



Reimagine prisons: Building futures

Providing training and skills through pop-up prisons



Let's reimagine



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This paper is one of a series of thought experiments in which KPMG staff imagine new ways for government to achieve public policy objectives.

This might mean building services around the user rather than the provider. Or drawing on the huge potential of data and digital technologies. Or tapping into the power of markets, new incentives, transparency, or the wisdom of crowds. In every case, it involves fresh ideas.

To channel our thinking, we imposed three rules.

1 Ideas must be designed to produce better public outcomes without increasing the burden on the taxpayer.

2 They must align with the government's philosophy and headline policies.

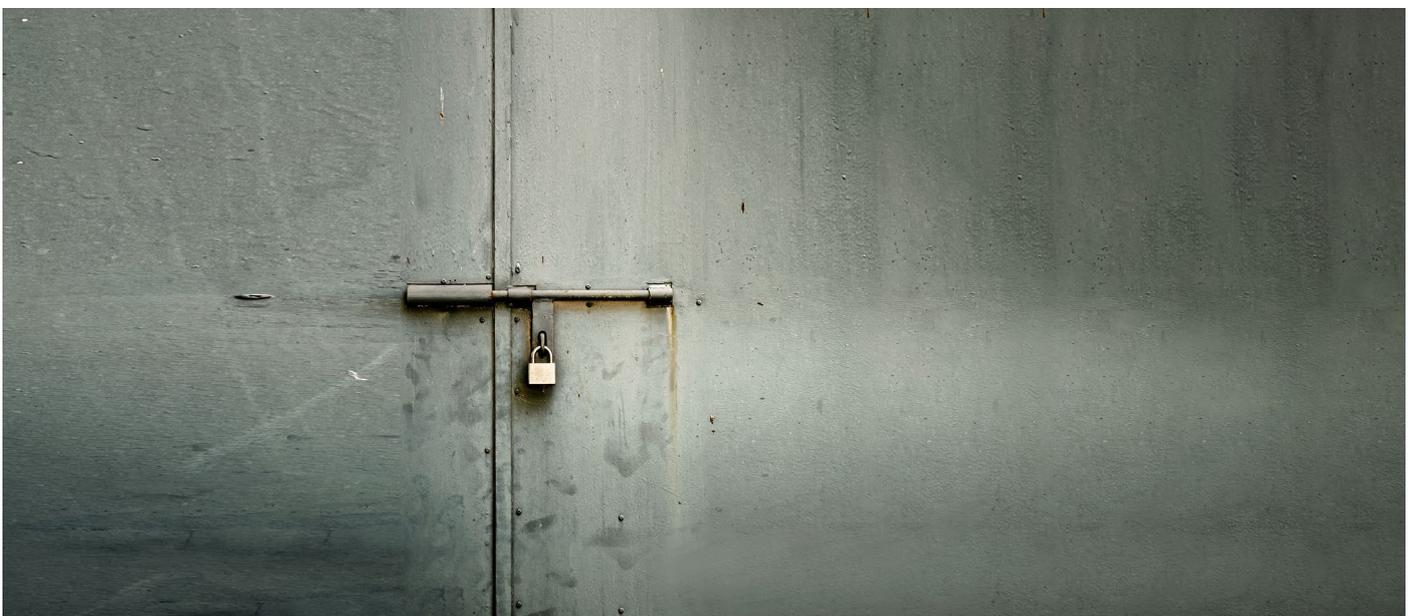
3 They must be realistic and deliverable.

But within these rules we want to step outside conventional thinking, and test out new ideas on how public policy goals can be achieved. We want to stretch ourselves, applying new technologies and techniques to solve old problems. We are not calling for a specific future – but we are reimaginging it. **What do you think?**

Where are we?

While serving a prison sentence takes away an individual's freedom, for too many offenders, re-entering society throws up additional challenges, with one of the largest being finding a job on release. Offenders may not have the right skills, education, or experience, understand how to navigate a job search, or move past the impact of having a criminal record. A major factor contributing to reducing reoffending is being able to rebuild their lives on release, of which employment is a key element. Reoffending in the UK remains too high; 44% of adults are reconvicted within one year of release, and for those serving sentences of less than 12 months, this increases to 59%.¹

HM Prison Service knows the importance of employment in reducing reoffending, with many prisons offering vocational training. Completing courses in prison training facilities, offenders can potentially finish their sentence with vocational qualifications to help secure employment. However, qualifications can only take people so far and the hands-on experience gained inside a prison is limited. Could more be done to support and build skills and experience not only while inside prison so that time is used meaningfully, but also outside during the crucial three month resettlement period following release? How can we reimagine our approach to breaking this cycle?





Prison and probation staff work with developers, contractors, local authorities and police to incorporate accommodation for inmates into construction plans so they can live and work on site – the 'Pop Up Prison'



Offenders housed and work on site to gain skills and real-life experience



On release, skills, experience and references help to secure employment

The idea: pop-up prisons

What if instead of learning construction skills within the confines of the prison walls, this training and experience could be brought into the real world on a building site through a 'pop-up' prison? Where a big development is planned – whether housing, infrastructure, or even the next generation of prisons – prison and probation staff could work with developers, contractors, local authorities, and police to incorporate a form of accommodation into the construction plans. Individuals in prison could be housed here to live and work on the site, gaining experience, skills and mentorship. Personal self-discipline and valuable references can also be obtained to help secure a job beyond the prison gates. This could be an ideal option for offenders eligible for ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence).

Run by prison staff and site contractors, prison governors and probation staff could identify and select those demonstrating the most commitment and potential amongst those assessed against appropriate risk criteria. A team of prison and support staff could also be located on site to provide additional support and supervision. With many major projects taking a year or more to complete, this provides longer term opportunities to develop deeper skills, experience, and relationships on-site. Offenders will return to their traditional 'home' prison for any necessary appointments, family visits, and assessments.

What are the potential benefits?

While some prisons do provide construction training skills, they are learned in an artificial environment where the work does not result in a lasting product or create a true sense of accomplishment. By contributing to a real-life project, it will help instil a sense of pride and ownership, creating a lasting and valuable legacy and a building gets built.

Construction is an industry facing labour shortages, which are projected to worsen with Brexit. For example, an estimated 200,000 construction jobs will be at risk if access to the EU Single Market is lost.² This idea could give construction companies access to a largely untapped new workforce.

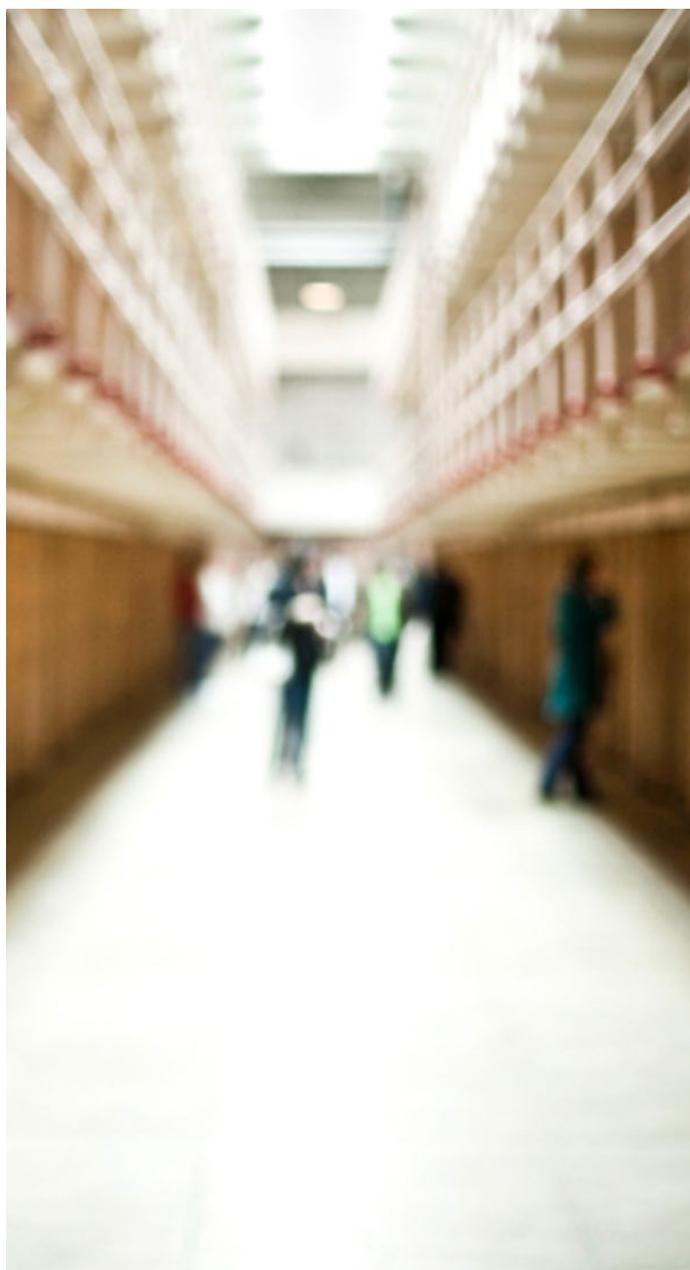
There is also benefit in helping to turn lives around and making communities safer through corporate responsibility action such as this. A percentage of individuals leaving prison could be taken on with contractors as they complete the scheme, thus creating incentives for offenders to aim for. The Government might encourage support for this initiative by creating a National Insurance holiday or non-financial incentives through an award or designation, for example.



Potential challenges

Funding for this programme could come from the wages earned by offenders working on the scheme. Offenders might also earn a stake in the housing that they have built (e.g. they could move into the housing project on completion). This could be a powerful contributor to strengthening bonds with the community, and pride and stability of place to help further reduce chances of reoffending. Other benefits could include lower unemployment rates, benefits to the economy, increased UK productivity, and social benefits to communities.

There are some clear challenges – not least the safety and security risks of giving offenders access to tools and machinery outside of the traditional prison environment. However, these can be managed and this new idea could help make a meaningful impact in improving safety for communities, and build a more positive, crime-free life for offenders on release. To start, this programme could be piloted as part of the creation of 10,000 new prison spaces by the Ministry of Justice, which will include some new housing blocks within existing prison walls, an ideal starting point to get this opportunity up and running. This scheme could also be considered in the controlled environment of factory-based modular construction, where it may be easier to test.



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Learn more about KPMG's Reimagine programme or join in the debate:



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References

¹ Tables C1a and C2a, Ministry of Justice (2017) Proven reoffending statistics: July 2014 to June 2015, London: Ministry of Justice.

² 'Brexit could cost the construction sector thousands of workers and increase the skills shortage' (2017). Available at <http://www.cityam.com/260909/brexit-could-cost-construction-sector-thousands-workers-and>

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