

CFO

CHRONICLE

Edition 1 - New in 2023



HM Prison &
Probation Service



European Union
European
Social Fund

Welcome!

Welcome to the 2023 CFO Chronicle.

The theme for this month is New in 2023, for which we will be celebrating how our projects adapt and innovate to continually deliver CFO projects to those deemed hardest to help

This magazine shares the best activities across all of our providers to help continue to deliver CFO projects across England.

We are continually identifying where gaps are, and there will always be new gaps to fill – it's our ability to morph and change and continually innovate so that we are always delivering to the people that need these services most that is vitally important. Many of the activities you will see are designed to support participants to give back to their community and reduce reoffence as a result.

We hope having read this edition will leave you feeling inspired!

Should you have any questions about any of the content within this newsletter, please get in touch via CFO-communications@justice.gov.uk. More information about the Edition 2 can be found on the back page.

We hope you enjoy reading through all of the amazing activities that have been delivered so far in 2023.

Mark Nickson, Head of CFO

*names changed throughout



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The performance of a lifetime

After months of preparation and dedication, the North East CFO Activity Hubs of Middlesbrough, Durham and Darlington performed their 'Jack and the Beanstalk' pantomime. Live and in person at the Middlesbrough Theatre, the show took place in February, with much anticipation.



A collaborative effort, the idea evolved from inception and the participants were enthusiastic about the performance. In front a hundred-plus-strong audience – including many CFO staff members – the stage was set for the performance of a lifetime.

From crafting the set and props, to rehearsals, everything came together through a collaborative effort. The costumes on show were colourful, the stage interactive and the sound effects added a level of immersion to the production. Not everyone involved might have taken to the stage, but they left their mark on the showcase in one way or another.

The performance itself was thoroughly entertaining from all on stage, with lots of audience participation and laughter. Even on occasions when things didn't run smoothly, participants embraced the fun and made the experience their own, with quick quips and jokes only adding to the experience and prompting cheers and laughter from the crowd.

"I really enjoyed being up there and doing it"



Speaking about the performance afterwards, the star of the show, Jason*, said: "It's a little bit of a weight off the shoulders if I'm honest. I really enjoyed being up there and doing it. I think for how much we rehearsed and how long we had to practice, we've done a really good job."

"I've done a little bit of acting before, but nothing like this. I'm just looking forward to the next one, hopefully we get the opportunity to do it."



There was support from partners involved with the CFO Activity Hubs such as Deborah Cairns from arts psychotherapy company, Catharsis, who stepped in as the pantomime director and also played the role of Fairy Beansprout. Her colleague, Afra Jurkiewicz, was the musical director.

Deborah said: "Sometimes participants hold a maladjusted level of shame when they come out of prison – having the opportunity to work alongside staff to step out of that shadow and be someone else through a character or to take on a creative backstage role is an important opportunity to give people."

Johnnie Walker from East Durham College, who collaborated with participants to design the programme, helped with technology and also played the part of the villain, said: "I'm really impressed by the dedication and hard work put in by participants and staff to bring all this together."

All proceeds from the pantomime went to Feeding Families, a charity based in North East England that offers support, hope and security to those experiencing food poverty. Feeding Families has supported a number of CFO Activity Hub participants supplying food parcels to help sustain those in need.

COMMUNITY LIVING UNIT

The Community Living Unit (CLU) is a new, specialist CFO wing at HMP High Down for long-term prisoners who may benefit from a safe space with tailored programmes and additional personalised support. The programme follows on from the success of the Discovery Wing at HMP Risley and is part of a wider pilot programme.

With a welcoming environment and culture, participants can engage with additional accredited training, motivation and confidence building, cooking, gardening, and additional family visits as well as wraparound services.

Everyone in the unit is working towards prosocial behaviour and community spirit. Participants can engage with accredited training, motivation and confidence building, cooking, gardening, with additional family visits and much more.

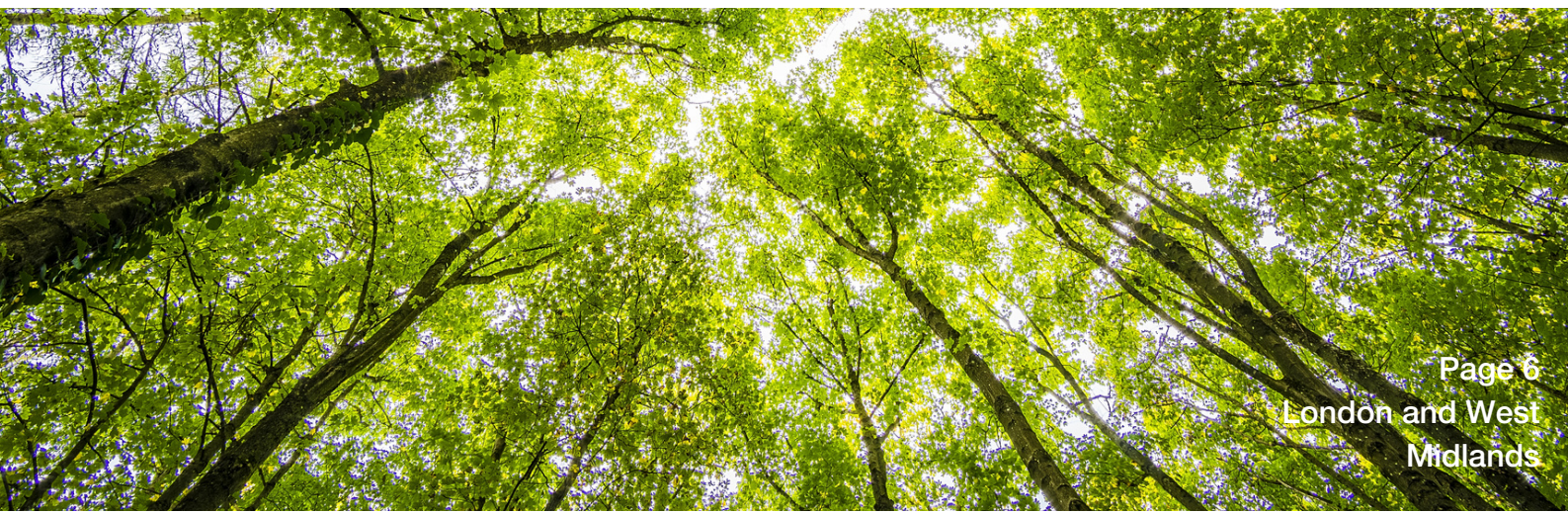
The first cohort of the pilot has almost completed the programme. Initially eight men started the programme, attendance has been 100% with the CLU is already attracting interest from peers.

Activity days (not dissimilar to what is on offer in CFO Activity Hubs) have proven to be a real hit with the men, drawing a good attendance and allowing participants to engage with activities and sessions that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

"We are now just five months into the project, and I couldn't be prouder of what we have managed to achieve in such a short space of time. I get to work with some incredible people who share my passion and enthusiasm to make this a success. And it is a success."

"I am glad to be part of something special, and I am so happy that I (we) are making a difference and will continue to help change lives. This role has certainly changed mine."

Mandy, Officer on CLU





George* has been part of the initial pilot at the CLU. He is in custody serving a life sentence for an offence he committed when he was sixteen years old. He has never previously been released and is now in his late twenties.

Reluctant to engage with many interventions, through a series of fruitful conversations George* began to trust that the project had been tailored to people in circumstances such as his. He was still nervous to engage however, and was concerned about how their lack of life experience might impact them within group settings.

Using the CLU helped to remove these barriers though. The kitchen provided George* a safe space to discuss his experiences without judgement, the community feeling allowed George* to feel at ease and the activities allowed George* to upskill his knowledge and grow in confidence. Finally, he had a positive outlook, and was willing to engage in more services available to him.

Overwhelming issues were addressed, such as council tax, and through teaching and 1-2-1s George* has developed an understanding of the world around him and the importance of integrating with his community. He even cooked a meal for the first time in his life, something he is so excited to do for his mum one day, to repay her the support over the years.

Stories such as George*'s showcase the mixture of soft skills the CLU and Hamlet programmes offer, and how accredited training can help develop participants into well-rounded individuals who feel much more positive about their future.

Elsewhere, The Hamlet has recently launched at HMP Drake Hall. The project aims to emulate the success of the CLU in a women-only environment. The programme has been finalised, with the first cohort of 39 women having started. A range of furnishings, equipment and activity materials are on-hand to deliver interventions to those involved.

The cabin has been transformed from a storeroom to a workable office with a pleasant atmosphere, whilst a classroom has been refurbished and is now dedicated CFO3 space.

Activities include gardening, therapeutic pet care, arts, decorating, book club, baking, exercise and much more, all of which contribute to reducing re-offence.

Like learning how to ride a bike...

The Warrington CFO Activity Hub have been hosting a bike maintenance and repair activity over the recent months.

It has been led by a participant who has expertise in the field and has been a success amongst peers, being a very popular intervention at the Hub.



The bikes were donated to the CFO Activity Hub by Warrington Police and have been lovingly restored by hand. Once a set were fixed, they got their first run out in the community.

A group of six participants rode through Warrington's Orford Park and had a wonderful time together. Hub Manager Tim commented that: "To see everyone return with smiles, spring freshness and a thirst for tea and life was magic."

Sadie Tutton, Contract Performance Manager at CFO said: "Interventions such as these can often help participants to progress forward and feel accepted by their local society. The peer-led nature of the session also means that participants often feel more comfortable and confident to take part. They draw upon the lived experience of their fellow participants and feel best welcomed." More on Lived Experience on page 16.

Furthermore, participants in Warrington have been running a repair shop, in keeping with the maintenance theme. They fixed a variety of clothing items with zippers and fabrics, sharing the love around the Hub by helping one another.



The Green Life Project

In 2022 the Green life Project, delivered by Three 13, started to renovate a disused and unsafe garden at the back of Alington House Community Hub in Durham, where the CFO Activity Hub is based.

Initially there was a sheer drop into the river behind, crumbling dry stone walls and a garden so overgrown you could not see the paths that lead through the space.

Fast forward 12 months, the hard work of 20 participants and the space has been completely revolutionised.

As you walk into the garden you are greeted by a pergola that sits over seating, which then overlooks raised flower beds and vegetable patches, with safe steps down to a water fountain and more raised beds of early spring flowers.

Just recently, the garden was handed back to the community centre and the many groups that attend weekly, for them to enjoy over the summer months as a restful space to enjoy the noise of the river below.

The space is fully accessible for all to enjoy and has even been nominated for a HMPPS Wildlife Award!

“You will never know how much of a change you have enabled me to make just by giving me a chance”



John* loved being part of the project, which really helped him to reintegrate into the community. He said: "It's not just for the final product, but I'd felt I'd lost my way a bit and it (the Green Life Project) really helped me to find myself and get back on track. It was good to work with everyone."





Likewise, Zahir* also took part in the project.

Just a few days in, Zahir* had enhanced his skills and spoke openly about how the project boosted their confidence and self-esteem. Through this new found confidence they would also disclose issues they had with toxic relationships, which are now being worked on.



Zahir* has since gain a qualification and was thrilled with the results of their hard work. They have exited the programme and are now registered with recruitment agencies, waiting for a date to begin upcoming employment.

As they signed off, Zahir* said: “you will never know how much of a change you have enabled me to make just by giving me a chance.”

The Canal Trust

CFO Activity Hubs aim to reintegrate participants with their local communities and areas. This can be done especially well when working with local community groups.

The process started with a wellbeing walk along Sheffield Canal, during which the group noticed a large amount of litter and graffiti along the route. Participants asked whether there was anything they could do to help and soon began litter picking along the canal using equipment donated by the local Probation Community Payback Team.



Participants were thrilled to be giving back to their local area, helping to transform the canal back into an area of natural beauty, and happy to share their achievements with others. During one walk, the team encountered another group trimming hedges along the water – this turned out to be the Canal Trust.

Through this meeting, the CFO Activity Hub and Canal Trust set up an opportunity to work together, with an activity just for Hub participants. The first session involved participants travelling on a floating pontoon, allowing them to reach over to cut back bushes and clear back some of the other greenery which was starting to encroach on the pathway and create a safety hazard.

Participants loved this opportunity, feeling it had been a fun activity which helped them all work together to give something back. They also enjoyed getting out in the open air and mentioned improved mood following the session. Tutors even noted their teamwork and sense of pride.

Speaking about the impact it had on him, Henry* said: “It was a great day. I like helping with projects, and I go walking on the Five Weirs walk quite a lot, so it will be great to see my hard work when I'm out walking. I'm going to try and get lots of other people signed up for the next one as I think it will benefit people being outside. I'm nearly 80 - so if I can do it, then anyone can, it's great that you can work at your pace and skill level too so everyone can join in.”

What started with a simple wellbeing walk has now evolved into a fortnightly collaboration between the Sheffield CFO Activity Hub and the Canal Trust.



Keep climbing

Reaching new heights is something that our CFO Activity Hubs are all about. Often this is a figure of speech, but in Stoke, they took things quite literally, introducing a rock climbing activity to participants.

Getting participants out in their local community, rock climbing was a popular intervention, and was enjoyed by all. In particular however, one Mike* found the climb a life-changing experience.

Being afraid of heights, there was an extra level of challenge involved for Mike*, and it was only through words of encouragement from his peers and Support Workers, that he even attempted to scale the wall.

"I conquered my fear of heights and it's given me a confidence boost and a sense of achievement"

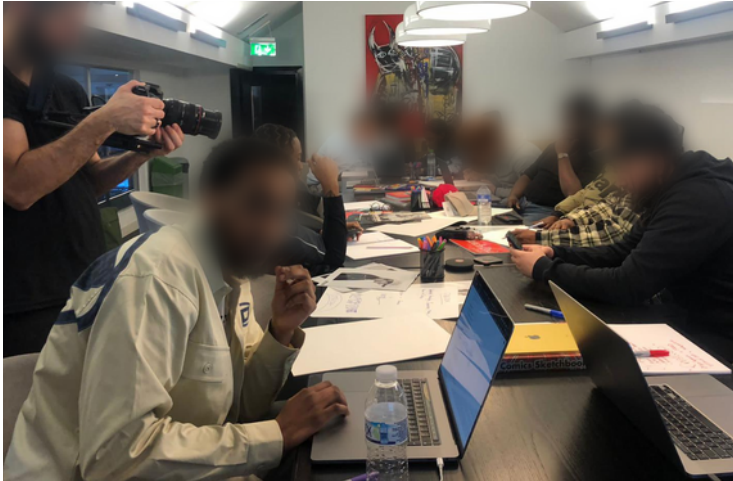
Not only did he succeed, but he climbed the entire wall, leaving his fear in the past and being thrilled with the experience. Speaking about it afterwards Mike* said: "I enjoyed the rock climbing, I conquered my fear of heights and it's given me a confidence boost and a sense of achievement."

Mike* then went on to craft a rock climbing wall out of pottery at the Hub in the following days, and staff were happy to see the confidence-boosting impact this new activity had on the participant.

Rock climbing is ongoing at the Stoke Activity Hub, and serves as a great team building, fun exercise which helps to get participants back out into their local community – there are many rock climbing centres located around the country, and linking up with them could have unforeseen benefits for participants, just like Mike*!



Lewisham listens



The Lewisham CFO Activity Hub have a strong focus on employability and empowering participants to success within the labour market.

One of the main ways they have heightened their focus on this is via the popular 'Hub Council' intervention. Led by participants, this group offers those who attend to make their voices heard within the space, granting a comfortable area to share ideas and thoughts for the future.

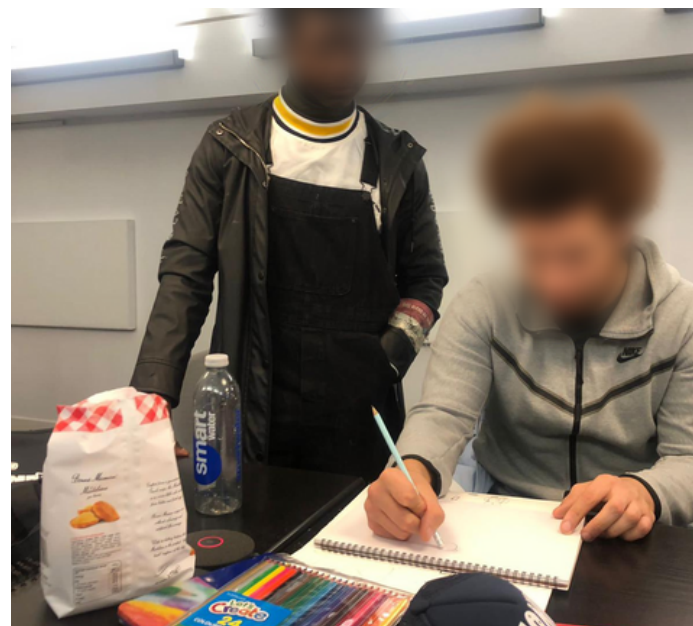
It also helps to create a greater sense of community between participants through working towards a common goal.

Recently the Hub Council expressed their desire to have more access to CSCS cards and construction roles. As a result Hub staff have tailored some added activities and availability towards this industry. Activity Hub Deputy Manager Sharni said: "We listened to what they wanted - more and different opportunities - so we have collaborated with a wider range of potential employers and brought them to the Hub to meet the participants."

One such potential employer is Inside Out Clothing, a fashion house who are the UK's first clothing brand created, designed and hand produced by young ex-offenders. They have visited the Hub to provide those interested with a potential pathway into the industry and share creative skills.

Elsewhere, Neil Gander from Electric Mayonnaise has attended the Lewisham Hub. Working in collaboration, Electric Mayonnaise aim to build participants' confidence and social skills – essential ingredients for employability.

Assistance with employability, whilst not a core focus of Activity Hubs, is one of the many branches which can be offered to CFO participants to help reduce re-offence, develop abilities or simply provide some much-needed routine and confidence.



Brum Beats

Brum Beats is the aptly named musical intervention delivered by the Birmingham CFO Activity Hub.

The idea came to fruition following a participant forum, whereby some participants wanted a safe space to create music and media to best express themselves.

The team in Birmingham were able to reach out to Making Change Studios whose founders have worked in custody. Some of the team members at the studio even have lived experience, making them even more relatable to for participants, and breaking down barriers to engagement with the Hub.



Since the initial sessions Brum Beats has evolved. What was once just music now includes music, podcasting, creative media, sound mixing, videography and editing. The variety of options mean there are many different ways for participants to get involved with the project and feel the benefits of such.

During World Book Day celebrations, Brum Beats took centre stage yet again. This time, with the group creating and Audio Story Book. The premise was that each participant and staff member added a few lines to a story they created off the cuff so there was no way of knowing where the story would go. After which, participants recorded the tale on the audio equipment, enhancing their skills in using such.

Events like these help participants in the Birmingham CFO Activity Hub to collaborate well, have healthy discussions and add to the community feeling. Sean* added: "Today was really good, really funny and as a group activity you could see how it brought us together."

The CFO Activity Hub have even collaborated with Making Change Studios (and TKO) to deliver a Pro Social Identity Taster at West Bromwich Probation, to specifically target 18–25-year-olds from minority ethnic communities in the local area.

Using the podcasting and sound equipment, a new session was delivered covering 'what does community mean to you?'. The taster was both innovative and informative and delivered an engaging introduction to the Birmingham Hub for the potential participants.



Fit For Work

The CFO team paid a visit to the Fit For Work team earlier this year. Working on dry stone walling in Bakewell, the participants braved the snowy conditions and were happy to be engaging with the project.

Fit For Work acts as an excellent bridge to the community for participants, allowing them to contribute to their local area. As well as dry stone walling, the team take part in hedge laying, install handcrafted gates and much more. The result is an intervention that not only benefits the environment and community, but one that also empowers participants to enter the next stage in their lives.

Volunteer Kieran*, who has been part of the project for five years, explained to us how stone walling works, and encouraged us to get involved with the activity, helping to future-proof the section of wall. He said: "I might not be the best speaker but I'm learning how to best show everyone how to do it. It's hard to take a step back and let the lads get on with it, I'm one for getting stuck into it and getting work done, but it's a chance to take in my surroundings more and understand where I've been."

Evan* has been a part of the CFO programme since 2018, he's completed a variety of courses, examinations and activities over the years.

"Now I'm getting close to seventy it's really hard work, sometimes I get home and just collapse into the chair and have a sleep for a few hours. It's great though, it keeps me active and feeling well. I was speaking to the doctor, and he said it's the best thing for me. I like coming out with the lads and working with the younger people, it helps keep me young and keeps my mind active."

One of the newer participants was Yusuf*, who really appreciated the opportunity to try something new whilst gaining qualifications and skills he can take into his future working life.

When asked what he enjoyed about the programme, Yusuf* said: "It's good being out in the air, my favourite bit has been the hedge laying. I've been getting loads of qualifications. It's rewarding, at the end of the day you step back and can say you did that."

Lived Experience and CFO

Championing lived experience is a core goal of HMPPS in 2023.

Lived experience is defined as: 'personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people.'

It is also defined as: 'the experiences of people on whom a social issue or combination of issues has had a direct impact.'

For HMPPS, whether this means an individual has been in prison, or subject to a community order, lived experience is vital in connecting with participants.

We had the pleasure of sitting down with Kylie McGowan, a Support Worker at our Stoke-on-Trent CFO Activity Hub, to talk about her lived experience, what her experiences bring to the Hub and misconceptions around those who have been through the Criminal Justice System.

"They tend to want to tell me a lot more because I understand where they're coming from"

"I'm not judgmental"

Kylie had suffered from depression and anxiety in her past, as well as an abusive relationship. She would turn to alcohol and drug use to combat this negativity, which found her in trouble with the law.

Following a court case Kylie came away with a two-year suspended sentence and an ankle tag for six months.

Speaking about her life at the time, Kylie said: "I think that caused a lot of anxiety, where I isolated myself because of fear of judgment and people knowing what I'd done. And I didn't really like going out and speaking about it then, because I felt so ashamed.

From that point then, when I didn't get locked up, I thought, you know what? I don't want to be in this situation again. What can I do now that's going to change that?" she added.

Kylie has since been a participant on the CFO3 programme, worked for the NHS and is now a full time support worker in Stoke – helping those with similar issues to prevent re-offence and allow them to reintegrate into society.

Her skills and ability to navigate situations due to her experience are a huge asset to the Hub, and Kylie is a shining example of what a lived experience staff member can bring to CFO, and beyond.



Hi Kylie, can you tell us about how to come to work at the Stoke CFO Activity Hub?

"When I went through probation, and I met a Case Worker at Ixion, Dawn Spilsbury, who was in CFO3.

She put me on some courses to help rebuild my confidence. She knew that what I'd been through and that I wanted to give something back. I wanted to help other people.

Meeting Dawn and how friendly and welcoming she was, and she believed in me, and I think that makes such a difference if you've got someone that actually cares about people and wants to make a difference."

What do you feel someone with that experience can bring that cannot be bought otherwise?

"We have, and I've been told this from people that we have worked with as well, they're [participants] more willing to engage with us when they know that we understand them.

So, if I give a little bit about myself to somebody and say, look, I have been here, I've had a drug addiction, I've been in trouble with the law, but this doesn't define us, we can move past that.

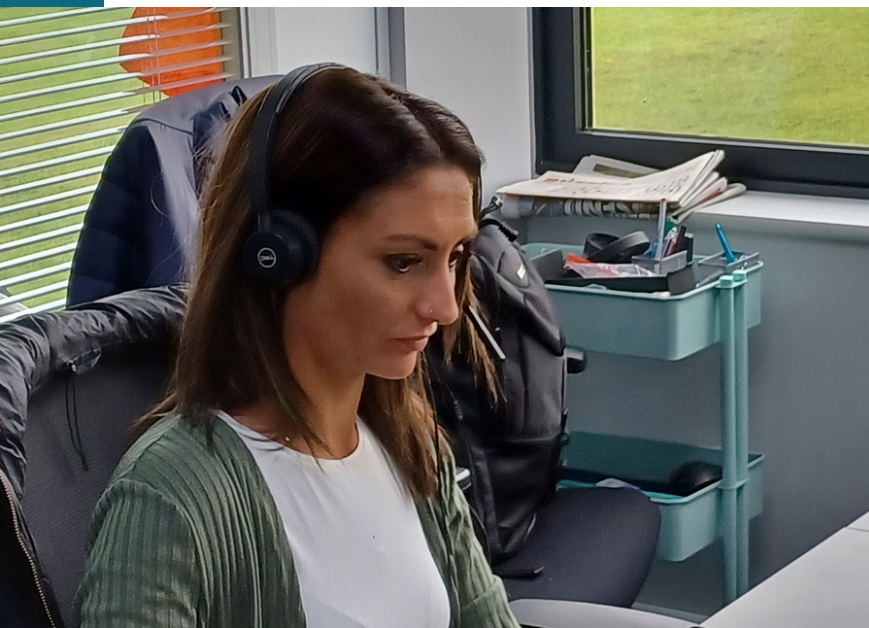
So, by me just giving a little bit of what I've been through, they really open up and we can have the conversations where we can put them in touch with the services and support that they need.

People used to say to me, I find it really hard opening up to somebody else rather than you who's been through it all.

They tend to want to tell me a lot more because I understand where they're coming from. I'm not judgmental. I've been there. So how can I judge somebody and I'm not that sort of person anyway, I think that we need to support each other."



The team at the Stoke CFO Activity Hub have fully embraced Kylie and her skillset, and she has already started to make a huge impact on participants, providing a safe, non-judgemental face who understands exactly what impacts the Criminal Justice System can have on people.



What has been your favourite part of working at the Hub so far? Do you have a Good News Story that makes you proud?

"It's very rewarding at the moment because in my previous job that I worked, I worked with a lady who got sentenced. But we've seen her come back through the Hub and her seeing me straight away here, it's a familiar face. She knew all about me anyway, so she knew it wasn't judgmental. She knew it was a safe place that she could come.

We do yoga together now and we do meditation – it's brilliant. And seeing the difference in her; she's not drinking anymore, she hasn't for 12 months. It's absolutely fantastic.

She's really putting in work into herself now because she sees that people believe in her and that we can make these changes.

It doesn't feel like work at the minute to me, to be honest!"

How might the Hub have benefitted you when you were going through your experience?

"I definitely would have ripped people's arms off to get here.

It would have been massive for me to rebuild and to grow again. Even just giving us the confidence back that we lose by going through what we go through. We have other people's conceptions of us, but we don't feel good about ourselves, so we don't need anyone else passing judgment because we feel really low anyway.

Just to have the conversations and have people supporting you here. Like come and have a game of pool and it's not like we're across each other from a desk having those professional serious conversations where people won't open up."

"By me just giving a little bit of what I've been through, they really open up and we can have the conversations where we can put them in touch with the services and support that they need"

Employment plays a key role in helping people with lived experience to make a success of their lives. Prison leavers who secure a role are up to nine percent less likely to reoffend. They also bring a plethora of unmatched abilities, insight and fresh perspectives to our approaches.

Lived experience should therefore be embraced, and at CFO we are proud to see lived experience staff numbers grow.

Are there any myths or misconceptions around people who have lived experience that you want to address?

"We do come across people like that, because we don't all think the same way. But if somebody believes in somebody to make these differences it can help them along the way."

Some people just need a little bit of support. So just holding their hand or something or taking them somewhere to stop that anxiety and things from building up. It can be little, or it could be massive to them.

I feel that people who are judgmental, they really need to look at themselves in and kind of ask themselves why they're being like that with other people. We all make mistakes, we're all human. And I don't believe that anyone's not made a mistake in the lifetime.

What's wrong with giving second chances? We're all learning, aren't we? Life's a big learning curve. It's a long journey and if we can support each other while we're on this, then it makes a hell of a difference."



Should your CFO Activity Hub not have a lived experience member of staff, perhaps Kylie's words will inspire you to take the next step.

Lived experience, just like Kylie's, can contribute to making CFO Activity Hubs even more comfortable for participants, allowing them to open up in ways they may have guarded against beforehand and making them more open to services which could be of benefit to them.

Hub charter

Writing and art projects are always very popular across the country in CFO Activity Hubs – however the Hastings Hub took these interventions to the next level recently.

Rather than using pen and paper, they took to the wall, crafting an amazing charter that has taken centre stage in the space.

Created by participants, the Hastings CFO Activity Hub charter depicts the values and expectations participants have set for themselves and the Hub, presented in a creative and visually pleasing manner!

Having the charter visible on the wall reminds participants and staff to respect each other, and embody these values in order to keep the Hub as a welcoming and safe space for all.

The wall will continually grow as more participants add to it and offers a chance for new participants to understand what the Hastings Hub is all about when they first attend.

Each Hub has it's own personality and individual touches, so something such as a Hub charter can help to showcase exactly what your location brings to the table. This makes creating a charter an ideal activity to express the hard work of staff and the impact of this work on participants.



Scarborough launch

The newest CFO Activity Hub opened its doors earlier this year! Located in Scarborough, the new space is a satellite of the York Hub. Working in tandem the staff have delivered a successful start to life in Scarborough, with a positive impact already being felt by the participants. The Scarborough CFO Activity Hub Launch Day was well-received, playing host to both professionals and participants.

The CFO Activity Hub was decorated in bunting and balloons to celebrate all of the hard work the team put into getting the brand new Hub ready for the day. The launch invited in professionals from a variety of services in Scarborough, including those which address housing, homelessness, sexual health, probation, alcohol and drug services and many more. The new venue has already made an impact on probation - with this feedback from a Probation Officer:



I just wanted to provide some feedback about the Scarborough CFO Activity Hub. They have been working with Callum (details redacted). Since Callum started attending the Hub, I have seen a vast improvement in his motivation, an improvement in his thinking skills, his compliance and in his outlook.

He has been encouraged and supported by the Hub to think about starting a college course. They have assisted him to apply for the course, and he is currently really motivated and hopeful for the future. I believe that as a result of their support he is contemplating permanently ending a very toxic relationship, and has indicated to me that he really values their input, advice and support.

It is obvious that Callum is really enjoying attending the Hub and is finding this high level of support and intervention very helpful. It is a pleasure to see the change in him in such a short space of time.

I just wanted to share some really positive feedback about one of the services which is available to us, as I feel most of the time, we are all quick to complain about services and slow to praise, when we witness really positive interventions."



Second chances and making advances



CFO Activity Hubs offer chances for participants to have a second chance to contribute to their community, or achieve something they may never have deemed possible before.

At the Peterborough CFO Activity Hub, participants are doing just that, through an upcycling activity at the Hub. This required a lot of planning, as the Hub needed lots of relevant equipment, including a woodworking table and clamp. From here, participants have engaged fantastically with the project.

Led by a former lifer and a ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) participant, the team built birdboxes, drawers and more from upcycled wood.

One of these participants, Ian*, is a peer mentor who engages fellow Hub members and is well respected by others, as he teaches them how to make these wooden crafts. As a peer mentor, he feels he offers a sense of steadiness and guidance his peers. Ian* said: "I like upcycling, making stuff out of other materials. I've been doing this project [the bird boxes] for what feels like ages. I try and get people involved and sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's hard."

When speaking about the impact this activity, and the wider Hub have had on his life, Ian* added: "It's been really good for me. I did the course and was a peer mentor inside and I always wanted to do something like that outside, but that's hard to do, it's hard to know where to start. So, without the Hub I don't know what I would have done, or where I would have ended up."

This is evidenced by the ROTL, Peter*, who said: "Before starting I felt low on confidence and found it daunting to walk in. As soon as I walked in, I felt good in myself and staff welcomed me and made feel at home straight away."

Upcycling and sustainability are key features throughout the Peterborough CFO Activity Hub, with metal crafts on display and even environmentally-friendly coffee.

The birdboxes are being sold in order to raise money for victims of the Turkey and Syria earthquake – just another way of participants supporting those in need.

"Without the Hub I don't know what I would have done, or where I would have ended up"

Supporting nature

It isn't just the Peterborough Activity Hub who have been taking to woodworking in 2023.

At the Leicester CFO Activity Hub, in similar circumstance, participants were asked if they would like to add extra social value to their work. As a collective they landed on wanting to help animals in the local area, feeling there was little support for them available.

It therefore made perfect sense, to support local animal charities with their woodworking.

Their new woodworking bench was put to the test, and quickly the participants were producing well made bird boxes, big hotels, snuffle mats and water bowls – covering a whole range of wildlife needs.

Barry*, who has been taking part in the project, said: “I wanted something constructive to do with my time. I like woodworking and making things. Doing something to help the animals is great, I just hope they like my bird box.”

Led by Support Worker, Andy, the group have developed their woodworking skills leaps and bounds during the project, learning the basics and getting to grips with some more challenging skills. These carpentry abilities will help some to open up other routes to success.

Just like the Peterborough birdboxes, the Leicester Hub will aim to donate the crafts to local charity shops, or sell them in order to raise money for charity.



“I wanted something constructive to do with my time”



Award Winning HMP Risley



"The veteran course brought me closer to the other veterans. I've got someone to talk to and engage with"

Earlier this year, Veterans HQ held their award ceremony, which was kindly hosted by Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Roy Gladden, at Liverpool Town Hall.

Chris Grace from HMP Risley was recognised with the Andy Cooke Award for supporting military veterans in the criminal justice system.

This was the inaugural award in recognition of the hard work that he has carried out in supporting veterans. Andy's family presented the award to Chris and are so proud of their father's legacy regarding his work in supporting veterans.

Chris and the team at HMP Risley have been pivotal in the success of the CFO Discovery Wing (one of the pilot programmes, similar to the CLU on page six). Their innovative approach has been vital in helping the development of the wing; both the participant numbers and testimonials are testament to this achievement.

HMP Risley now has upwards of 40 verified veterans on the wing, the most across England. Veterans are now being trained to be peer mentors to others on the wing, a qualification they can use upon release.

Speaking at an Open Day event earlier in the year, Hugh* said: "The veteran course brought me closer to the other veterans. I've got someone to talk to and engage with."

"I suffer with anxiety and usually one of the other lads (veterans) will pull me over and ask if I'm okay. Sometimes I don't even realise I'm suffering until they ask first. It's great that we're now being given the right tools."

Under 25s



The Bristol CFO Activity Hub recently launched their under 25s sessions, which occur every Wednesday morning.

It can be challenging as a Hub to deliver what every audience requires all at once, so these sessions have been designed in response to what young people in the Bristol area want.



These tailored weekly sessions largely revolve around personal development and preparing younger participants for future employment. Participants can complete sessions on Digital College courses, substance misuse, cooking, managing emotions or take part in indoor sports. All of these interventions are designed to improve pro-social worth and behaviour, preparing participants for the next stage in their life and career.

As a result of this group's success, the Hub are piloting a six-week course, which has been co-designed with a participant.

This will help to specifically support Under 25s to be employment ready. Participants will be helped to work on CVs, disclosure, positive attitudes in the workplace, interview techniques and will have the opportunity to gain an Accredited First Aid certificate.

A random act of kindness goes a long way...

The Wolverhampton CFO Activity Hub fully embraced 'Random Acts of Kindness Day,' which takes place on February 17th, by producing something uniquely crafted for their local community.

The team have been working with 'Foodetc.' and produced multiple sample pieces (such as the aprons below) designed for engagement with kitchen and cooking activities.

These engagements include cookery courses, shopping advice and healthy dieting and nutrition.



The feedback from the participants was positive, as not only did they have the opportunity get involved with supporting a social enterprise, but they also developed a new skill in sewing the aprons themselves with the guidance from the Interventions Facilitators.

The staff at the Wolverhampton CFO Activity Hub also visited Bilston Approved Premises to serve brunch to the residents in order to build a relationship with them and engage with the local community.

These acts of kindness truly show that it is better to give than to receive, and the feeling of being able to contribute to the wider community is something important to CFO participants.

Community garden and spirit

Now that the winter months have passed, work has started on the creation of a Community Garden in the HMP Holme House CFO Activity Hub. The Project is led by one of the HMPPS Veterans Officers and supported by six veterans.

The team have completed the repair of existing poly tunnels and the creation of raised beds for flowers and vegetables, to complement the Memorial Garden at HMP Holme House. On top of this, a wooden building has been designated to the project as a dry space for veterans to pot plants and continue their efforts, even in more challenging weather conditions.

As part of the programme participants renewed their First Aid training. Practical sessions and tests included CPR, burns, wounds, bleeding and how to use a defibrillator correctly. Participants even spent time in evening testing one another on the skills, helping everyone progress as a team.

The veterans who passed also received a certification which is valid for three years, helping to bolster their prospects upon release.



They won't stop there though, as the project will be an ongoing staple of the Hub.

A new memorial site has been dug out and shaped, and is currently under construction. Seven tonnes of white stones have been ordered and once delivered, veterans will fill the area in preparation for the arrival of a 'Tommy' statue from HMP Kirklevington Grange.

The statue, made in the metal shop, will be placed in the centre of the circle and participants will add box hedging for to complete the space.

Finally, all vegetable produce will be harvested and donated to North East food banks, which will be much appreciated by the resource.

1,000 Enrolments

Darren Ramsdale has been working on CFO3 since the start of the contract in 2015. Operating in the East Midlands, he has just recently passed his 1000th enrolment onto the programme – a first across the CFO3 Ingeus contracts.

Darren works in HMP Ranby as a CFO3 Case Worker and has become the embedded staff member there working with men in custody.

Gary Smith, Head of Delivery for CFO3 shared: "Darren's job is not an easy one, and it sees him supporting many participants, with a variety of complex needs, in preparation for release to the community. He understands the need to ensure an individual approach is delivered, to ensure the specific needs and training of participants is implemented at the right time for them."



"He understands the need to ensure an individual approach is delivered, to ensure the specific needs and training of participants is implemented at the right time for them"

This ever-growing knowledge has led him to deliver 730 training sessions and 900 specialist supportive measures over the years. His hands-on approach is invaluable for participants struggling with mental health conditions, substance misuse and a range of other complex needs.

Darren should be very proud of his contribution in the East Midlands (we certainly are!), and the real impact his work has on reducing reoffending.

International Women's Day

As part of their International Women's Day events, the Leeds CFO Activity Hub set out to assure that female needs were understood by all genders. They began with a quiz that got everyone thinking about the theme of equity and empowerment. Afterwards, they were visited by Maureen from Freedom4Girls, who are a charity battling against period poverty. She talked to the group about the importance of period poverty and donated products to attendees.

Afternoon tea was served, with a selection of the food created by the Hub participants, with plenty of purple sweets and balloons to fit the theme of International Women's Day.

A 'swap shop' was set up in the Hub that was filled to the brim with donations of clothes, shoes, household items and toiletries free for anyone to take away, before finishing off the day with arts and crafts filled with positive affirmations.

Staff fed back that it was a pleasure to see everyone get involved and ask questions about how they can make a difference for women and girls in Leeds.

Moving forward the Leeds CFO Activity Hub have developed a specific suggestion box for their female focus group. This will allow female participants to be best heard, adding to their comfort within the Hub and appealing directly to their specific needs.



Adaptive approach

Recently, a sport session at the Croydon CFO Activity Hub delivered by Air Network, the Hub's sporting provider, trainer Anthony, offered some tailored sport support with a twist with participant Kyle*.

A quieter class allowed for more focused and guided support and Kyle* was thankful for the support and the added motivation he needed.

When asked about the Hub's impact, he said: "They (the Hub) have done so much for me, they saw something in me that other people couldn't see, and I wouldn't be in this part of my life without them."



"They (the Hub) have done so much for me, they saw something in me that other people couldn't see, and I wouldn't be in this part of my life without them"

Whilst working through the session Antony delivered not only sporting excellence, but important motivation and encouragement with advice around goal setting, employment and money management being shared. Through the encouragement he has received Kyle* will be looking into a potential qualifications and employment, as he continues to make positive choices to better himself through the Hub's guidance.

A great example of how an activity can evolve and expand to fit the needs of specific participants, allowing them to excel and best engaging them with interventions of most interest to them.

The wider impact of the Hub was felt by Kyle* as he added: "I only have travel money so I have to use it wisely, but I know I have everything I need. I come here, I can get drink and food and use the computers, I use the food bank too and just get what I need."

Wildlife award nomination

Making the most of the space available at the CFO Activity Hub is a challenge to relish in.

Despite not having an outdoor location available, the Liverpool CFO Activity Hub have been undeterred, and introduced an indoor gardening activity for their green-fingered participants to take part in.

The well-used space has been recognised by HMPPS, being one of six CFO projects that have been nominated for a HMPPS Wildlife Award!

This award is active across the HMPPS estate, which recognises community support, restorative justice and creative learning and skills for custodial and non-custodial offenders, whilst supporting offending rehabilitation programmes.

Liverpool's nomination is therefore not just recognition of a wonderful indoor garden space, but of their ability to create a pro-social atmosphere and reduce re-offence through their activities on offer.



Many of our Hub's across the country have completed outstanding ecology projects – including HMP Holme House, Durham and Warrington, amongst others.

A community within a community



Men's Matters has been taking place throughout past the months at our Manchester CFO Activity Hub. This is a programme designed and ran by Support Worker, Jack, and encourages a sense of community and chatter within the Hub.

The group has been a hit amongst male participants.

Jack started with simple topics, but the success of the project has allowed it to evolve into something more applicable to everyday life, with relationship management and mental health discussions taking place. It is an ever-growing process, which is led by the needs of those in attendance.

"I like the social parts of the Hub, all of the group activities, it's nice to get here and talk because most when I'm at home it's just me"

Men's Matters has created a 'safe space' for participants, encouraging participants into other social activities they otherwise may not usually engage with as they feel a strong sense of community amongst their fellow attendees.

Likewise, the Manchester participant newsletter has blossomed a community with the community of the Hub, helping participants work on personal skills such as communication and positive feedback as they write articles, poems, interviews and more together.

These group sessions have real impact on those most isolated within their local communities, as Richard* stated: "I like the social parts of the Hub, all of the group activities, it's just nice to get here and talk because most when I'm at home it's just me."



New Dawn

New Dawn is a CFO Development Fund project in both the South East and East of England.

Ran by Aurora, the project gives safety, support, advocacy, and empowerment to survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking.

New Dawn sessions cover a variety of topics including positive changes, identifying controlling behaviour through letter writing, self awareness, self management and demonstrating good coping techniques.

The group have developed a real sense of community and togetherness along their journey, being able to share their experiences in a comfortable space – for many, this is the very first time they will have been able to address these personal issues.

The sessions have been noted to not only tackle past trauma and difficulties, but they have also seen a great improvement in perseverance, resilience and growth of character. Breaking down these barriers helps to reduce re-offence and makes participants feel much more positive about their future prospects.

3 Lovely Ladies



Thank you to every
single one of you who
work with Aurora.

You change lives every
day and I will forever
be thankful for all I
have learnt and the huge
fact that you opened my
eyes that I am a
Survivor!

Thank you guys
you have helped
me, more than
you ever no!

I do feel so much
lighter in my self

I Am a Survivor"

Please don't ever
stop your great
work, we need you
all the best

Claire* is a shining success story from the New Dawn project. She had suffered from an abusive relationship with her ex-partner and has a history of trauma and abuse from her adult relationships. This led to C* feeling anxious about joining the New Dawn group as she was concerned about how she would respond to group work and the subjects being talked through. Trusting the process, Claire* opted to take part.

As it was her first time in custody, the group presented Claire* the ideal space to address things she had never been able to previously.

Upon enrolment she scored 12 on the self-esteem scale and at the back end of the sessions, she improved her score to a 14 – just one point away from what would be considered the 'normal' range.

Since her completion of the full programme, Claire* has gone on to become a wing representative as part of the prison council. She is determined to use her new-found voice to support others (especially those who have experienced domestic abuse) and influence change, in the same manner she has done as part of the New Dawn sessions.

What's Next?

Our next edition of the CFO Chronicle will be launching the summer months, with the theme being diversity.

We'd love to assure that your CFO Activity Hub or CFO3 provisions are well represented so please send any submissions for the diversity issue to CFO-communications@justice.gov.uk. This could include anything from neurodiversity activities to Pride celebrations!

For updates in the meantime, why not follow CFO on our social channels?



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