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July 2010

Change the Prison System to Make Prison Policy Work, says new Politeia pamphlet. Funding and power must go to front-line trainers, say authors of *Jailbreak*.

Within weeks of coming to office, Kenneth Clark has announced a dramatic change to justice policy. The use of prison sentences is now to be cut. Those who do end up in jail will be given training - with independent companies brought in to see it through. But the authors of *Jailbreak**, Politeia's new study, who have first-hand experience of training offenders, warn that radical change in the system is needed if the policy is to work. The last government had set out on the same path, but with little success. Re-offending rates remained high at around 62%. In particular the system:

Lacks a clear chain of accountability. Responsibility for training and funding overlaps between different Whitehall Departments and their agencies.

Suffers from confused aims and means. Programmes are often ill-suited to the offenders and have the wrong emphasis. There are high drop-out rates.

Is patchy. Access to it for offenders is uncertain. Many don't get the chance to train properly.

But there *are* exceptions – where companies and others from outside the system have had remarkable success. The authors propose that a change of direction is needed if the system is to open to success. Responsibility for training must be allocated to one body with a clear chain of accountability. Success should be judged against whether the offender is prepared when in prison to find and keep a job on release. Funds must be transparently allocated on a per capita basis. The total amount now used should go to the contracted body for an individual's training.

In particular the authors propose the following changes

The Distribution of public funding – The sum allocated for training and preventing re-offending should be fixed and set aside, to be distributed to the supplier on a per capita basis.

The Bidding system and awarding contacts - The system should be open to contest and subject to the principle of competitive neutrality – a level playing field. Contracts should be awarded on the basis of proven success in supporting and training offenders, equipping them to find and keep a job on release and reducing conviction rates.

One-to-One Training; One –to-One Responsibility - There would be one body to oversee the contracted activity, take responsibility for each offender and for every aspect of training, education and personal support, accountable to the Ministry of Justice.

Payment by results – Payment would be linked to success and take account of reduced conviction rates. While payment should be linked to success, the model should also allow small, often local, successful new providers or companies to take part.

Jailbreak: How to Transform Prisoners' Training*, by Jon Trigg, Mark Lovell and Carolyn Altounyan, is published by Politeia , 22 Queen Anne's Gate SW1H 9AA
Hard copies are available to journalists on request from press@politeia.co.uk

***Jon Trigg** was Group Strategy Director for A4e. **Mark Lovell** is the Executive Chairman of A4e.
Enquiries to Jon Trigg – tel: 077 178 5 6505, jontrigg5376@googlemail.com
Mark Lovell – tel: 020 7467 9236, Abigail.Townsend@apexcommunications.com
Politeia – c/o Press Officer – tel: 0207 799 5034; 22 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AA