

Working prisoners in the UK

Laws, policies, and practical realities

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Abstract This briefing describes the governance of prison work and prison labour in the United Kingdom. Recent years have seen a considerable focus on policies aiming to promote prisoner employment and employability and yet, as the briefing shows, this focus has been confined to small parts of the UK prison system. Reliable data describing prison work is difficult to obtain, and many of the long-standing contradictions and difficulties which have plagued efforts to turn prisons into productive, rehabilitative workplaces remain unresolved. Despite some impressive progress in some parts of the system, the nature and usefulness of prison work in the UK remain largely obscure. This briefing reviews the legal and policy landscape and what little published data exists to describe work done by people serving prison sentences, and summarises what can be said about the nature and extent of different kinds of work in practice.

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