

- 1 - What institutional barriers do you face in your country which limits prisoners' involvement in education?**
- 2 - What promising/inspiring practices/projects exist in your country to motivate and support prisoners into education?**

SCOTLAND

1.

There are a number of institutional barriers that prisoners face in Scottish prisons which can limit involvement in education. A number of key factors are outlined below:

- On the whole, pay is still less than many other work parties for full-time education when compared with other work parties.
- Digital exclusion is an ongoing issue. Whilst we provide as many opportunities for prison learners to access digital learning as possible, prisoners still have no access to the internet. There is also still a shortage of IT equipment available for use out with education department. This can make advanced education, such as Open University degrees, more difficult.
- Prisoner movement, work commitments, unscheduled appointments, and understaffing can all limit unfettered access to education. In some areas capacity means that waiting lists are a necessity.
- Finally, education provision undergoes contract revisions every five years, which means that services are subject to a degree of discontinuity and a period of change for prisoners. This can have an unintended impact on motivation where services are discontinued due to provision.

2.

In Scottish prisons, education is provided by fully trained learning professionals, serviced by FE colleges. The provision in all centres is a blend of formal, non-formal and informal opportunities.

Notable examples of promising practice which can increase motivation include:

- Well-established university partnerships have been set up where departments of various universities around Scotland work alongside prison learning staff to deliver academic reading groups, science experiments, and a series of arts and culture workshops.
- In addition to the main provision, the learning centres offer an Open learning programme, for which a prisoner can apply for funding to the prison Higher Education Access Board (HEAB). This ranges from professional accreditation, through official SQA qualifications, to degree-level study – all offered through supported distance-learning.
- There are also many arts-based projects and visiting artists. The prison magazine – STIR (stirmagazine.org) – is a multi award-winning arts magazine, designed, written and produced by prisoners, for prisoners. The editorial group is based at HMP Shotts (where it runs as a Creative work party) and creative work and editorial content is submitted by prisoners from all prison learning centres. In addition to this, visiting artists and groups are commonplace within prisons, which provides a wealth of informal learning opportunities for prison learners.
- There is a growing number of e-learning courses being made available offline to support prisoners education and help their digital and technological competences.