

A stylized illustration of a sunflower and a bumblebee. The sunflower is in the foreground, and the bumblebee is flying towards it. The background is a soft, purple and blue gradient.

Quarterly Newsletter

Supporting
National Year of
Reading with
activities in
custody and
the community

Through-the-gate
delivery helping
participants to
transition
successfully into
the community

Updates on
nationwide CFO
delivery, veterans
and women's
support



Contents

Welcome to our first CFO Quarterly Newsletter of 2026.

Throughout 2026 CFO will be embracing the National Year of Reading, which looks to enhance the literacy experience for people across the criminal justice system. We've also been looking at the positive impact of through the gate delivery for participants and more.

Should you want to learn more about CFO delivery, have questions about the materials in this newsletter or want to make a referral, please visit our website: [CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk](https://www.CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk)



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Artwork above from Preston and Birmingham CFO Activity Hubs.

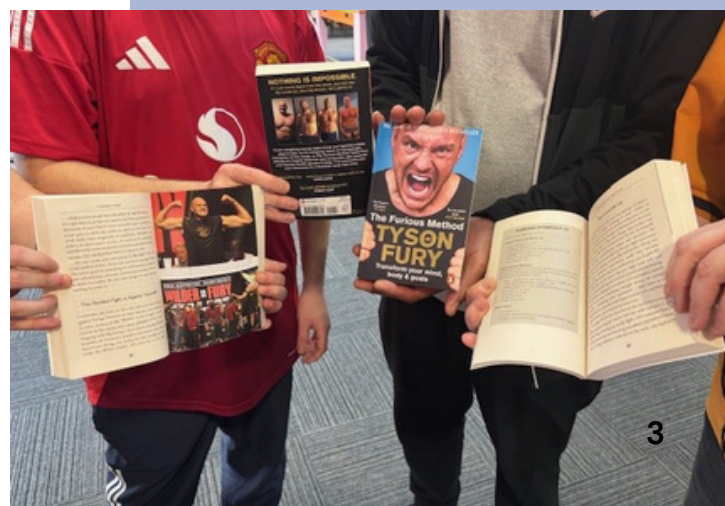
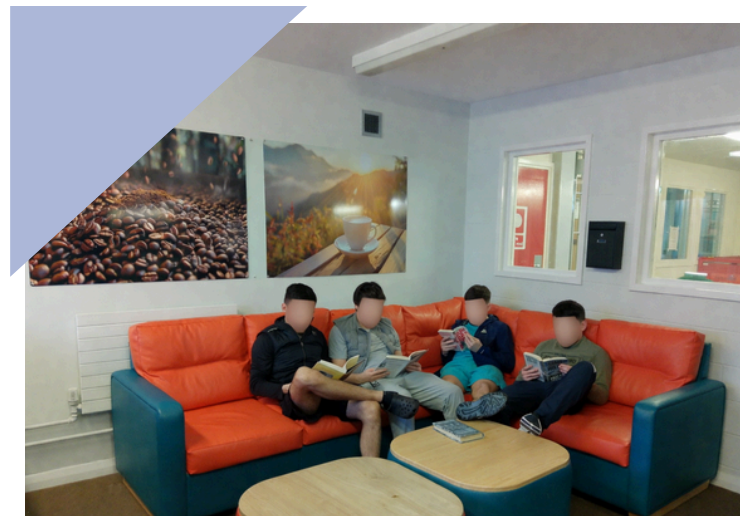
National Year of Reading

Reducing reoffending through literacy skills.

The National Year of Reading creates a powerful moment to promote reading and learning not only within our custodial sites but also across our community delivery. Whether in prison or the community, many participants face barriers such as low literacy and restricted access to materials. This initiative helps us open up new pathways to reading, build confidence, and support the positive journeys already being taken by CFO participants.

Literacy can be a powerful foundation for rehabilitation, whether someone is in custody or supported in the community. Many participants have had challenging early experiences with reading, often shaped by disrupted education, negative school memories, or limited access to suitable materials.

With the right support, reading can offer calm, focus and a sense of escape, bringing meaningful wellbeing benefits in both custodial and community settings. It can help build positive routines, grow confidence and open up new pathways into learning and skills development. Shared reading activities also create opportunities for connection – supporting stronger peer relationships and fostering positive, constructive interactions between staff and participants wherever they are engaging with the CFO programme. ►



National Year of Reading has established six practical ways of supporting the development of literacy skills – here's how CFO are supporting each:



Become a literacy champion: literacy champions and peer mentors are present at several CFO locations, supporting others through reading and writing skills



Embed a culture of reading with bespoke resources: workbooks are available throughout the CFO Evolution programme and participants can request further materials to enhance their progression



Enhance access to reading materials: CFO have multiple, ever-growing libraries available at CFO Wings, with reading materials and book clubs at CFO Activity Hubs too



Connect reading to wellbeing and family time: an activity was facilitated at the Community Living Unit at HMP High Down whereby participants read storybooks to their children; having a positive impact on both participants and their families



Collaborate with partner organisations: CFO work with several sub-providers and stakeholders to best engage participants; the Shannon Trust are just one of many who help to improve participants' literacy skills



Take part in national and sector moments: activity schedules from CFO Activity Hubs contain national days with educational elements, such as World Book Day; they also outline educational and literacy-based activities available to participants monthly

CFO Wing Libraries

Libraries at CFO Wings allow participants to access reading materials that might otherwise be unavailable to them, helping them to develop literacy skills in their own time. At HMP Risley for example, a book exchange is available for participants, so new books are consistently available on the wing for participants and mentors. And at HMP Lancaster Farms the wing library is part of their on-wing coffee shop.



Peer Support

Peer support can be a key factor in helping participants to boost their literacy skills. At the Nottingham CFO Activity Hub, Matthew* has been offering this support to others, having graduated through the peer mentoring programme at the Hub.

Matthew's* Support Worker helped him identify transferrable skills and experience to develop into the role, even working around health restrictions to define a new career path for him.

Working with Shannon Trust, who support people who can't read, or struggle to, Matthew* began delivering sessions to his peers within the Hub. Aisha Homar, Programme Manager from Shannon Trust, said: *"Our peer-led approach to literacy is about empowerment, inclusion and meeting people where they are. By creating safe, supportive learning environments, we help individuals build confidence in their reading and open more opportunities for education and employment. Peer mentors gain valuable skills and a sense of purpose. When people like Matthew* support others, it shows the power of trust and lived experience in helping people feel motivated and capable of change."*

These sessions have been beneficial to participants in improving their literacy skills and helping to make everyday information more accessible. They have also been positive for Matthew*, who has been able to gain experience in teaching others, moving him closer to his career goals.

Speaking about his experience, Matthew said: *"Helping people to improve their literacy skills has had a strong impact on my sense of self and my self-worth. I don't actually know if I helped anyone break the cycle they were on or not, but I like to think that I, at least, gave them the opportunity to do so. Peer mentoring has had a massively positive impact on my life and on the lives of others, including my own family. I definitely gain just as much from my mentoring work as I give to those I help and I hope it carries on for a long time to come."*

Celebrating Success

As part of National Year of Reading initiative, CFO will be producing a storybook of literacy projects from participants, including short stories and poems.

Here's just one as a taste of what's to come! The poem is titled 'Better Days' and was written by a CFO participant on the CFO Unity Wing at HMP Humber.

When it seems to get too much
And you feel like you are losing touch
Remind yourself you've come so far
And keep believing in who you are

Take each day one step at a time
And everything will be just fine
Try not to worry about the rest
All you can do is try your best

Make a change or start a new
Find something that's right for you
Leave your troubles and past behind
There's plenty more still left to find

There's so much more that you can give
And better days for you to live
Look into the future and you will see
The person you know that you can be

Release on Temporary Licence

Enhancing the progress of women in custody.

Female participants at HMP Drake Hall have recently been supported to access the CFO Activity Hub in Stoke on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL).

Participants have been able to engage with further 1-2-1 support, resettlement support, life skills, employability, future goals and wellbeing activities whilst at the Hub. The hope is to develop this to maximise through the gate support and improve community integration, ultimately helping to reduce reoffending.

Speaking about their ROTL experience at the Hub, Maisie* said: *"It's amazing, there are so many things at the Hub that could help me with my release. They will be introducing me to my Support Worker in the Wolverhampton CFO Activity Hub. It has given me hope that the support will be there on my release."*

Similar ROTL opportunities have taken place within the South East and beyond; should you want to have your participants ROTL to a CFO Activity Hub, please get in touch with your regional provider via:

[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/Contact](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/Contact)



"It has given me hope that the support will be there on my release"

Nationwide Support

Practical support in every region

Whether engaging in custody, the community or through the gate, participants can be referred to CFO for all manner of support in reducing reoffending.

Activities and interventions available include independent living skills, education and employment, personal skills and more. This practical support builds personal resilience, upskills participants and strengthens support networks, amongst other benefits. All of which aims to help participants to reach a mainstream destination.

Wider Delivery

Delivery is not limited to the locations outlined here. Wider custody delivery is available from over 70 different locations, whilst wider community delivery takes place throughout each region, often in conjunction with probation locations.

To find out what is available within your region, please visit the CFO website and access the delivery maps in the contact section.



North West
Blackburn
Blackpool
Liverpool
Manchester
Preston
Warrington
HMP Lancaster Farms
HMP Risley

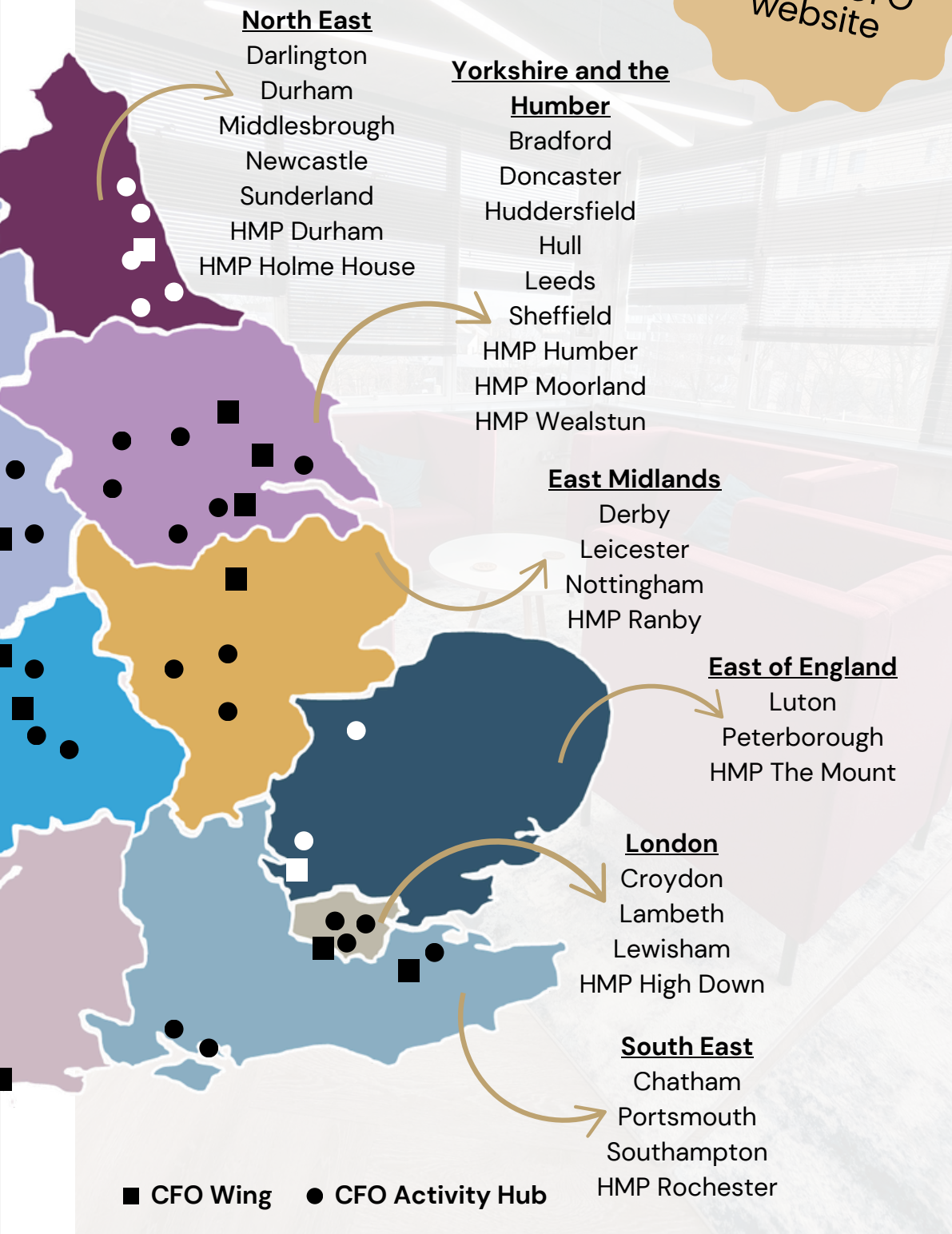
West Midlands
Birmingham
Stoke
Wolverhampton
HMP Drake Hall
HMP Featherstone

South West

Bristol
Plymouth
HMP Portland



Full addresses are available on the CFO website



CFO support people on probation with:



Education and Employment



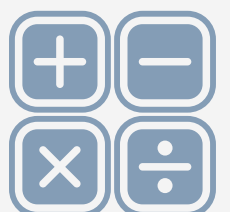
Personal Skills



Independent Living



Additional Skills



Addressing Wider Barriers

Making a referral to the CFO programme is simple and easy via our referral form. Information around risk is now included if referring from probation, whilst questions around the support required are present to allow participants to continue on their rehabilitative journey at a pace which suits them.

Visit [CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Referrals](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Referrals) to complete a referral to CFO.

Through the Gate

Continuing progression from custody to the community.

Engagement through the gate is a key aspect of CFO delivery, supporting participants to re-enter the community successfully. As participants leave custody there is an expectation that support they require will have been identified, with a warm handover taking place – this can take place within and across regions.

By engaging through the gate, participants experience benefits including:

Prevention from falling through gaps in support

Stronger relationships with community Support Workers

No need to repeat their story

Starting from an advanced position in the community

Continuous progression along the rehabilitation journey

Focussed delivery that picks up on engagements made in custody

Participants who engage with the CFO programme through the gate are:

7–8

times more likely to engage with a CFO Activity Hub within the first two weeks of release

12

times more likely to complete a community-based activity

CFO participants are regularly supported through the gate with pre-release inventories. This inventory includes actions completed, progress achieved, goals and further support required, allowing them to progress quickly when entering the community.

An innovative approach to through the gate delivery has been taken in the Yorkshire and the Humber region. Support Workers have been visiting participants residing in local Approved Premises (APs) on the first day of their release.

This visit completes the warm handover and helps participants to build trust and rapport with their Support Worker. Staff have reported that participants have a better understanding of support available by engaging in this manner and the smooth transition to the community has helped CFO Support Workers to build strong relationships with AP staff too.



Activities are often delivered on-site at the Approved Premises to give participants immediate progress within the community (usually around accommodation), which also makes them much more likely to engage with their nearest CFO Activity Hub.

Speaking about his experience of through the gate engagement, Rick* said: *"I left prison not knowing what an AP was or what the plan even was. I was worried because I can't walk far, I'm disabled. In custody they helped me feel better about leaving, as I was worried about not having structure. I met with someone from CFO in the AP and he told me he would be there weekly, it sounds stupid, but it gave me that routine. I know if I need anything I have someone I can ask."*



Digital Justice for Veterans

Enhanced verification to increase access to veteran-specific support.

HMPPS CFO has been working with staff across prisons on verification of veterans on the updated DPS (Digital Prison Service) Military records page.

Verifying that someone has previously served in the armed forces is paramount in accessing any wraparound support from military charities as well as obtaining a veteran ID card, both of which have a positive impact on reducing reoffending amongst the cohort.

The aim is to assist veteran participants and their families in accessing support which is specifically tailored to their needs. It will help to create a seamless pathway for participants to access veteran-specific support, beginning with this updated verification.

Once this is widely used, it will be much easier for staff to filter veteran-specific information on an individual's notes. Currently, some users may not know this information exists; with enhanced verification helping to overcome significant barriers to referrals and engagement with veteran services.

A recent meeting with Lord Timpson prompted more insight into veterans across prisons and probation, and CFO are thriving to assure the data is as accurate as possible.

Veteran participants can be referred to CFO services for support via:

**[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/](https://www.gov.uk/creating-future-opportunities)
CFO-Evolution-Referrals**



Innovation Fund



Additional funding to reduce reoffending.

CFO are continually adapting and developing our delivery to provide the best possible support for participants. The Innovation Fund is a significant part of this support – it allows for additional funding and delivery infrastructure, mobilised at a quick pace to enhance delivery in each region.

All projects delivered via the Innovation Fund aim to meet the specific needs of the cohort and enhance the local economy. We learn from each of these projects, and use them as a platform for future CFO delivery, transforming innovations into nationwide support.

CFO Innovation Lead, Sharon Flynn, helps to shape the projects delivered. Speaking about the impact of this additional funding, she said: *“This funding represents a unique opportunity to bring real additionality to our already strong CFO offer. It allows us to enhance the support we provide to participants, trial innovative approaches, and deliver meaningful improvements that could have a lasting impact on rehabilitation and reoffending outcomes.”*

Innovation Fund projects are already taking shape nationwide. A standout example has been delivered at HMP Moorland and HMP Holme House, who have been tackling reoffending through a project in partnership with Doncaster Rugby League. The eight-week course, which includes classroom elements, has seen a high turnout. It focusses on teamwork, resilience and personal growth, with lived experience elements which resonate deeply with participants.

Rugby drills are used to break down barriers and encourage communication, bringing together participants from different prison wings into one activity. Speaking positively about his experience, Graham* said: *“I enjoyed every last bit – it took me out of prison and put my mind in a better place.”*

CFO have 14 dedicated wings in custody community, here are just some of t

Down at The Hive at HMP Rochester a participant has created a mini-garden on the wing. He is carefully managing the project and looking after the plants, which includes herbs to be used within cooking sessions on the wing. Elsewhere at The Hive, the cohort have been engaging with crafting and decorating the wing to enhance the space's supportive environment.



Meanwhile, HMP Holme House's Phoenix Wing, participants have been crafting wooden items for sale, to raise money at recent events. Activities such as these form part of Phase 2 on the CFO Evolution programme in custody, allowing participants to contribute to their local community.



These wooden items have even been donated to the aviary at HMP Drake Hall, with similar donations coming from HMP Featherstone. The additions will help to revive the aviary and transform the space into a therapeutic space for the female participants. This is a fantastic showcase of how CFO Wings can collaborate to enhance delivery for participants.



Similarly, as part of Phase 2 at HMP Humber, participants have been handcrafting crisp packet blankets to support the homeless community. Staff delivered these blankets to the CFO Activity Hub in Hull, with a further supply donated to a local centre which provides aid to rough sleepers.

body and 33 CFO Activity Hubs in the the highlights from the last quarter.

The Liverpool CFO Activity Hub celebrated the success of their peer mentors with an event that was attended by judges, probation and other justice staff. Peer mentors will now offer enhanced support to others at the Hub, helping new participants to settle well and continuing to contribute to a positive environment. Speaking about his experience at the Hub, IPP participant Neil* said: *"I was referred last March to the CFO Activity Hub, it's a great place to come, the guys are great and the quizzes are brilliant. I'm an IPP prisoner and I get all the information first-hand here and it's been a great help. It's helped me through a hard time."*

The biggest London Careers Fair to date was hosted at the Lewisham CFO Activity Hub in partnership with DWP. Over 120 participants attended to see what the 20 training providers and employers had to offer. From barista training to construction work, participants could engage with professionals at their own pace, creating a comfortable way to progress on their employment journey.



Young adults will be the focus on upcoming pilot within Yorkshire and the Humber. Launching in Leeds, the new Young Adults Hub will support the cohort with activities tailored to their needs, whilst also supporting neurodiverse participants in a comforting environment. We'll have more on this in our next update!

To make a referral to the CFO programme for custody or community participants, please visit:

**[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/
CFO-Evolution-Referrals](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Referrals)**

Community Highlights

Make a Referral

Referrals can be made to CFO Evolution via:
CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Referrals
or by scanning the QR code!



Please note: data stated is comparative and some of the measured change may be attributable to factors external to the CFO programme.

*Names changed throughout to avoid disclosure of identity

CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk