



***The Working Wing – Supporting effective prisoner rehabilitation***

**The Challenge**

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Kenneth Clark, confirmed on 30 June 2010 the coalition government’s intention to create a “rehabilitation revolution” in Britain’s prisons. As one of the UK’s leading providers of services to offenders, in 32 prisons and in the community, A4e very much welcomes the new government’s recognition that there is scope for much better and greater use of rehabilitation to improve the lives of ex-offenders and reduce re-offending. As the Lord Chancellor observed, the prison population has doubled since the early 1990s, and stands at more than 85,000 today.

The Lord Chancellor also observed that reoffending remains a major problem. Nearly half of offenders sent to prison are reconvicted of another offence within a year of their release, more than half of the crime in this country is committed by people who have already been through the prison system, and the rate of reoffending is even higher – 60% – for the 60,000 prisoners who serve short sentences each year.

This makes it all the more important that the support provided to offenders is targeted and effective. But a National Audit Office report in 2008 concluded that this was not the case. The current system is clogged by too many organisations with undefined roles and responsibilities, and with few links between services inside prisons and in the community. Since there are seven pathways by which support to offenders may be provided (see box) there may be up to seven different providers of services.

- The seven pathways**
1. Accommodation
  2. Health and Social Care
  3. Finance, Benefit and Debt
  4. Education, Training & Employment
  5. Children and Families
  6. Attitude, Thinking and Behaviour
  7. Drugs & Alcohol Rehabilitation

This not only makes it difficult to provide the most effective intervention, but also increases the costs to the Prison Service and individual prisons of managing multiple providers. But equally if not more importantly, the way support is organised increases the rate of reoffending. Support along the pathways finishes on release, so the offender may not be fully rehabilitated. Resettlement usually begins just six weeks prior to release – not nearly enough time to source adequate housing or any of the other essentials. So ex-offenders have no home to go and only the standard discharge grant of £46.75 on which to survive. Their access to benefit support is often limited or inadequate leaving them in a desperate situation (and therefore much more likely to re-offend) with no money, no house and no job.



The Solution

The Working Wing is an integrated, employment-focussed solution to the problem of reoffending and prison overcrowding in the UK. By coordinating support along the seven pathways, and continuing support from custody into the community we can continue the client journey towards rehabilitation and significantly reduce the likelihood of them reoffending.

The Working Wing brings skills and employability into everyday prison life through Working Wing projects run by prisoners. These will be live business projects relevant to employer requirements and local economic strategy. It combines this with support tailored to the needs of the individual, sourced where necessary from other specialists but managed by a single provider.

How it works

The Working Wings approach is shown in Figure 1 below. A4e will take single responsibility for the rehabilitation of offenders on the Working Wing. Working in partnership with other specialists when necessary, we will provide the support that the offender needs throughout their journey and "Through the Gate" into the community. Offenders that leave the Working Wing "job ready" will have a guaranteed interview with an employer local to their resettlement area; those who are not ready to enter employment will be referred on to relevant support programmes such as the flexible New Deal or Pathways to Work.

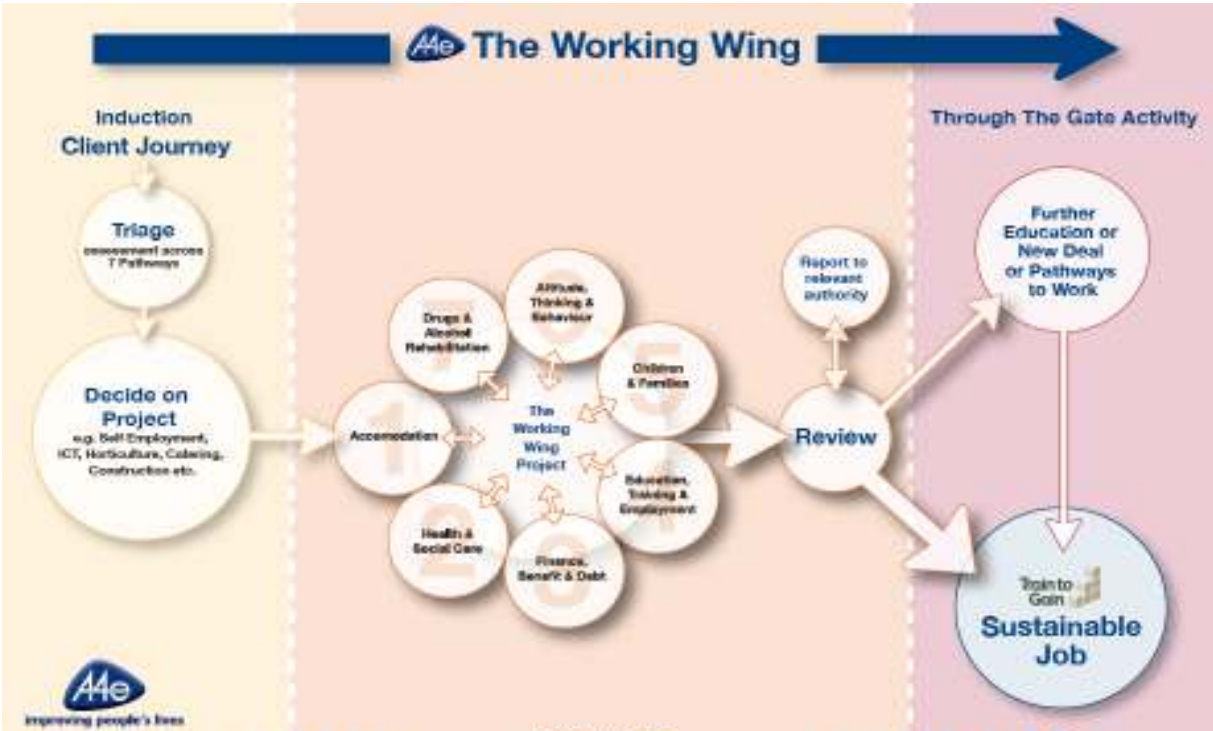


Figure 1 – The Working Wing Approach

Offenders will each be assigned a personal advisor who will work with them to re-evaluate their needs, goals and aspirations. A triage assessment will assess the individual, the distance they need to travel along each of the seven pathways, and the support required to achieve their goals. This



assessment will be turned into an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that will track the offender throughout his/her journey. Offenders will sign a Working Wing contract (part of the IDP) that commits them to a programme of activity with agreed milestones and outputs.

Where specialist support is required, A4e will source it from A4e quality-assured providers. For example, A4e have existing working relationships with Riverside and Places for People who provide accommodation advice and support for disadvantaged individuals.

A key element of the Working Wing will be the vocational learning and “live” work experience undertaken by offenders through social enterprise projects. These will equip offenders for entry into employment upon release and ensure job-ready candidates for employers. Working Wing Projects will be determined by the nature and resources of the prison, and the external funding available. Live vocational projects could be used to provide a commercial vehicle that would be run as a business delivering a range of services in the prison to the prison population. Projects could also be developed that work across both community and custody.

We will offer a personally tailored package of “Through the Gate” interventions to help offenders secure employment. Where possible, the same advisor who works with the offender in custody will continue support in the community, meeting them at the prison gate on the day of release, if necessary.

**Benefits**

The benefits of the Working Wing approach compared to existing programmes could be considerable and are summarised in Figure 2 below. They would build on A4e's work with individual prisons, where we have already demonstrated the results which can be achieved by working intensively with offenders to improve their skills and employability.

Current System	Working Wing
Numerous providers involved working on one pathway only.	One provider responsible for each offender, sourcing most appropriate support along all seven pathways
Limited join-up between services provided in prison to services on the outside	Seamless support from custody to the community and into employment with in-work support
Resettlement begins in the last weeks of the sentence	Employment and resettlement services brought into prison from the outset and continuing post release
Poor motivation for learning due to lack of employment / vocational learning focus	Vocational Projects engaging offenders in real work linked to employers and jobs on the outside

**Figure 2 – The benefits of Working Wing**

We believe that this kind of integrated approach could reduce reoffending from more than half of all offenders and three fifths of those on short sentences, to less than a third. If this level of improvement were achieved, and with reoffending estimated to be costing more than £11bn a year, the savings to the Exchequer could be very significant.