



Employment and CFO

**A series of good news stories showcasing how CFO
support participants through their education, training
and employment journey**

Employment and CFO

Improving access and securing sustainable employment opportunities is a crucial element of effective rehabilitation and a key component of the HMPPS business plan.

The Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) Evolution programme provides opportunities for people on probation to progress along their employment journey. The programme focuses on achieving sustainable, long-term employability, reducing the likelihood of reoffending as a result.

Participants are able to access a wide range of support (not just around employability) including identifying existing skills/interests, which helps in building self-confidence, setting long-term achievable goals, accessing funded courses relevant to employment and tailored support and advice.

CFO also offers participants 'in work support' in the community to ensure they are supported every step of the way.

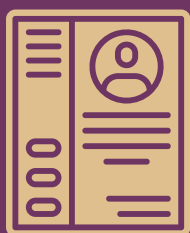
There are 33 CFO Activity Hubs available across nine regions for participants to access employment support. For some participants, who will be released to areas where it is not practical to attend CFO Activity Hubs, support is available via wider community delivery.

All CFO Activity Hubs represent safe, warm spaces where participants can, and importantly want to, engage in a range of activities. Participants can engage with CFO at a pace which suits their rehabilitation.

Support Workers offer a consistent contact point for participants throughout engagements, helping to build trust and encourage involvement. Participants are not rushed into engaging with activity before they are ready.

To understand what CFO support is available within your region, visit: **[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Community-Delivery-Map](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Community-Delivery-Map)**

To refer participants for employability support from CFO in the community, please visit: **[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/Make-a-Referral](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/Make-a-Referral)**



**CV
Writing**



**Disclosure
Support**



**Practical
Courses**



**Peer
Mentoring**

Matthew's Journey

Serving a life licence, Matthew* had done a lot of work on himself in custody but wanted support in finding employment in the community.

At the CFO Activity Hub in Nottingham Matthew* became a positive presence, regularly supporting others with his lived experience and helped to explain things to those unsure.

Matthew's* Support Worker helped him identify transferrable skills and experience to search for appropriate work, even working around health restrictions to define a new career path for him. Despite being rejected for some job roles himself, Matthew* would still help others with their employment journey, displaying his dedication to supporting others.

Eventually however, he would apply for a role with the Shannon Trust, who support people who can't read, or struggle to. This role was successfully secured and he is now operating as a Peer Mentor, returning to the CFO Activity Hub to support others with their reading, and visiting custody locations with Shannon Trust to inspire others on their rehabilitation journey.



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."



Nolan's Journey

Having served a long sentence Nolan* required support with employment and accommodation. He was referred to the Luton CFO Activity Hub by his Probation Officer and was sceptical to engage but his Support Worker encouraged him to engage with the Hub.

Whilst he wanted to find work, his present accommodation was a barrier to employment. To support this, together they worked on housing forms that needed to be completed, and set up a housing account with the local council to begin bidding on properties.

Meanwhile his Support Worker identified volunteering opportunities which would allow Nolan* to spend time positively and improve his mental wellbeing. Some were a long commute, so the Hub sourced a bike for Nolan*, allowing him to access these opportunities and gain important work experience.

With progress made, Nolan* reported feeling more positive and less likely to involve himself in anti-social behaviour. His volunteering opportunities have reduced anxiety and negative self-talk, and he feels more valued within his community, stating: "The service is brilliant. My Support Worker has helped me in one of the hardest periods of my life. I now have places to go and feel less isolated."

Nolan* is feeling better mentally and adamant that he will break the cycle and avoid returning to custody.



The service is brilliant. My Support Worker has helped me in one of the hardest periods of my life. I now have places to go and feel less isolated.

Dawn's Journey

Despite a good employment history prior to her offence, Dawn* had lost her confidence and didn't know how to begin her return to the labour market. Having heard about the Croydon CFO Activity Hub through her Probation Officer, she attended 1-2-1 sessions, working on her CV and disclosure letter with her Support Worker.

Dawn* also joined the job club at the Hub, engaging with her peers and a DWP Community Support Advisor for extra support. She began to apply for several roles and was referred to Smart Works to secure appropriate interview clothing.

Despite several setbacks, Dawn* remained committed to her rehabilitation in the community. She engaged in wraparound activities to boost her confidence, including sessions around thinking skills and lyric writing. With this renewed confidence Dawn* also became a Peer Mentor at the Hub.

As a result of her positive engagement with CFO, Dawn* was offered a role with DWP, successfully securing employment as a DWP Work Coach – her role was even arranged with compressed hours, so she could continue to engage with the Croydon CFO Activity Hub as a Peer Mentor.

Speaking about her journey with CFO, Dawn* said: "The team at the Hub were incredible. They helped me craft my CV, covering letter, and disclosure letter, and invited me to attend a 5-week job club run by Ayiri from DWP and Mandy from CFO Activity Hub. Ayiri's personal experience with similar challenges made an enormous difference – he truly understood our fears and the barriers we faced.

At a job fair, I learned about a role at DWP. Initially, I did not think I was good enough. But Ayiri believed in me. He saw how I supported others during job club and said I was perfect for the role. His encouragement gave me the courage to apply.

I want to thank CFO Activity Hub, DWP, and most importantly, Ayiri, for believing in me and helping me believe in myself."

They helped me craft my CV, covering letter, and disclosure letter, and invited me to attend a 5-week job club.



Levi's Journey



When first engaging with CFO Levi* was experiencing low mood and anxiety, but wanted to take steps to move into employment.

His Support Worker at the Middlesbrough CFO Activity Hub helped Levi* to create an up-to-date CV and discussed relevant training opportunities, landing on a CSCS site safety course as the best option. Together they also created a bank account to complement Levi* re-joining the labour market.

Throughout the CSCS course at the Hub Levi* communicated well and was invited to other Hubs in the area to help deliver sessions and scribe, as a volunteering opportunity.

Due to his strong engagement across the North East, Levi* was recommended for a full-time role with the CSCS training provider. After completing additional training, Levi* was officially offered employment, representing a significant milestone on his rehabilitation journey.



Full of confidence thanks to his newfound employment, Levi* said: "I never imagined I'd be in this position. The support I received gave me confidence and purpose. Now I'm proud to help others and start a new chapter in my life."

Kareem's Journey

Kareem* attended the CFO Activity Hub in Warrington with the goal of securing employment to reduce his likelihood of reoffending.

With a clear goal in mind, Kareem's* Support Worker delivered 1-2-1 employment sessions. This included creating a new CV, writing a disclosure letter and interview preparation – together they looked at company values and how Kareem* aligned with them, all the while Kareem* was supported to develop his skills through non-accredited courses.

Kareem* supported his peers at the Warrington CFO Activity Hub throughout and engaged in holistic support sessions including quizzes and Lego making.



I love coming to the Hub as it gives me a sense of comfort as I know everyone here is in the same boat. I also like the staff, they always put a smile on my face even when I'm tired. I love my job and can't wait to see what the future brings.

Thanks to the progress made at the Hub, Kareem* secured full-time employment as packing operator. Kareem* has been enjoying returning to work and the Hub even helped to source a bike for Kareem*, so he could easily commute to work during late and early hours.

He's also been enjoying the financial security of working, and speaking about his CFO experience, he said: "I love coming to the Hub as it gives me a sense of comfort as I know everyone here is in the same boat. I also like the staff, they always put a smile on my face even when I'm tired. I love my job and can't wait to see what the future brings."

Frankie's Journey



Frankie* was released to a new area of Portsmouth and was residing in an Approved Premises without an accommodation plan to follow this. His offence was also causing a significant barrier to employment.

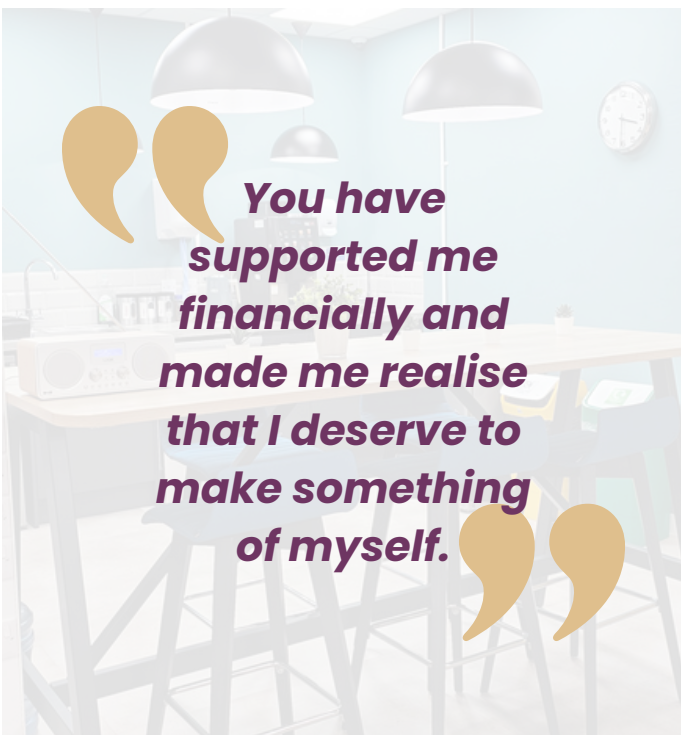
To move Frankie* closer to the labour market, his Support Worker enrolled him onto CSCS and counterbalancing courses, as well as digital college pathways for further qualifications.

Holistic sessions such as healthy eating, breakfast club and sports were also attended to wraparound the employment support and increase confidence and motivation. Throughout, Frankie* engaged well with his peers, reducing his social isolation.

Thanks to this engagement and his new qualifications, Frankie* was able to regain employment and relocated to a more familiar area to return to a stronger personal support network.

Speaking about the CFO Activity Hub, he said: "I know I have said it before, but I truly appreciate all that you have done for me. You have supported me financially and made me realise that I deserve to make something of myself. Thank you doesn't cover it."

You have supported me financially and made me realise that I deserve to make something of myself.



Ashley's Journey

When first arriving at the CFO Activity Hub in Bristol Ashley* was quiet and nervous. He was struggling to overcome barriers in place to achieving his goals, including returning to employment, having been rejected for multiple roles.

To restore his confidence, Ashley* was encouraged to engage with group sessions and to explore some personal hobbies. This helped Ashley* to speak more openly with his Support Worker, as they worked towards achieving his long-and-medium-term goals.

To help Ashley* rejoin the labour market, together they updated his CV and disclosure letter, with Ashley* attending a traffic management course to learn new skills.

With these new documents, Ashley* got in touch with a local recruitment agency and began working in warehousing. With his employment goal achieved, he was able to push towards his ambition of gaining a university degree, which he is completing alongside work.

Whilst his main focus was on employment and education, Ashley* also completed activities around independent living, looking through accommodation options that would be most suitable, and learning to cook for himself.

Having taken steps to achieving his goals with the Bristol CFO Activity Hub, Ashley* said: "I would like to thank you for everything else you have done for me, not just in the sense of employment but also housing and everyday life. You listened, guided me and put me in touch with everyone else that could help me in my situation. Without your help and support I am sure I would not be in employment and this far along my journey post-release as I would have been otherwise."



You listened, guided me and put me in touch with everyone else that could help me in my situation. Without your help and support I am sure I would not be in employment.

Shawn's Journey

Upon initial engagement with the CFO Activity Hub in Wolverhampton Shawn* was residing in supported living and facing challenges around his autism diagnosis. He was also socially isolated and ineligible for certain employment due to the nature of his offence.

The Hub wanted to establish a more solid routine for Shawn*, and his Support Worker engaged him with one-to-one sessions around a sense of self, developing goals, identifying barriers to progression, CBT and wellbeing. He engaged well with these sessions and also took part in group activities around education and training, media, independent living and relationships, gaining a full suite of support from the CFO Activity Hub.

Thanks to this range of support Shawn* has been able to live a more independent life. He is managing his finances better, has a stronger social network, more digital literacy and is far more confident than beforehand.



The Hub is amazing and the Support Workers are the best and have made my mental health loads better.

Perhaps most importantly, he has gained bespoke employment. Before attending the Hub Shawn* did not see a pathway to employment but he has now progressed to become a trainer who educates others at Dudley Voices for Choice, a user-led charitable organisation that supports people with learning disabilities and autism to speak up for themselves.

The impact was shown by Shawn*, who said: "I'm so proud of myself that I've become a trainer and I can help more people with autism. The Hub is amazing and the Support Workers are the best and have made my mental health loads better. I love coming here and everyone always make me happy, the Hub Guide includes me in everything and I love book club even though I didn't like reading before and another Support Worker has taught me things about work that I didn't even know were a thing. The Hub Manager is a great manager and whenever the staff want to help me he makes sure they can and I feel at home here."

Grant's Journey

Grant* was struggling with depression and anxiety, with a negative attitude toward his future. Prior to engaging with the Leeds CFO Activity Hub, he thought he would never find a job and was lacking the motivation to try.

His Support Worker built rapport through 1-2-1 sessions focused on wellbeing, which gave Grant* some coping techniques and built his confidence to tackle other barriers, including his negative perception of employment.

Grant* was encouraged to attend the Hub's Job Fair and was helped to update his CV to complement attendance. He also engaged with interview practice with his Support Worker. As a result of these engagements, Grant* secured a successful job interview and was offered a job role in the New Prison Capacity Support Team with MoJ.

Finding stable employment, which felt impossible previously, helped Grant* to build better peer relationships and reduce his reliance on drug and alcohol intake. He has used his coping techniques well, moved away from negative groups and feels like he has successfully broken the cycle of reoffending.



I feel like I'm getting fully back to myself.

Speaking about the impact of the Leeds CFO Activity Hub on his life, Grant* said: "Before enrolling at the Hub and speaking with my Support Worker I was sad all the time, angry at my mistakes and how life had turned out due to them. I couldn't see me finding a good career again. I was scared to start again, I felt like a failure and was embarrassed.

Fast forward a year, things are looking up I'm a lot happier day to day, I've been successful in an interview and I've learned to fill my time with other things other than drinking and I'm not constantly angry which is a bonus, I feel like I'm getting fully back to myself after a difficult 15 months or so.

Positives I gained was having someone I could speak to when I was struggling, who could offer me advice to prevent me making the wrong decisions. Helping me to trust people and believe it's better to speak to someone. I feel quite positive about my future now. I've got to take each day as they come but I'm hoping to start my new role next month and I'm looking forward to that, then the future looks good again. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the support from my Support Worker and the sessions. She's helped build me back from scratch again. I've got a second chance. Thank you."



***Names changed throughout to avoid disclosure of identity**

CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk