

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2008

### **East of England to pilot scheme to cut re-offending rates**

The East of England has been selected to take part in a pilot scheme which could significantly reduce the likelihood of people re-offending by giving them the best chance of getting a job.

The East of England is one of just two regions in the UK to have been chosen by cross Government departments, the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Ministry of Justice to pilot re-offending reduction schemes. A partnership of offender, youth, employment and government bodies will work together to promote best practice in prisons and in the community and consult with employers over the duration of this eighteen month project.

Figures from The Cabinet Office show that in 2006/7 39 per cent of offenders in the East of England were in employment. The Test Bed project will work to increase this percentage by assessing the skills and training available.

Diana Edwards, Test Bed Project Manager, said: "All the indications are that having a job is the single most important element to having a crime-free life. We must provide offenders with the skills and other support they need to find and keep work if we are to have any hope of reducing re-offending rates."

The Test Bed project will work by assessing the needs of the labour market and the current skills of offenders to identify people who would benefit from practical training and other support designed to get them ready for employment and secure better jobs.

Under the Test Bed project, funded by the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills, offenders will receive personalised information, advice and guidance and will be offered a range of training opportunities which could include literacy and numeracy skills, enterprise and self-employment training, and practical work experience with skills training.

Diana Edwards added: “To have a job can give hope and dignity to people, and employers can benefit from filling vacancies in sectors where there are skills shortages. It makes economic sense for the East of England to have people in work rather than going back to prison.”

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### **Notes to editors**

**For more information or a spokesperson for the East of England Test Bed contact Dawn Humphreys or Donna Barker at Tribe on 01603 417722 or email [dawn@tribepr.com](mailto:dawn@tribepr.com)**

The organisations involved in the **East of England Test Bed** pilot scheme partnership are:

- Learning and Skills Council
- National Offender Management Service
- Jobcentre Plus
- Prison Service
- Probation Service
- Sector Skills Councils
- Go-East
- Youth Justice Board
- Community & voluntary sectors