is mixed

Suggestions that community-based programmes may be more effective than those that are prison based can be found in the literature, though there is a significant lack of comprehensive evidence (especially due to methodological issues and a lack of randomised control trials (Harper and Chitty) Others argue that community programmes are less effective because drop-out rates are higher (Hurry et al, 2006). There are a number of studies which show that offenders in the community may refuse to attend programmes or drop out fairly quickly, suggesting that a primary objective must be to understand what will motivate participants and tailor programmes to reflect their needs and circumstances (Bushway and Reuter, 1997).

Although the Probation Service in England and Wales has had a long history of employment-related work, there is little evidence of effectiveness with few published evaluations of probation-led initiatives and even fewer high quality evaluations. There is also little evidence of systematic targeting according to need. Thus there is no evidence of greater provision for unemployed probationers, suggesting that this might be due to sequencing other interventions before employment work (Harper and Chitty, 2005).

Niven and Olagundoye (2002) show that the likelihood of a prisoner finding employment on release is often tied in with other factors such as having stable accommodation, having qualifications, not having a drug problem and receiving help and advice with finding work. It is much harder to deal with the employment and training needs for an offender who is homeless or who has an untreated substance misuse problem (Webster et al, 2001). It is therefore increasingly evident that interventions aimed at reducing re-offending should address as many potential barriers as possible (McGuire, 1995). Integrated programmes are required which address personal development, accommodation and substance misuse needs as well as training and employment issues. The core principles which have influenced probation policy and practice in recent years and which might be incorporated into such integrated programmes can be identified as: matching interventions to level of risk; targeting needs that are most directly related to offending; drawing on cognitive-behavioural methods; tailoring interventions to motivation, learning style and the abilities and strengths of the offender; addressing multiple problems in a co-ordinated way through multi-agency partnership; and ensuring that programmes are delivered as designed (Vennard and Hedderman, 2009).

As Bouffard et al (2000) point out, this makes it difficult to determine what aspects of interventions are responsible for positive outcomes, and the uncertainty of these inter-relationships casts doubt on the role of employment programmes. Webster et al (2001) agree that even when a programme is successful it is usually not possible to say which element, or combination of interventions, has made the difference. This is partly down to poor documentation but it also reflects the fact that employment programmes rarely follow evidence-based principles. In particular they do not adhere to a particular design and there is too much variation in what different offenders receive. Moreover help is rarely targeted at those at higher risk of offending although there is some evidence to suggest that, as with other interventions, these are the ones who benefit most.

Targeting the development of appropriate skills is essential

As we have suggested above, research evidence indicates that generic skills relating to self-efficacy are of more immediate value to offenders and ex-offenders in the labour market than job-specific skills (CfBT, 2011; Fabiano et al., 1996; Metcalfe et al, 2001). Research by Hamlyn and Lewis (2000) focusing on female prisoners' work and training during and after custody found little relationship between the vocational work experience and skills developed in prison and the jobs obtained by offenders after their release. Any new vocational skills acquired in prison were generally not found by respondents to be transferable to the outside workplace (Webster et al, 2001). Raising job expectations through training without any serious prospect of a job on release may be actively damaging rather than just ineffective. Arguably work experience and training should be carefully targeted at local labour market demand (Webster et al, 2001), at areas of employment growth such as the green sector (Owens, 2009; Forest Research 2008) and, as we have suggested above, at transferable self-efficacy skills.

Advisors often see the achievement of sustainable employment as a very long term goal, particularly when there are wider social problems present, and perceive their role principally in terms of moving offenders towards job-readiness rather than directly into jobs. Linking funding to achieving targets can be an effective way of managing performance, but unless targets are realistic and reflect progression towards employment they can have unintended consequences. Advisors may tend to concentrate their resources on offenders who were most likely to find work rather than the least 'job-ready'. By the same token, they were discouraged from putting effort into improving the qualifications, vocational and 'soft' skills that for many offenders are essential bridges to sustainable employment. The exclusion from targets of training outcomes will also place providers under pressure to secure jobs for offenders regardless of their motivation, skills and job-readiness. In the longer term this is likely to be counter-productive. In short, employment targets on their own do not give credit for 'soft outcomes', steps taken on the way towards employment such as improvements in skills, self-confidence and the motivation to find work (McSweeney and Hough, 2006; Vennard and Hedderman, 2009). Intervention in Canada takes a more direct approach to ensuring that programmes for offenders target the employability skills that reflect the needs of real-world employers (Fabiano et al, 1996). The Conference Board of Canada compiled an Employability Skills Profile based on the critical skills required in the Canadian workforce including academic, personal management and teamwork skills. The need for a 'balanced scorecard' of outcomes will form an important dimension in our discussion of how *The Green Employability Project* can add value to existing activities (section 4 below).

There is little literature on how self-efficacy skills and "desistance" can be built through work experience in a prison or probation context, but we can draw on a wider body of research on the relationship between task design, work-based learning and engagement. Work experience can offer an important means of building these generic skills, but only when tasks are designed in such a way that enables participants to develop and use them in practical settings. Likewise poorly designed jobs can deskill and demotivate those exposed to them.

Hacker, a German psychologist, argues that work tasks need to be "complete" and form an integrated whole if they are to provide the basis for intrinsically rewarding jobs, learning and employee wellbeing:

1. The task must comprise a coherent combination of preparation, organisation, control, correction and communication. Feedback is also important.
2. The task should demand different levels of cognitive or mental effort at defined intervals (thinking before execution, thinking during execution, routine actions).

A task can be regarded as complete only if it meets both these criteria. Hacker's research shows that incomplete tasks result in low levels of wellbeing, poor mental health, low job satisfaction and lack of motivation as a consequence of stress and insufficient learning opportunities. Job design should therefore seek to achieve "complete" jobs both in the interests of employees and for the performance of their organisations (Hacker, Iwanowa and Richter, 1983).

Karasek and Hacker offer important insights into the evaluation and improvement of job design (Karasek and Theorell, 1991; Hacker, Iwanowa and Richter, 1983). In countries such as Denmark and The Netherlands, job quality as a means of promoting learning and well-being has been an important part of legislation since at least the early 1990s. Job design has therefore achieved a much higher profile than in the UK. For example TNO (the Dutch national research organisation) developed the *WEBA Model* from the work of Karasek and Hacker as a practical resource to help practitioners introduce better job design (Dhondt and Vaas, 2001). This body of literature will be of particular value to *The Green Employability Project* in ensuring that work experience focuses on enhancing the skills associated with sustainable employment.

5. Working in partnership

Social innovation as a European policy paradigm

Recent experience from Europe and the USA points to the emergence of a new mode of policy intervention characterised by continuous innovation, entrepreneurial behaviour and partnership between diverse public and private actors with particular emphasis improved delivery to "hard to reach" social groups and on both cost containment. This new mode of policy is characterised as *social innovation*. Social innovations are seen as innovations that are social in both their ends and their means:

"Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act. The *process of social interactions* between individuals undertaken to reach certain outcomes is participative, involves a number of actors and stakeholders who have a vested interest in solving a social problem, and empowers the beneficiaries. It is in itself an outcome as it produces social capital" (BEPa, 2010).

Social welfare in the twentieth century was dominated by bureaucratic and programmatic modes of policy intervention. Bureaucratic procedures were designed to ensure consistent and transparent decision rules in resource allocation, and were adequate in addressing well-understood and relatively stable policy arenas. In the post-war era increasing awareness of the complexity of policy issues such as multiple deprivation or labour market exclusion was matched by the development of new and more technocratic models of public management. From the 1960s onwards this was reflected in the increasing dominance of programmatic policy interventions, often problem-driven with a defined

timescale and governed by measurable performance targets. Governments of all political colours throughout enthusiastically adopted programmatic interventions in labour market policy, health care, urban renewal, crime prevention and a host of other policy arenas. This trend reached its climax in the UK through the dominance of centrally-driven targets that infused every area of public life since the mid-1990s. Latterly, especially in countries such as the UK and The Netherlands, the emergence of the New Public Management paradigm led to the separation of public service commissioning from service provision; this allowed private firms and the not-for-profit sector to compete for service provision contracts against traditional state providers but critically within a framework in which delivery is micro-managed by government through detailed target setting and external audit in an attempt to secure accountability and cost effectiveness. Such outsourcing of service delivery permeates wide areas of public provision from homecare to job seeking guidance, arguably (though contestably) deploying a wider breadth of experience and management skills than would be available within state organisations alone. Yet while such approaches to public policy intervention are effective in focusing resources on clearly defined targets they are widely criticised for oversimplifying complex problems, inhibiting creativity and creating perverse incentives to ensure compliance with targets at any cost (Hunter, 2003; Wanless, 2004; Totterdill et al., 2010).

Social innovation is seen by its advocates as a means of overcoming these limitations, suggesting radical potential for the emergence of different models of intervention and provision. While the state has a unique role to play in ensuring for example equality of access, quality of provision, cost effectiveness and accountability, complex socio-economic problems may often respond more effectively to diverse but overlapping forms of intervention and provision characterised by entrepreneurial behaviours, innovation and the ability to respond flexibly to individual needs. Unlike the blanket, universalist provision which often characterises state programmatic intervention, such diversity can enable provision to be tailored to the needs of different client groups. This focus on innovation to meet needs in a more creative way is distinct from the simple privatisation of services previously instigated by public agencies; rather it attempts to support social entrepreneurs in building local initiatives and new ideas. Given a firm grounding within local communities, such initiatives may have more chance of becoming effective than standardised public services.

In this sense social innovation grows from 'organisational density' in the policy environment combined with high trust relationships, knowledge sharing and open dialogue. The concept of organisational density suggests that most social problems cannot be tackled from one angle only; multiple approaches are needed to solve such complex and diversified social problems, hence the need for social innovation. This is therefore a qualitatively enhanced approach from simple competitive tendering based on service level agreements. Consequentially it also requires radically different ways of working and different competencies from those which have traditionally characterised public agencies (Exton, 2010).

Social enterprise: a new actor in offender employability

Social enterprises in this context should be characterised as organisations whose principal aim is to meet specific social needs, often with the active engagement of charitable and voluntary organisations, rather than to generate profit. The European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) defines a social enterprise as an organisation that focuses on achieving social impact, applying market-based solutions to address public sector and market failure in innovative ways (Smit et al., 2011).In

the UK, government is actively promoting employee owned social enterprise as a means of breaking the monopoly of state provision in certain sectors. Social enterprises are therefore distinct from mainstream private sector providers, many of which are multinational. Although this distinction cannot always be found in, for example, US literature or policy dialogue on social enterprise, it remains important in a European context (BEPA, 2010).

Social enterprises work on the principles of mutualism and participation and, its advocates argue, motivate staff by giving them a more direct voice in running their organisation. This often improves the quality of a service because those who know the users best (those working on the frontline) have a say in how a service is run. This approach also reduces costs: organisations with highly motivated and empowered employees have reduced absentee rates and a lower turnover of staff. Committed and appreciated staff members very often work to create a better experience for the service-user (Social Enterprise UK, 2012). It is further claimed that social enterprises often have the ability to develop services that better meet the needs of certain groups of society, such as those who are hard to reach, or would benefit from a high level of trust between provider and user. Many social enterprises are well versed at engaging with and building trust with people from disadvantaged or excluded communities, to help them reach their potential, often by involving both service users and staff members in managing and developing services, creating better relationships between them.

Some researchers are enthusiastic about the potential of social enterprise to “complement other rehabilitative interventions delivered by criminal justice agencies not only by providing valuable work experience and routes into employment, but can empower individuals to address their offending behaviour by restoring self-esteem and offering a renewed sense of purpose” (Graham, 2010). However until social enterprises secure the trust and confidence of prison and probation personnel, manage the complex partnership working arrangements involved and, above all, demonstrate their impact on reoffending through a commitment to evaluation, they will struggle to achieve a more prominent profile (Cosgrove and O’Neil, 2011).

Partnership is more than outsourcing

Building collaborative advantage is a key *The Green Employability Project* objective. According to Mullett (2001) there are many good reasons for partnership working to reduce crime:

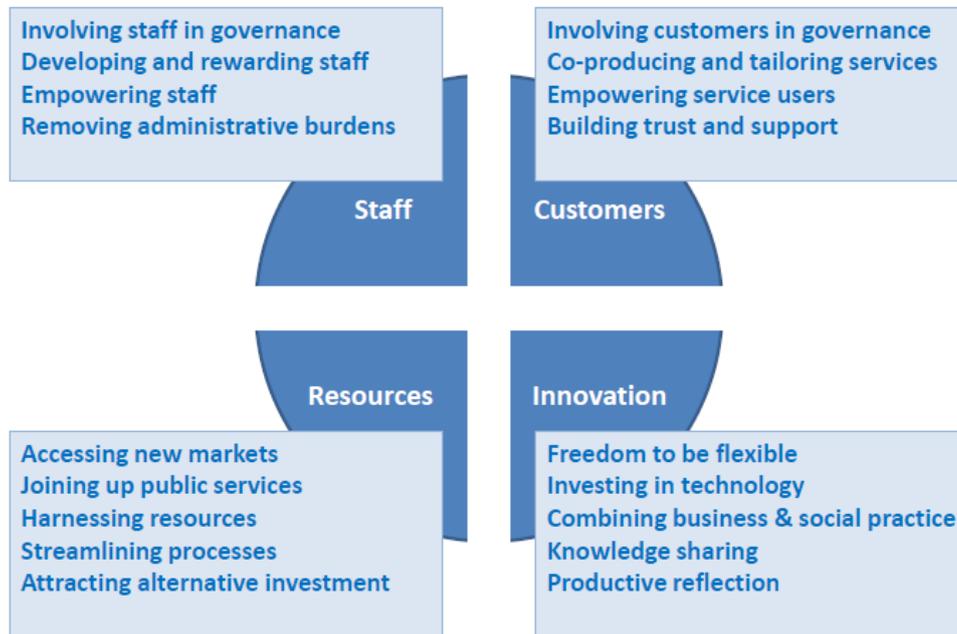
- It avoids unnecessary duplication, confusion and waste of resources.
- Partner agencies will consider the impact of their policies and actions through peer review and comparison.
- The more agencies that are involved, the greater the potential impact.
- Pooling resources maximises their effectiveness and efficiency providing the most cost effective service provision.
- It provides opportunities for sharing expertise and learning from others.

No single agency can have expertise in every area of work that the partnership is involved in. Bringing together a range of agencies enables each agency to concentrate on its strengths and should ensure that a depth of knowledge and experience is brought to bear on all areas of the partnership’s activities.

The potential value of partnership-based approaches can be represented in the following terms:

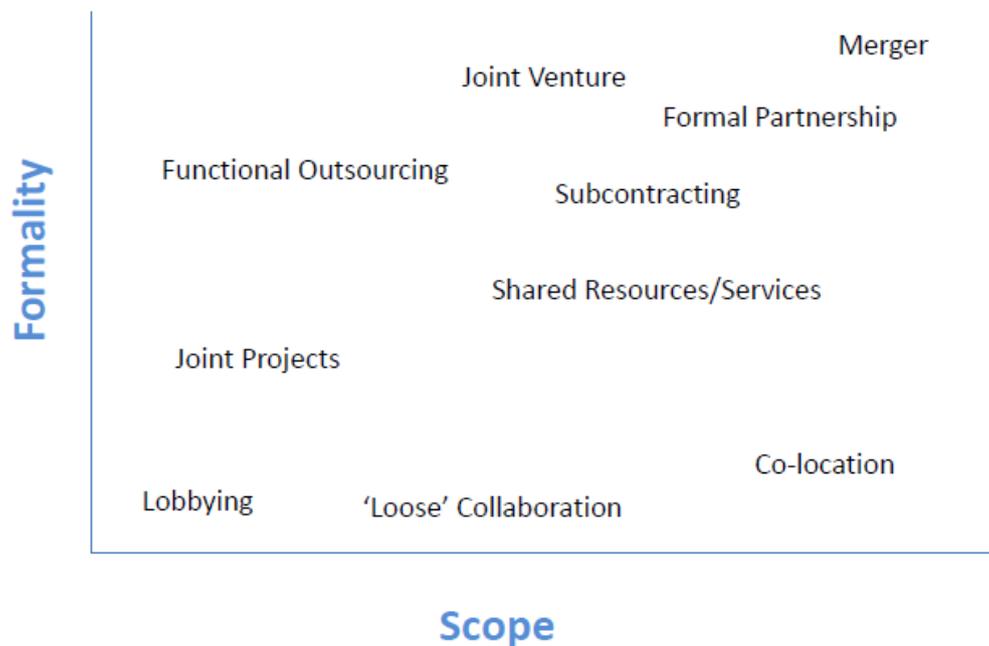
Partnership and service improvement

Adapted from *The Social Enterprise Guide for People in Local Government*, Social Enterprise UK (2012)



However there is no one model of partnership. Its precise character in any given setting is highly contextual and can take diverse forms:

Forms of partnership



An overview and analysis of the broader literature on inter-organisational partnerships in social policy provision suggests the need to make clear distinctions between outsourcing, commissioning and

partnership (Callaghan et al, 2000; Hardy et al 1992; Hills, 2012; Hudson et al, 1997; Hudson and Hardy, 2002; Huxham and MacDonald, 1992; Kenmore, 2011; MacGregor, 2007; Mattesisch and Monsey, 1992; Ray, Hudson, Campbell-Barr and Shutes, 2008; Social Enterprise UK, 2012). Outsourcing and commissioning established through competitive tendering and service level agreements are, on their own, no more than short-term contractual relationships based on delivery and monitoring of specific targets by the respective parties. 'Partnership' indicates a qualitatively different relationship, one in which immediate targets are achieved through mutual reciprocity and as a by-product of collaborative working towards longer-term goals. Partnership-based relationships:

1. *Are strategic, not transactional.*
2. *Represent convergence between partners' strategic goals.*
3. *Build capacity within the social enterprise/third sector.*
4. *Are grounded in wide-ranging and visionary dialogue between partners.*
5. *Are characterised by deepening appreciation of each partner's competence and contribution.*
6. *Demonstrate inter-organisational teamworking involving staff at all levels in the partner organisations including trust, active co-operation and reduced demarcations.*
7. *Work towards open and unconstrained knowledge sharing.*
8. *Embed regular spaces for productive reflection and feedback by partners, leading to collaborative improvement and innovation.*

In practice public procurement requirements tend to undermine partnership because of short-term horizons, staff insecurity leading to mistrust, restrictions on knowledge sharing resulting from commercial considerations, and the failure to include intangibles such as shared learning and continuous improvement as 'deliverables'. The Probation Service itself faces an uncertain future as a provider of employment support given the current government's intention to introduce a system of competitive tendering, presently awaiting the outcomes of a Review.

Nonetheless partnership lies at the heart of *The Green Employability Project* and assurance of its sustainability is an important PARES outcome. These seven attributes therefore offer important indicators for the development of the *The Green Employability Project* coalition.

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ANNEXE II



THE GREEN EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT JOB QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This is a practical tool designed to help project partners deliver work experience which provides offenders with the transferable skills and competencies most valued in the labour market.

In particular it is designed to:

- assess the quality of jobs provided within work experience placements against evidence-based standards;
- identify examples of good practice in job design that can be used to inspire and inform other work experience providers;
- stimulate improvement and innovation in the quality of work placements.

Why does job design matter to *The Green Employability Project*?

The way in which jobs are designed is a major determinant of quality of working life, wellbeing, motivation, learning and employability. Narrowly focused and rigidly specialised jobs distance workers from the whole product or service, minimising interaction with colleagues, limiting the individual's responsibility for quality and reducing their ability to resolve and learn from problems.

In contrast, enhancing the scope of jobs can lead to increased satisfaction and motivation. It also builds the transferable skills and confidence that enhance an individual's versatility and resilience, as well as their employability in the wider labour market.

Whilst work experience is in itself a particularly important dimension of employability, it is unlikely to be sufficient in the current labour market. ***It is therefore particularly important for The Green Employability Project to focus on those aspects of work experience that develop skills placed at a premium by prospective employers.***

Research suggests that thinking and learning skills, personal management skills (such as responsibility and adaptability) and teamwork skills (such as self-organisation, co-operation and joint problem solving) are of more immediate value to offenders and ex-offenders in the labour market than job-specific skills. Such skills are transferable, increasing adaptability and resilience within a job as well as their employability in the wider labour market.

JOB QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The following questions focus on the characteristics⁵ of job design that lead to the development of employability skills in work experience placements.

Please answer the following questions relating to the work experience jobs currently being undertaken by offenders. Where relevant please give as much detail as possible (expand the text boxes as necessary). In particular:

- *Can you identify examples of good practice?*
- *Are there ways in which work experience jobs can be improved in terms of these criteria?*

If questions are not relevant in the context of work place which you provide please say why – this will help us to refine the questionnaire for future use.

Name of work placement:

1. Is the job a complete job?

A job is occupationally complete if it contains a logical and coherent sequence of preparatory, executive and supportive tasks, offering clear opportunities for planning, problem solving, learning and self-regulation.

Are participants involved in planning their tasks? If so how?

Are participants involved in preparatory tasks such as machine setting and ensuring the supply of components? Please describe.

Do participants have responsibility for fetching, checking the quality and preparing materials?

⁵ For the evidence see the *The Green Employability Project Working Paper “Task Design for The Green Employability Project”* (UKWON, 2012).

Do participants have as much control over how the task is performed as possible?

Do participants keep their own record of what is produced, stocks used and problems encountered?

Do participants have responsibility for organising their immediate work environment and keeping it tidy?

Are participants helped to undertake support tasks such as routine care and maintenance for tools and equipment?

2. Collaborative planning and problem solving

Participants should be able to assume responsibility for day-to-day decisions about planning and work methods through co-operation and communication with others. Regular opportunities should exist for problem solving through horizontal contact with peers.

Does the job provide opportunities for the whole group to analyse and plan the production of the complete product?

Do participants understand how their own task relates to the production process as a whole?

Are participants encouraged to share problems and knowledge with each other?

Is the whole team given responsibility for ensuring and improving quality?

Does the whole group have opportunities for to reflect on what is going well and to contribute ideas for improvement?

3. Work cycles

Task cycle times which are short offer limited possibilities for autonomy and can induce stress, boredom and repetitive strain injury.

Team-based production systems in which all participants are responsible for several overlapping tasks are generally more efficient than traditional production lines where each worker is confined to one workstation. Crucially they also enhance the participant's co-operation, communication and problem-solving skills.

When work consists solely of simple tasks, opportunities for learning are limited. However work can be excessively difficult if its execution requires frequent pauses to consider methods.

Are tasks repeated at intervals of ten minutes or less? Are work cycles less than 1.5 minutes?

Are work cycles designed in ways that enable participants to move between work stations at regular intervals so that they undertake two or more tasks, ideally involving co-operation with others?

Is the level of stress, fatigue or recuperation associated with each part of the cycle balanced out across the cycle as a whole?

4. Ensure a coaching style of supervision

Styles of supervision have a major impact on any worker’s motivation and engagement as well as their willingness or ability to learn. “Command and control” supervision can sometimes ensure compliance but rarely achieves engagement or the acquisition of self-efficacy skills.

A coaching approach to supervision should help a new participant to gain earned autonomy and trust through experience, learning and reflection.

Please score and comment on the following aspects of supervisory practice.

Do Supervisors:	
Recognise that poor motivation and performance are often the result of low self-esteem and confidence?	Always 1 2 3 4 5 Never
Celebrate achievement?	Always 1 2 3 4 5 Never
Avoid blame when things go wrong (especially in front of others) and focus on learning from mistakes?	Always 1 2 3 4 5 Never
Ensure regular opportunities for participants, individually and in teams, to reflect and learn from their experiences.	Always 1 2 3 4 5 Never
Receive training in the people aspects of supervisions?	Always 1 2 3 4 5 Never

THANK YOU!

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