

### The SMART Company

The SMART Company specialises in corporate responsibility, community involvement and related public policy issues.

### The Smith Institute

The Smith Institute is an independent think tank that has been set up to look at issues which flow from the changing relationship between social values and economic imperatives.

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# CSR in action:

a review of the Young  
Offenders Programme led  
by National Grid Transco

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By The SMART Company

National Grid Transco



2005

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## Preface

Wilf Stevenson, Director of the Smith Institute

The Smith Institute is an independent think tank, which has been set up to undertake research and education in issues that flow from the changing relationship between social values and economic imperatives. In recent years the institute has centred its work on the policy implications arising from the interactions of equality, enterprise and equity.

One strand of the Smith Institute's recent work has focused on the interplay between the economic benefits of competition and enterprise, and the limits of markets in delivering fair and equitable economic and social outcomes. Core to this, and crucial to the government's aims of increasing productivity and providing opportunity for all, will be the development of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda. Although not new – in the 19th century William Lever and Joseph Rowntree began to consider the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the communities where their employees lived – we have, in recent years, undergone a sea change in thinking about the responsibilities of companies. Today, the CSR agenda is moving well beyond how companies give money away, to central questions of how companies can take a social lead and fulfil their role as corporate citizens.

At present more than 11,000 under-21-year-olds are in prison, at a cost to the taxpayer of £340 million. Over 70% reoffend within a year of their release. National Grid Transco has developed a unique scheme to train and employ young offenders as gas network operatives, and has pioneered business involvement in the rehabilitation of offenders which meets both a business and social need. To date, National Grid Transco has trained more than 140 former offenders. A further 100 will have completed training and be in jobs by the end of 2005. The reoffending rate is currently only 7%.

The Smith Institute is pleased to be publishing this review of National Grid Transco's young offenders programme, which has been prepared by The SMART Company. We hope that this excellent case study will contribute to the ongoing debate about the role that business can play in promoting public interest goals.

## Foreword

Stephen Timms MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury

The best initiatives in corporate social responsibility are those that deliver positive effects for everyone involved. The initial impulse may be commercial, but the benefits extend deep into the broader community in which the company operates.

I have enjoyed opportunities to see for myself numerous examples of superb initiatives – not least as minister for CSR at the Department for Trade & Industry from 2002 to 2004 – and I have no hesitation in commending the National Grid Transco initiative as one of the best examples we have. As this report shows, everyone involved is benefiting. NGT and its contractors are recruiting much-needed entrants to their workforce; prisons are being drawn closer into their communities; and above all the young participants are getting a new start through a secure job with good prospects, in many cases for the first time in their lives. It is an opportunity that can transform the outlook for their future.

Now the scheme is up and running it looks so obvious and simple. However, it took real foresight on the part of NGT and the many partners involved to get started and make it work. One of the most attractive benefits of CSR is that bringing together partners from different sectors, often with no past experience of working together at all, sparks innovation and new approaches to intractable problems, resulting in real progress in addressing social issues.

One of the things that we in government can do is to draw attention to outstanding examples of corporate social responsibility and encourage others to emulate them. I have often spoken of the NGT programme and other schemes to do just that.

I warmly welcome this report, which shares the lessons of the NGT programme with a wider audience, and I hope the message of what has been achieved will inspire others to develop equally impressive initiatives in the future.

## Introduction

Dr Mary Harris, Director, National Grid Transco, Young Offenders Programme

National Grid Transco's involvement with the training and resettlement of young offenders began in 1998 with a visit to Reading prison. This visit inspired the company to initiate, in partnership with the Kennet young offenders' resettlement wing of Reading prison and the Reading probation service, a scheme to train young offenders from Reading for jobs as forklift truck drivers.

The aim of this initial pilot was to cut reoffending rates (estimated by the Home Office to be 70%) and also to meet an identified high skills shortage of forklift truck drivers around the M4 corridor, caused by sudden growth in the warehousing/distribution sector that arose largely from the increased popularity of internet shopping. This project proved to be very successful. Seventy percent of participants subsequently found sustainable employment and only around 7% of participants were subsequently reported as reoffending.

The success of this pilot scheme turned the company's thoughts to its own industry. In 2002, the company established a second project, in partnership with Reading prison, Transco and Transco's major contractors, to train and employ selected young offenders in the initial competencies for work as gas distribution technicians.

Like its predecessor, this project had the dual purpose of cutting reoffending rates and, at the same time, plugging an identified skills gap in an industry short of skilled and semiskilled labour.

For the 13-week course; prisoners are selected for training in the final stages of their rehabilitation and are trained within the prison for the theoretical parts of the course. A secure location is provided by Transco for the practical elements of the programme. This programme is unique in prisoner rehabilitation programmes, as successful completion of the course leads to guaranteed employment within National Grid Transco's supply chain. The reoffending rate remains constant at 7%.

National Grid Transco believes that the success of the programme is down to:

- the identification of a skills shortage in a local area;
- the establishment of a public-private partnership between the company and the young offenders institutions;

- strong business leadership and effective utilisation of the supply chain – that is, the identification of how each component of the supply chain can most effectively contribute to the initiative, such as through the provision of training, work placement or, most importantly, the offering of employment.

In his 2003 budget statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the government was so impressed with the effectiveness of the National Grid Transco scheme that it was keen to expand the programme to other industrial sectors nationwide, under the leadership of Sir John Parker, National Grid Transco's chairman.

To this end, Sir John, James Ross, and I held a series of briefing events to inform and engage companies with large supply chains. As a result, the National Grid Transco model is being rolled out across five industry sectors and a number of companies are now using this model to select, train and successfully employ offenders. These companies include: AMEC, AssetCo, AWG, Exel, Balfour Beatty, Morrisons, Murphy Group, RMC and Wessex Water. From its base at Reading prison, the programme has now expanded to include 15 prisons throughout the UK. Discussions are continuing with other prisons, with a view to further expansion in 2005.

# Research

The SMART Company specialises in corporate responsibility, community involvement and related public policy issues

## Introduction to the research

An initial review of National Grid Transco's Young Offenders Programme demonstrated that reoffending rates among individuals who had successfully completed the training were dramatically lower than the average reoffending figures shown in Home Office research (7%, compared with over 70%). As a reflection of this success, the Chancellor in his 2003 budget speech asked the chairman of National Grid Transco, Sir John Parker, to lead the expansion of the programme across all industry sectors in the UK. The programme has now completed its pilot phase, and as a result NGT commissioned The SMART Company to carry out a more detailed, independent review of the programme, looking at its benefits, the reasons for its success, and the lessons that can be learned.

The review undertaken by SMART was a qualitative one, using face-to-face interviews with representatives from NGT, contractors, young offenders institutions and programme participants. The intention was to get from those involved a feel for why this particular programme has engaged such a wide range of support and what involvement has meant for all partners.

The research was guided by three key questions:

- What are the characteristics of the scheme that have enabled it to be a success both in terms of addressing reoffending and in meeting the objectives of key partners?
- What is the particular contribution that business makes to the programme?
- What lessons can be drawn from the programme and applied more widely to corporate social responsibility programmes?

A programme such as this clearly has implications for a whole range of issues, from the services provided by young offenders institutions to more general themes around training, education and employment. While some of these themes will be touched on during the course of the discussion, the main focus of the study is on the implications for business, particularly in the context of corporate social responsibility. A desire to develop a strategic CSR programme with demonstrable impact provided the foundations for the programme, and it is to this agenda that we feel the research is best placed to make a contribution.

### Methodology

The findings in this paper are based on literature review and face-to-face interviews with programme partners. The review was undertaken between November 2004 and January 2005.

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## Interviews

Stakeholder groups	Details
Business	National Grid Transco Balfour Beatty Murphy Pipelines Morrison Utility Services
Participants	3 x former young offenders 1 x former adult offender
Prisons	Glen Parva young offenders institution Wymott prison Reading young offenders institution
Other	Stephen Timms MP

## The National Grid Transco Young Offenders Programme

### Context

Youth offending is an issue placed high on the public agenda, and for good reason. There are more than 11,000 under 21-year-olds in prison and research shows that a majority of these individuals will offend more than once. Of those prisoners aged between 18 and 20 released in 1997, 72% were reconvicted within two years, of whom 47% received another prison sentence.<sup>1</sup>

Unemployment has been highlighted by the Social Exclusion Unit as one of nine risk factors that increase the likelihood of a young person reoffending – individuals were found to be up to twice as likely to reoffend if they did not have a job. Other research has found that getting a job was the single most important factor in preventing reoffending – reducing the need to offend by providing financial support and giving structure and stability to the individual's life. The implications of this become clear in the light of the following statistics:

- Over two-thirds of prisoners are unemployed leading up to their imprisonment.<sup>2</sup>
- Of those that have a job, two-thirds will lose it while in prison.<sup>3</sup>
- Three-quarters leave with no job to go to.<sup>4</sup>

While there are many complex factors that contribute to offending and reoffending, employment is one key area that has been shown to make a difference; and something that proves a challenge to many ex-offenders.

*"There's a gap at that age. The type of jobs you can get only pay about £65 a week or something, so you look for other opportunities. But then once you've been inside, you've got no options. It's hard to find a job, people won't give you a chance, so you have no wages."* NGT programme participant

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1 *Reducing Reoffending by Ex-prisoners – Summary of the Social Exclusion Unit Report* (July 2002)

2 Article by Bernadette Monaghan, Apex Trust, *Edinburgh Evening News* (19 September 2003)

3 *Reducing Reoffending by Ex-prisoners – Summary of the Social Exclusion Unit Report* (July 2002)

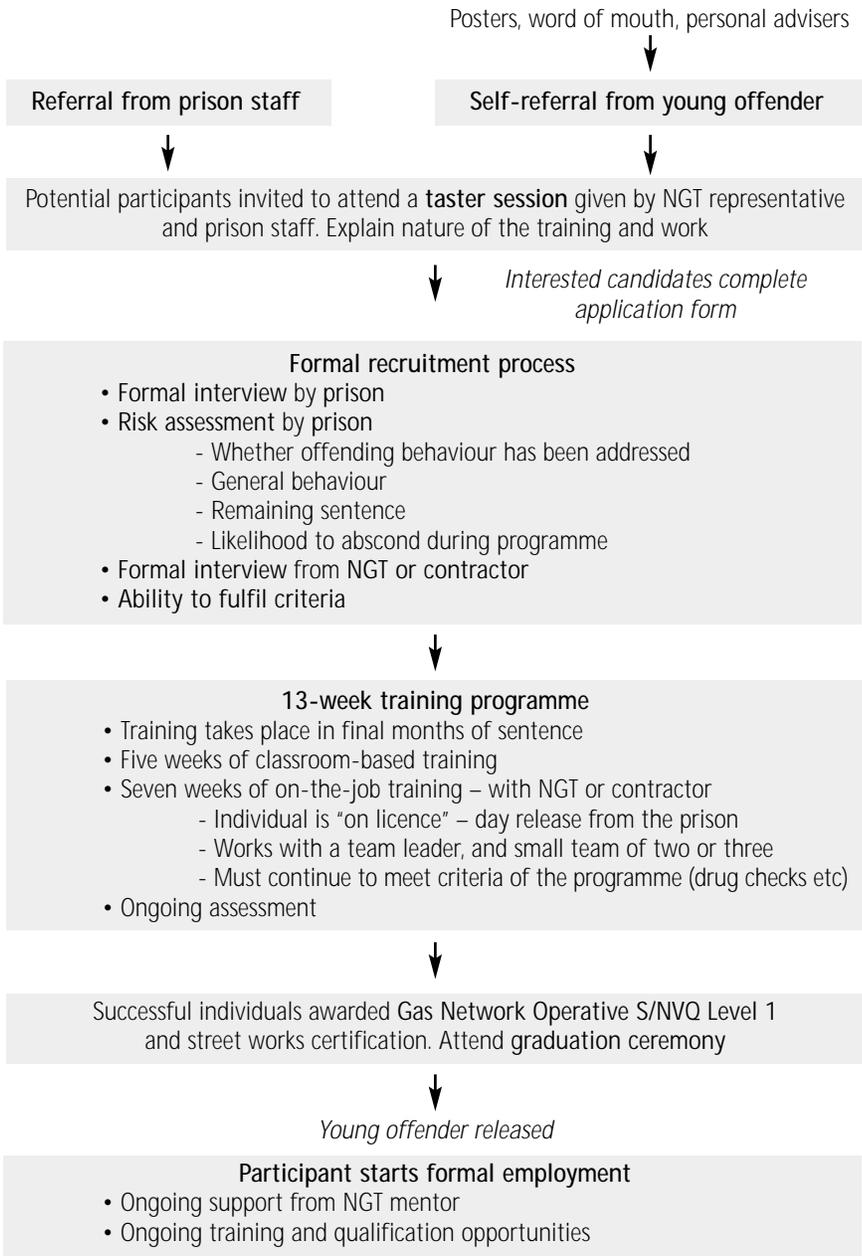
4 Article by Bernadette Monaghan, Apex Trust, *Edinburgh Evening News* (19 September 2003)

## How the scheme works

The NGT programme is a training and employment scheme for offenders. Most of the participants are from young offenders institutions, though some are drawn from adult prisons. The scheme provides 13 weeks of training in specific skills through a combination of classroom-based learning and practical experience, as well as driving tuition, and takes place while the participants are still in prison. Mentoring is provided before and after release, and help is also provided with housing and benefits issues. On successful completion of the course, participants are offered a job with NGT contractors in their home area or another area of their choice. Essential elements of the scheme are:

- Careful selection of participants, who must be approved by the prisons' risk assessment process to be released "on temporary licence" to leave the prison for work. Participants must also meet a range of criteria to ensure suitability for the job, including physical fitness and basic literacy and numeracy.
- Participants who have a release date within six weeks of the course completion date, to ensure a smooth transition between the training and employment.
- Agreement of NGT's contractors to provide training and support to participants – who may not be employed by the same contractor at the end of the scheme.
- A guarantee of sustainable employment for participants who successfully complete the course.

The model below outlines the programme process, from initial awareness through to completion and employment.



## Keys to success – why the programme has worked

Throughout the review process it was clear that the programme has been a success. The scheme is just moving out of its pilot phase and as it has progressed, various practical issues and challenges have arisen. However, these do not in any way detract from the enthusiasm and commitment shown by all partners for the programme's future development. The first element of this review, then, was to uncover some of the reasons why this programme has worked so successfully to meet the objectives of a diverse range of partners.

### Addressing needs

All the partners involved have very different needs and priorities – the secret of this programme has been to address them all. The NGT programme was developed by Sir John Parker and Dr Mary Harris as an expression of NGT's commitment to CSR – but it was particularly important that this commitment should meet a genuine need and produce demonstrable impacts. The initial motives for the contractors to offer support were slightly different. NGT is a client with a big impact on contractors' future success, by offering, renewing or declining contracts. It was therefore in the interests of contractors to show support for a programme that was clearly at the heart of their client's commitment to CSR – as one contractor explained: "If a major client starts to talk about an initiative, it would be foolhardy not to be interested."

Through its desire to develop something that would have a measurable and positive impact, NGT was able to supplement contractors' wish to please a client with something even more powerful: a business case. The utilities industry is a growing one – a major gas-pipeline replacement programme is planned for the next 30 years – but it is also an ageing one, with a high percentage of the workforce aged over 50. One contractor summed up the situation: "There's a 30% rise in work every year and we're getting retirements all the time."

This would not be such a problem if the industry was able to attract young people to sign up as trainees, but it cannot. Contractors cited a range of reasons why young people are not attracted to the industry: not wanting to do manual work; perceived low pay and lack of opportunity; direction by schools towards white-collar rather than blue-collar jobs; and a feeling that this sort of work is not "glamorous" or "sexy" enough.

*"Anything sustainable has to have a business case – that's the starting point. We can't just do things because a client thinks it's a good idea or it flatters the corporate ego. This programme is sustainable because utilities will be going through a significant period of growth in networking activities. Traditionally guys have come up through the ranks, or father to son. But when you try to recruit through schools, guys don't want to do this type of work – young guys want to be the cufflink brigade, with braces and laptops. There's a need for resources, and we're not recruiting the people we should be."* MD, contractor

On the industry side, then, there was a very strong case for development of and involvement in a scheme that could potentially provide a whole new stream of willing trainees – provided the scheme was successful. But for the other core partners in the programme – the prisons and the offenders themselves – there also needed to be an incentive for involvement and support.

For the prisons, two main needs emerged that could be addressed through participation in the programme. First, prisons face an ongoing challenge to build and promote their reputation, and are increasingly trying to reach out into their local communities and improve relationships and perceptions. This programme, which shows prisons supporting offenders in reintegration into the community, can help overcome negative perceptions and bring prisons and communities closer together.

Second, prisons have a responsibility to support offenders in rehabilitation – targets are set to get people into employment after discharge. Prison resettlement teams do a significant amount of work in helping offenders to find stable accommodation, and there are many training and intervention programmes aimed at improving prison leavers' chances of employment. As one prison governor noted, however: "We can address everything but we can't get them a job." Participation in this scheme not only offers the opportunity for some of a prison's inmates to find employment, it also provides the prison with leverage to encourage other employers to offer similar schemes.

This offer of a job, with all its associated benefits of stability and security, lies at the heart of how this programme meets the needs of the participants. It is not just the job that is important, however. Interviewees pointed to a range of factors that combined to fit successfully with what offenders might want and need.

First, the nature of the industry was cited as important, both in terms of the day-to-day work and the opportunity it provides.

*"Number one, the type of work probably appeals. It's a job they can recognise and they understand what it's about. Putting on a course in brain surgery, they're not going to relate to it. I'm being careful because I'm not saying, 'Oh, this is a great job digging holes', because I know it isn't, but the lads can see there's worthwhile training and it's an industry they know about, so they can see themselves doing it. They recognise it's a well-paid job; they recognise it's going to get them qualifications they can use."*

Prison governor

The outdoor work and camaraderie among teams clearly appeal, but the opportunities for development and progression are essential. Participants are very much aware that this is a job that can become whatever they want it to, and if they want to progress to team leaders and managers, the opportunities are there. The contractors were clear that the participants' backgrounds were no barrier to progression: "We don't hold them back for what they've done – not all of our blokes are angels. There's a lot of scope for them there if they want it, but we tell them it's up to them."

The structure and design of the training programme is also important – with a 13-week programme there are tangible results in a short period of time and, crucially, a guaranteed job at the end of it if the participant successfully completes the training. The "realness" of the course and the opportunities it offers form a significant factor in its attraction for the participants and the favourable reputation the programme has developed through word of mouth.

*"They're getting hope at the end of the day, hope that they're not going out there and there's no job. They were saying [at one of the prisons], there's loads of courses in there and most of them are pipedreams. This is not a pipedream, it's actual reality. It's not 13 weeks training and then nothing. One of the lads from the course, he never thought he'd have a hope of getting on anything because he's a bit of a rough diamond, so for him to get a job afterwards – a lot of the others paid attention to that."* Contractor

The nature of the training, which enables participants to go outside the prison to work, provides much-needed structure and a routine – successful participants become accustomed to getting up and going to work during the training, and then move straight into a job on release.

The training also offers a recognised qualification in an industry where there is guaranteed work for the next 30 years. This means that even if participants want to try something else

after a couple of years, they will always have the ability to find work in the utilities sector. This security and stability is much appreciated by the participants, who are only too aware of the alternatives: "It's soul destroying to come out of prison and not have anything: no family, no support, no genuine friends who can be a positive influence on your life. That in itself is very demeaning."

### **Meeting needs**

It is clear that all the partners in the programme had quite specific needs that the programme could potentially address. Has it done so?

For NGT, the programme has been recognised by many, including the former minister for CSR, as a leading example of corporate social responsibility. The press coverage received by NGT over the past year about the programme, has been 100% positive. Participation in the programme has also reinforced and strengthened the relationship between NGT and its contractors – a factor recognised by both parties.

The programme is providing a solution to the sector's recruitment needs. To date, more than 130 people have entered employment as a result of successfully completing the programme, going on to work for NGT directly or for one of its contractors. Although this is not a huge number, the programme has assisted with some employers' recruitment planning processes: "The programme enables you to plan and has become a core element of my labour strategy."

For the prisons, participation has resulted in more positive PR and in leverage to encourage other employers to offer opportunities. Those participants who have successfully completed the programme are now in stable, permanent jobs and some have progressed to take further qualifications and become team leaders.

The programme has, however, gone beyond meeting those basic needs to providing more intangible benefits, most noticeably for the contractors and the participants.

Contractors clearly recognised the need to "give something back" and make a contribution to wider society, and this programme provides an opportunity to do that. It was acknowledged that initially there may have been scepticism and suspicion about taking on the participants, but they soon became part of the team, or "just another worker".

The contractors responded in a very matter-of-fact way to the programme, recognising that “these lads could be our own sons – it’s just bad luck”. It was observed that when the programme did not work out for some of the participants, “it hurts”, and the feelgood factor clearly plays a key role in sustaining the involvement of contractors.

*“Once you get involved, you get quite evangelical. It does feel like it’s the right thing to do. If you can provide a young offender with a future, so he won’t reoffend, it’s the right thing to do. It feels good, and it differentiates you a bit. It’s about promoting the right behaviours and understanding that business isn’t just about putting a pipe in the ground.” Contractor*

For the participants, the benefits of the programme go some way beyond the provision of a qualification and a job. All those involved noted improved self-confidence, self-esteem, discipline and self-respect as outcomes of participation. As one governor commented: “We tend to notice a real difference in the way they approach things, how they deal with things, not just on the course but in prison.”

A large part of this is due to the trust that is placed in the participants by the prisons and the employers, which can be a rare experience – “Trust isn’t often placed on prisoners in prison.” This was recognised by the participants, who sometimes found it difficult to comprehend the opportunities they had been given and the level of risk that contractors were prepared to take to give them a chance. One of the first participants on the scheme recognised that this was “a big responsibility on very small shoulders” – the scheme was being piloted on them and if they did not make it work, opportunities would be lost not only for themselves but for all other potential participants.

### **Mentoring and support**

The additional benefits felt by the participants is a reflection of the level of support and encouragement they are given throughout the programme. As will be discussed, the practical elements of the programme such as careful planning and tight filtering have been essential to its success, but the support given by prisons, contractors and mentors has also been vital.

Participants are supported by prison resettlement teams as well as by NGT mentors, who were described as “friends, rather than mentors”. The support of the mentors goes beyond the training period – it is there as long as it is needed, and its value is well recognised: “You know there is someone there – you can just pick up the phone if anything is wrong. Sometimes they even phone just to check how things are going.”

Participants also pointed to the key role played by their trainers and team leaders in their work placements. These people are carefully selected to ensure they have the right skills to provide training – and are the same people who would be used to train any other new starters. Participants appreciated the time and effort put in by their trainers – some of whom keep in touch even though they no longer work together – while contractors spoke of one trainer who treated his participant “like a son”.

For some, this is the first time that people have paid attention to them and taken the time to provide support and encouragement, which for one prison governor is the most important aspect of successful rehabilitation.

*“The most effective thing at reintegrating people is actual personal interest, being hands-on with people. Everything you set up as a large sausage factory, churning lads through, like some of the courses – it doesn’t have an awful lot of effect. What does have an effect is working closely with the lads, taking an interest, showing them that they’re worth something and that their contribution is valued. It doesn’t cure everything but in my experience it statistically works better than no end of weird and wonderful courses that the prison service has tried since Victorian times and which have never reduced reoffending by more than about half a percent.”* Prison governor

### **Planning and piloting**

That the programme has more than fulfilled the needs and objectives of all partners is testament to the commitment and dedication of them all. It is also a reflection of very careful planning and structuring of the programme.

The programme was originally developed by NGT and Reading young offenders institution, and significant time was spent on the planning process. A sector analysis of the skills shortages was carried out to identify the gaps; a consultation process with young offenders identified issues such as a suitable starting salary, the need for transferable skills, the need for progression, and the need for a tangible timeframe; and a forklift truck programme, which followed a similar process, was run as an initial pilot.

This “slow and steady” approach was appreciated by the different partners. While contractors are keen for the programme to develop, they recognise the need for piloting, testing, and developing a track record to show others that the programme really works.

The size of the scheme was also commented on by one of the participants, who felt that having a small group of trainees was vital to success. As the trainees are brought together from different prisons, they do not know each other and therefore do not know how they are going to work together. Participants felt that having a small group was more likely to result in an effective team.

## Selection

It is not only the number of participants that matters – it is having the right participants. All the interviewees highlighted the very careful selection process, the strict criteria and the ongoing monitoring (such as drugs testing) as major factors in the programme's success. Selection for the programme is a balance between the prisons' primary concern of ensuring public safety, and the companies' need for people who can do the job.

*"I'm grateful that NGT has a realistic approach – we know everyone won't stay the course. We've worked together well to select the right lads – we've had to come at it from slightly different directions. My prime concern is protection of the public so I need to be satisfied that no one's going to commit any serious crimes or harm people. NGT are looking for good people who are going to do the work."* Prison governor

This rigorous process is very much recognised as a strength of the programme: there is no point in selecting participants who are going to fail. For contractors, the selection process provided reassurance, especially in the early days of the scheme – it enabled them to become involved in the programme and test out participation with the minimum possible risks. Acceptance of the scheme by the companies' employees depended on those early successes, when "we got the crème de la crème, the best of the best". Early success meant that support of the scheme could be built up, negative perceptions overcome and understanding developed of the business benefits, meaning that now, "if we got a few bad apples, we could probably ride it through".

Careful selection also means that the business needs of contractors are more likely to be met, through taking on trainees who are genuinely willing to work. It is particularly important that participants are committed to the job and its implications (such as early mornings), as following training they will go into a two-man team. Contractors therefore take great care to select the right people for the programme, but say: "It's the two-man gang that really sorts them out. It really shows when they're a two-man team because they've got someone relying on them."

For participants too, the rigour of selection and strict boundaries of the programme encourage them to take it seriously. When someone was removed from the original group, the others took it as “a good lesson”.

The strict selection is a key factor in why the reoffending rate for programme participants is so low – participants are probably among those least likely to reoffend anyway. But its more important implication is in ensuring success of the scheme for all the partners and maintaining their buy-in, meaning that the programme can continue to be made available to a small but significant percentage of offenders. It is recognised that prisons might have been overcautious in their selection and in the decisions made about taking people off the programme, but all partners recognise that no one is likely to benefit from taking much greater risks and fundamentally changing the selection criteria.

## The business contribution

All the partners have played their part in the success of the programme, and it is a leading example of what can be achieved through cross-sector working. For the purposes of this review, we are particularly interested to explore in more detail what the contribution of business has been, and what this has meant for the scheme. Understanding more about the unique role that business can play in a scheme such as this will enable us to draw lessons for CSR more widely.

### Fundamental contributions

At a basic level, business involvement in the programme has enabled two things: practical training, and on-the-job experience. These elements should not be underestimated. For all groups that find access to work difficult, be it young offenders or the long-term unemployed, getting a recognised qualification and practical work experience can make an enormous difference to future success. In the case of the NGT scheme, the opportunity to go outside the prison and go to work is undoubtedly one of the elements that attracts people to it and contributes to its reputation. Prisons do provide a wide range of training courses and qualifications, but the involvement of a business in that process adds the vital element of reality – there is a real prospect of work at the end of it.

Business involvement in schemes such as this can also bring other benefits. First, the business environment provides a much wider network within which a participant is interacting. This is particularly important for offenders, but could also apply to other groups, such as the long-term unemployed or those with disabilities, who might face discrimination. Enabling those groups to interact in a work environment helps to address misperceptions and demonstrate that everyone has the potential to make a contribution. In the NGT programme, contractors pointed to the fact that the attitudes of their own employees towards offenders were changed through involvement with the programme, and also that perceptions of the prison had probably changed through closer interaction between its inmates and the wider community.

This potential change in attitude was considered particularly important by the prisons, which are looking for more private-sector involvement in training and rehabilitation. Both contractors and participants commented on the fact that participants are encouraged to be honest about their pasts and what they have done: "They soon get names like 'Bonnie and Clyde' but that's all right, it's part of it ... the men do ask what they've done. It's probably the first thing they ask, what are they in for." Participants appreciated this

openness, that there did not have to be any “white lies” on application forms, and admitted that otherwise they probably would not tell an employer about their past. It is only through this sort of openness and the exposure of a business and its employees to the employment of offenders or other excluded groups that wider business attitudes are likely to change.

Second, business can bring credibility, which has an impact on all partners. In this case, the involvement of a leading company not only made the scheme “real” for participants, but enabled them to speak with pride about their work with a big-name company. For prisons, it was important in terms of leverage to point to well-respected companies offering support. NGT is also a company respected by its contractors and wider partners, and this has almost certainly made a difference to the number of other companies that have shown commitment to the scheme.

Business involvement in any programme addressing social needs can also bring another benefit – a different and often more innovative approach. Increasingly, the concept of corporate social responsibility is widening to consider how sectors can work together and learn from each other to bring about social change. This agenda has been promoted by the government: references by the Prime Minister to “rights, responsibilities and citizenship”, with particular reference to the role that individuals and companies should play in building a strong civic society, highlighted the priorities of Labour second-term policies.

Through a series of initiatives, New Labour has sought actively to engage with the private sector in pursuing this broader agenda. The New Deal; education, health and employment action zones; regional development agencies; the learning and skills councils; the Social Exclusion Unit – these have all have depended upon the support and involvement of UK business. The message from the government comes across strongly: business has a vital role to play in contributing to wider social issues. Corporate social responsibility is not only about businesses giving money – rather, they should be working in partnership with other groups, including the government, to contribute their expertise to addressing some of the UK’s serious social problems.

### **The business case**

The strength of the NGT programme draws on the fact that business is fulfilling a need for its main partner – the prisons – and is using its particular expertise and resources to address a key social issue, therefore providing opportunities for a group of potentially excluded young people. What has had particular impact in this scheme, however, is that

there is a business case for NGT's and the contractors' involvement that goes beyond an expression of CSR and "making a difference". The real business need for a new stream of trainees transforms the scheme into much more than business assisting with a training programme.

The business need means that the scheme is sustainable. There is an ongoing recruitment need and this has proved to be one successful way of addressing that. Sustainability means that all partners can plan ahead and that the scheme can be developed and extended to include other partners. Research shows that what partners in corporate community investment and CSR programmes want most is long-term commitment and sustainability.

Because the need is there, the scheme has been developed slowly and carefully to ensure that its outcomes will be positive. This is a real business investment, and it is therefore in the businesses' interests to make the scheme work. The early piloting, testing and ongoing development of the programme reflects the fact that it matters whether or not it has positive results.

Fundamental to the involvement and commitment of the participants is that successful completion of the programme means a guaranteed job. This is an extremely powerful element of the programme and it is the only programme that is able to make that commitment – because it is being driven by a genuine business need.

The business need for this programme has also affected its success in other ways. Everyone working in the industry recognises the need for increased recruitment and new joiners. This gives the scheme an element of "business as usual", in the sense that everyone can understand and appreciate why it is happening and recognise the value of it. Contractors commented that employees "didn't really mind about people's backgrounds as long as they're part of the team". The participants are valued because of what they can bring to the company, not in terms of what they have previously done or where they have come from. This has added greatly to the acceptance of the participants, and, crucially, has made them feel that they are making a genuine contribution.

For contractors, participating in the scheme is a bonus, rather than an additional resource burden. Training of the participants is no different from training any other new joiners. Because the scheme is aimed at a defined need of the contracting companies, they are realising business benefits as well as the additional benefits of the feelgood factor and the positive PR that participation might bring.

For the prisons too, the financial backing and administration of the programme by NGT means that the resource burden on them is minimised. The prisons recognised that business has the financial power, weight, and less bureaucratic systems that enable a scheme such as this to get off the ground. As one governor summed up: "It's beneficial to everyone. There aren't really any losers."

## The future – implications for corporate social responsibility

The NGT programme is a clear demonstration of how business can bring its particular strengths to address key social problems. As the previous discussion has shown, the business need has played a key role in this. NGT began the programme as an expression of its corporate social responsibility, and other businesses have recognised how participation can reflect their own social responsibility commitments. So, what are the lessons that can be drawn in terms of CSR more widely? This programme demonstrates some key elements that should form the basis of any leading CSR programme.

### The business case

As has been demonstrated, having a real business case for a CSR programme makes the difference between wanting to do the right thing and actually achieving something that will make a difference. A strong business case means a programme is more likely to be accepted and understood by stakeholders, will be more sustainable and more rigorous because it will have clear objectives and desired outcomes, and will stand up as a credible, serious programme.

In developing CSR programmes, businesses therefore need to think about where their needs are, and how those needs correlate with those of other partners or groups. A business case does not just apply to business but reflects the needs of all those involved – success is far more likely if all partners feel the programme is going to meet real needs, whether personal or organisational.

### Planning

The most successful programmes have clear objectives and targets from the outset. Carrying out initial research, starting small and piloting ideas mean that any problems can be identified and addressed early on. All programmes are likely to encounter challenges and unexpected outcomes – it is much easier to resolve these when the programme is still small enough and flexible enough to make changes. Evaluation allows regular review of a scheme's progress and objectives and targets to be reassessed in the light of experience. Evaluation and review also provides potential partners with reassurance that a programme is tried and tested, and has been shown to work.

### Partners

Many businesses seek partners in delivery of a CSR programme. Once more than one party is involved, managing different needs and expectations becomes more complex. It is

therefore important for all partners to be clear from the outset about their own objectives, and to understand the objectives of others involved. Regular review throughout the programme, involving all partners, means that issues can be identified and resolved as soon as they arise.

### **Senior-level support**

Many businesses cite senior-level support and buy-in as fundamental to the success of their CSR initiatives. This has been demonstrated clearly in the NGT programme, where all partners pointed to the commitment of senior people in the business, particularly Sir John Parker and Dr Mary Harris, as adding real weight and credibility. The commitment of senior people means that a programme is more likely to be accepted both within a business and by external stakeholders.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this research paper has been threefold: to review the NGT programme and identify the key factors to its success; to understand what unique contribution business involvement has made to the programme; and to draw wider lessons for CSR. The value of the programme lies not only in what it brings to its partners and, most importantly, to the participants, but in providing some specific lessons on successful CSR, as well as wider learnings about the involvement of business in addressing social issues.

We have strongly emphasised the importance of the business case in contributing to the success of the scheme. What is unique about this programme, however, is that the strength of the business case is matched by the strength of the social case. Often CSR programmes are oriented towards one or the other; this programme fulfils an indisputable business need, but also addresses one of the most challenging issues there is in terms of society and how it functions.

That NGT chose to focus on offenders, rather than the equally important but less controversial group of, say, the long-term unemployed, is a reflection of the innovation that drives the programme and the vision of its founders, NGT chairman Sir John Parker and Dr Mary Harris. Often approaching something from a CSR angle leads to a new way of thinking about things, opening up possibilities that would not be considered during business as usual. CSR enables businesses to think about where and how they can make a difference, and offers the legitimacy to try something completely new. The power of this programme lies in the harnessing of that innovation and commitment, and directing it towards an area where all can benefit.

While expectations are growing that the private sector should and can make a difference to public policy issues, companies often shy away from engaging with the really intractable problems such as crime or drugs, and are more drawn towards more accessible issues like education. This is because the risks of involvement at the hard end are perceived to be much greater, and therefore the implications in terms of negative outcomes and comment much more serious.

The NGT programme shows that business does have something useful to bring to these more challenging issues, that risks can be managed with careful planning, and that the benefits to all involved are much greater. The risk taken by the businesses and the prisons made a huge impression on the participants, who recognised the level of trust that was being placed in them, and appreciated it. Employees will almost always gain benefit from involvement with any social responsibility activity, but their involvement with this particular issue certainly added to the feelgood factor and the feeling of genuinely making a difference.

What this programme has also demonstrated is the power of business intervention in public policy. Through the programme, prisons have realised what can be achieved with a certain group of offenders. It has crystallised the message that training and employment are an essential part of rehabilitation, and demonstrated a proven way of addressing this, thereby giving confidence to try new approaches. This was recognised when the Chancellor asked Sir John to lead the expansion of the programme across all industry sectors of the UK.

It is hoped that, as this expansion continues, not only will other companies become involved with this programme, but more will be encouraged to develop CSR programmes that engage in innovative, cross-sector working, to address real social challenges.

*"In a modern world, we must use the means available to us – public sector, business, voluntary sector and individuals – to build a strong society, where individuals have the hope and the means of reaching higher." Tony Blair, 2001*

## Appendix: context

### Introduction

To put the findings of the research review into context, this appendix presents evidence and research on the wider issues of reoffending and the government's commitment to tackling it. This appendix will begin by looking at the phenomenon of crime, specifically reoffending, with particular focus on young offenders. This literature review will draw on evidence from research rather than our own views around the extent of reoffending, what role employment has in tackling reoffending, and the issues that offenders and employers face.

### Youth crime

The phenomenon of youth crime and antisocial behaviour is a cause of widespread concern, but how much of a problem is it? Adults are still responsible for a vast majority of notifiable offences. During 2002, 89% of all detected crimes were committed by persons over the age of 18. Adult offenders over the age of 21 accounted for 73% of those offences.

That said, youth crime continues to be a very serious problem. According to the committee of public accounts, crime committed by young offenders accounted for around 6.5% of all crimes in England and Wales in 2002. However, a small number of persistent offenders are responsible for a significant proportion of these crimes, with about 3% of offenders being responsible for 25% of offences.

### Reoffending among young offenders

A report by the home affairs committee states that although there has been a recent decrease in reoffending rates, the scale of the problem is still massive. The Social Exclusion Unit found that of those prisoners aged 18-20 released in 1997, 72% were reconvicted of another crime within two years and, of these, 47% received another prison sentence. This compared with figures for adult offenders of 58% and 36%.

### Experiences of a young offender

There has been extensive research carried out on what causes young people to turn to crime. Rather than try to cover all of this research, we have focused here on the evidence that bears relevance to the review of the NGT Young Offenders Programme specifically. Much of this research looks at the life experiences and influences that young offenders have in common.

The National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) presented the findings of research carried out on behalf of a safer communities partnership. The research looked at the life experiences of persistent young offenders between 12 and 18 years of age, with the aim of uncovering links between risk factors and offending behaviour. The report found that risk factors often clustered together and reinforced each other. The young people in the sample had an average of nearly six risk factors. The main risk factors were:

- Relationship with parent: Only 14% were living with both parents. 66% lacked a good relationship with one or other parents.
- Loss: 22% had suffered a bereavement, 39% family breakdown or divorce, and 34% had lost contact with a significant person.
- Abuse: 44% had experience neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or had witnessed violence against other family members.
- 22% were looked after by social services, and 27% had been previously.
- 71% had either truanted from school on a regular basis or been suspended and/or excluded at some point.
- 49% had problems with drug or alcohol use.

The Youth Justice Board reviewed major studies on youth crime and why it happens, identifying what were termed as “risk” and “protective” factors. Risk factors were identified under four domains:

Domain	Risk factors
Family	Poor parental supervision and discipline; family conflict; family history or criminal activity; parental attitudes that condone antisocial and criminal behaviour; low income; poor housing; large family size.
School	Low achievement, aggressive behaviour, lack of commitment to school, truancy.
Community	Disadvantaged neighbourhood; community disorganisation and neglect; availability of drugs.
Personal/ individual factors	Hyperactivity and impulsivity; low intelligence and cognitive impairment; alienation and lack of social commitment; attitudes that condone offending and drug misuse; early involvement in crime and drug misuse; friends involved in crime and drug misuse.

Protective factors were defined as the buffers that exist in an individual's life that can protect them against the impact of risk factors. Protective factors include: female gender; resilient temperament; sense of self-efficacy; positive, outgoing disposition and high intelligence; social bonding; healthy standards; opportunities for involvement; social and reasoning skills; and recognition and due praise.

The Social Exclusion Unit found that prisoners had generally experienced a lifetime of social exclusion. They are 13 times more likely than the general population to have been in care as a child, 13 times as likely to be unemployed, 10 times as likely to have been a regular truant, two-and-a-half times as likely to have had a family member convicted of a crime, six times as likely to have been a young father, and 15 times as likely to be HIV positive.

Child and adolescent mental health problems are relatively common and may act as a risk factor for criminal behaviour. A report for the Office of National Statistics found that nine out of 10 young offenders between 16 and 20 years old showed signs of mental illness.

Children and young people in care are one of the most socially excluded and often disadvantaged groups in society. Low educational achievement increases the chances of them being unemployed and engaging in antisocial behaviour and crime. This is reflected in the high number of prisoners (particularly young offenders) that have been in care at some stage in their lives.

## **Unemployment**

### **Unemployment and crime**

More than two-thirds of prisoners do not have a job in the period leading up to their imprisonment; of those that do, two-thirds will lose it while in prison. Three-quarters leave with no job to go to. It is clear that unemployment is prevalent among offenders, but how far can unemployment be attributed as a risk factor, and is employment a protective factor?

Chiricos's (1987) review of research on unemployment and crime argued that, on balance, evidence demonstrated a "frequently apparent significant relationship between unemployment and crime". Other evidence has proved inconclusive and a consensus on the relationship between unemployment and crime remains elusive.

### **Unemployment and reoffending**

Evidence supporting unemployment as a factor in *reoffending* is more conclusive. The

Social Exclusion Unit states that individuals are up to twice as likely to reoffend if they do not have a job. Employment is identified as one of nine key factors that influences reoffending – these factors should not be viewed in isolation, but instead together form the life situation in which the offender exists. Key factors such as education, attitudes and self-control, life skills, housing, financial support and debt directly affect an individual's ability to gain and remain in employment, and are in turn affected by a lack of employment.

One reason given for individuals' decisions to stop offending is that they acquire something of value that gives them a reason to re-evaluate. Employment is noted as one of the most common and significant of these reasons, cutting reoffending rates by up to half by providing financial security and structure in an individual's life.

A 2002 prison survey highlights employment as one of the three main concerns to prisoners before their release (along with housing, and family support).

A home affairs committee inquiry that looked specifically at the effectiveness of prisons in reducing reoffending through rehabilitation (the process by which an offender returns to society, and becomes a law-abiding and useful member of the wider community) found that the best way to reduce reoffending was to ensure that prisoners, on their release, had a home to go to and the ability to get into work.

### **Barriers to gaining employment**

There is a general acceptance among community safety professionals and criminologists that employment is "a vital ingredient to the effective resettlement and reintegration of offenders". Ensuring that ex-offenders are given employment opportunities has a positive impact on the likelihood of an offender reoffending – benefiting them, the community and the business sector. But are these opportunities available?

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 aimed to assist offenders in the transition between prison and community integration. However, evidence suggests that many still encounter difficulties and discrimination when applying for jobs, and it is estimated that 95% of offenders are excluded from employment opportunities.

A number of reasons have been suggested for this discrimination. These include:

- Skills:
  - 70% of adult prisoners are illiterate in one form or another;

- 80% of adult prisoners have the writing skills at or below the level of an 11-year-old (65% have the numeracy skills, and 50% the reading skills, of the same level);
- the position is even worse for 18- to 20-year-olds, whose basic skills and school exclusion background are more than a third worse than those of older prisoners.
- Employment experience:
  - many offenders have had little experience of employment.
- Life experiences:
  - many have additional issues due to experiences of a lifetime of social exclusion, severe housing problems, drug/alcohol issues and mental health problems.

Even for those whose offences were minor, the stigma we attach to offending means the chance of any person with a criminal record obtaining work is seriously affected.

### **Tackling unemployment among young offenders**

As a result of the recognition that employment is a key factor in reducing reoffending, criminal justice agencies have developed over recent years a range of interventions to try and enhance employment opportunities for young offenders. These programmes have been delivered by a number of organisations, including youth offending teams, the probation service and the Youth Justice Board. Unfortunately, information on the impact and effectiveness of these schemes is limited.

In 2000 the Home Office commissioned a three-year evaluation of two probation service employment projects for young offenders – ASSET, in inner London, and Surrey Springboard. Both projects aimed to improve the employment and training prospects of unemployed offenders on probation, through advice, guidance, training, work placements, mentoring and employment opportunities. The evaluation findings were generally promising – the reoffending rate among those who participated was lower than that of the control group (although not radically so), and there was positive feedback from all those involved with the schemes, both providers and clients.

### **The role of the voluntary sector**

Until very recently, with the introduction of the National Offender Management Service, no single organisation was ultimately responsible for the rehabilitation process. As a result, availability of positive initiatives was patchy and organisations working with these individuals faced difficulties in placing offenders into education, employment or suitable housing. This issue, in addition to a longstanding lack of resources, led to involvement from the voluntary sector.

There are a number of charities and voluntary organisations that work with offenders (young and adult) to improve their skills and employability. These organisations include:

- The National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), which runs a number of programmes that aim to get offenders into work and provides them with the support they need in order to be able to lead law-abiding lives and play a meaningful role in society.
- The Apex Charitable Trust, which seeks to help people with criminal records to obtain appropriate jobs or self-employment by providing them with the skills they need in the labour market, and working with employers to break down the barriers to their employment.
- The Inside Out Trust, which develops projects based on a partnership between the trust, a prison and at least one other organisation. Each project gives prisoners the opportunity to gain transferable skills, and where possible a recognised qualification, improving employment prospects after release.
- The Prince's Trust, which works alongside criminal justice agencies (although it remains firmly outside the criminal justice system) to support young people with histories of offending through awareness, signposting and resources.
- Fairbridge, which supports 13- to 25-year-olds who are not in education, training or employment or who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out. Its Learn to Earn scheme enables young people to develop the skills needed for employability.
- Trailblazers, which provides mentors to male young offenders in custody aged between 15 and 21 inside Feltham young offenders institution. Visits take place inside the prison during the last six months of the sentence, then continue for a further six months after release.

### **The government's commitment to reducing reoffending**

In recent years the government has made commitments at several levels to reduce re-offending rates through the provision of effective rehabilitation. Employment is recognised as a central element of this.

*"We need to make sure that a prison sentence punishes the offender, but also provides the maximum opportunity for reducing the likelihood of reoffending. That means we need to redouble efforts to rehabilitate prisoners back into society"* Tony Blair

In 2001 the Social Exclusion Unit made the recommendation that "effective reception and resettlement procedures should be developed, to improve access to housing, healthcare, benefits, employment, education and training".

In 2004 the home affairs committee report suggested that the prison regime should be “reconstructed to support prisoners working a conventional nine-to-five working day in education, vocational training or work programmes”. This was seen as a means to “foster a work ethic” and encourage prisoners to obtain qualifications and skills.

Through the creation of the National Offender Management Service, the government aims to bring together prisons and probation under a joint responsibility for reducing reoffending. The umbrella of “education, training and employment” is a key area of the plan, and focus is placed on integrating vocational training into education in prisons. It also focuses on developing an effective business case to encourage more employers to engage and consider ex-offenders as employees.

### **The business sector as a provider**

The government recognises the need for involvement from the business sector if it is to fulfil its commitment to provide employment opportunities.

*“The prison service is now serious about helping prisoners not to reoffend ... we know we can’t achieve our goals single-handedly. We need a partnership with employers to make it happen.”* John May, Prison Service Area Manager

The 2004 home affairs committee report suggests that partnerships between prisons, companies and their supply chains should be established in order to provide sustainable employment opportunities for offenders. Basic labour shortages and skill gaps should be identified and matched to vocational training and work programmes in prisons. It also suggested greater use of day release schemes, to enable prisoners to experience work in the community prior to their release, and enable them to demonstrate their abilities and trustworthiness to future employers.

A 2004 Home Office report points out that while the National Probation Service can improve the employability of an offender, the offender then needs to be recruited within the free market. Emphasis was therefore placed on the need not only to produce high-quality potential employees, but also to “cultivate a customer service approach to market them among employers and secure recruitment”. The report recommended that the probation service find local partners with which it can find places for offenders in the real employment market. The Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Personnel Management have expressed support for such initiatives.

However, getting businesses involved in the recruitment of offenders is difficult. In 1998, NACRO undertook a research study on behalf on the London Offender Employment Network. The study demonstrates the struggle in generating interest and support among potential employers. The research concluded: "Offenders are disadvantaged by a range of problems that preclude attempts to secure employment."

### **The business case**

In recent years there has been a move to demonstrate to the private sector the business case for employing ex-offenders.

A report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development outlines this business case through the following points:

- the safeguarding of property and resources against theft, fraud and vandalism;
- employers' common-law duty of care to provide a safe working environment that includes protection of individuals from personal harm and violence;
- the "war for talent" – employers continue to experience problems filling job vacancies; and
- the importance for business of creating safe, inclusive and economically healthy communities in which businesses can gain greater prosperity.

Ex-offenders as a group are recognised as having great value to the labour market in meeting market shortages, which are predicted to continue. NACRO states: "Employers cannot afford to exclude such a significant part of the workforce, most of whom can make a really positive contribution and will not present any real risk."

Digby Jones, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, has actively encouraged the private sector to employ ex-prisoners and former young offenders as a way of filling the skills gap seen to be stunting the progress of the UK's small businesses.

*"I strongly believe that business is missing out on a pool of undervalued labour and underused talent among prisoners and ex-offenders."* Digby Jones

There is also the financial saving that businesses can potentially make by avoiding recruitment costs (estimated to be an average of £4,500 per new employee).

### **Corporate social responsibility as a driver**

The Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development report identifies the fourth point in its list (the importance for business of creating a safe, inclusive and economically healthy communities in which business can gain greater prosperity) as the “key driver for corporate social responsibility initiatives”. It states: “Current signs are that more organisations are realising that business reputations, image and branding are enhanced by involvement in community issues which are of concern to the public.” As the focus on corporate social responsibility grows, the training and employment of offenders offers a perfect opportunity to turn corporate responsibility into corporate opportunity.

### **Employer concerns**

Research carried out by NACRO highlights the issues and concerns within the business sector that are stopping them from becoming actively engaged with the recruitment of ex-offenders. The report demonstrates that businesses are still concerned that recruiting ex-offenders could put their organisation at risk. These concerns were not based on experience – employers had no evidence that ex-offenders were more likely to offend against employers than non-offenders, and most employers who had consciously taken on ex-offenders had had positive experiences from it. However, it was felt that this was the view held by many members of their staff.

Some of the businesses within the groups had developed links with agencies that work with unemployed ex-offenders, but did not want to make this public. Media played a big role in this, as employers felt they were at risk of being attacked by the press for what was actually a responsible approach to the employment of ex-offenders. The report suggests: “Employers are willing to employ ex-offenders but are reluctant to develop policies and procedures for their recruitment, or do so openly, because of the critical response they might receive from the press and the public.”

Employers also felt that they lacked the information about the risks that were involved and without that information, decisions tended to be made on “fear and anecdotal information”.

### **Other employers’ schemes for ex-offenders**

Although there are still many issues and concerns around the employment of ex-offenders, there are a number of schemes or programmes, other than the NGT young offenders programme, that have been set up by employers with the specific aim of providing training and increasing employment opportunities for this group.

### Leyland Trucks

Leyland has been working in partnership with Wymott prison and Preston prison since 2000. Their customised training programme focuses on culture, team building and training, and preparation for employment. Leyland also donated forklift trucks for a training facility.

### Toyota – modern apprenticeship with Aylesbury young offenders institution

Prisoners take part in an 18-month Modern Apprenticeship in the prison's Toyota workshop. This NVQ Level 3 accredited course trains prisoners to maintain and repair cars, with the aim of developing useful job skills for release as well as providing essential basic skills training. In 2002, eight of the 40 prisoners that had taken part on the course were in full-time paid employment.

### Severn Trent

Severn Trent converted a derelict corn mill into the Cromford Venture Centre. The goal of the centre is to "engage young people in continuing with education so that employment is seen as both attainable and desirable". Six young ex-offenders were trained as carpenters and stoneworkers through the project and now have permanent positions with the centre's building team.

### Premier Custodial Group

Premier (private owner of Doncaster prison) has worked in partnership with Reed to establish the Bridge Project, which focuses on accommodation and employment planning. Offenders were offered access to a renewable rent deposit scheme, which enables them to secure accommodation and improve their chances of gaining employment. The programme is supported by around 13 external agencies.

### Barclays and Woolwich

In 2004 Barclays and Woolwich presented the resettlement unit at Dartmoor prison with learning resources from the Barclays University. This is one element of the "Ready for Work" programme – a two-week work placement programme, which aims to prepare the individual for employment. Many companies use this programme as a recruitment tool.

### United Utilities

United Utilities' partnership with Thorn Cross young offenders institution aims to improve offenders' ability to enter employment, training and education. This includes: work placements; vehicles for prisoners to work on in the prison workshop; promoting the

social inclusion of offenders to other employers/contractors; and financial support towards the secondment of an employment link worker to further the development of partnerships with local and national employers.

### **Business in Prisons**

The Business in Prisons self-employment project was set up in 1998 by a consortium of various bodies (the Home Office, the probation service, the employment service, training and enterprise councils, the Prince's Trust and other national organisations). The aim of the scheme is to develop a productive, long-term partnership with industry that, through the provision of work for prisoners, teaches them the skills that meet the labour shortage in the marketplace and enhances their job opportunities on release.

### **West Belfast & Greater Shankill Employers' Forum**

The West Belfast & Greater Shankill Employers' Forum (sponsored by the Bombardier Aerospace (NI) Foundation) was established by local employers and Business in the Community. It aims to improve employability and job opportunities for local people, and to improve the effectiveness of the interface between employers, unemployed people, training organisations, and government departments. The employers' forum has a key role in addressing long-term unemployment in the area.

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