

Open up for:

Unlocking
Employment



Women-Only
Careers
Fair



What Makes
a Good
Employment
Referral?



Approved
Premises
Through the
Gate Support



Collaboration
with PELs



CFO Quarterly Newsletter Employment Edition



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

Summer 2026

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

Within this edition we are thrilled to showcase the wide range of employability support available to participants via CFO Evolution, including support for stakeholders, women, and statistics which showcase CFO's employment credentials.

Should you have any questions about the content within this newsletter, please email: CFO-Communications@justice.gov.uk

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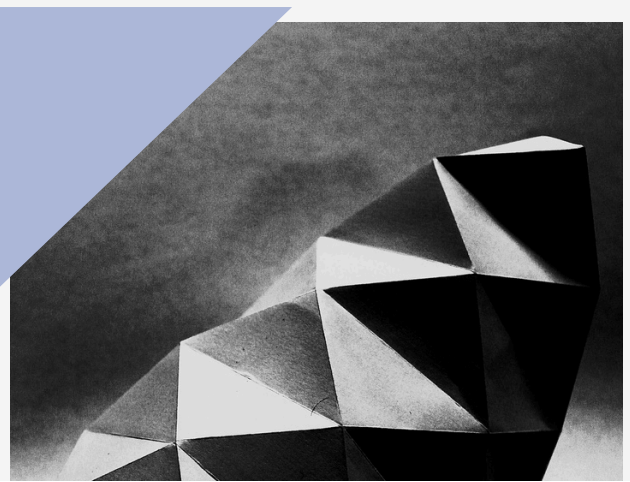
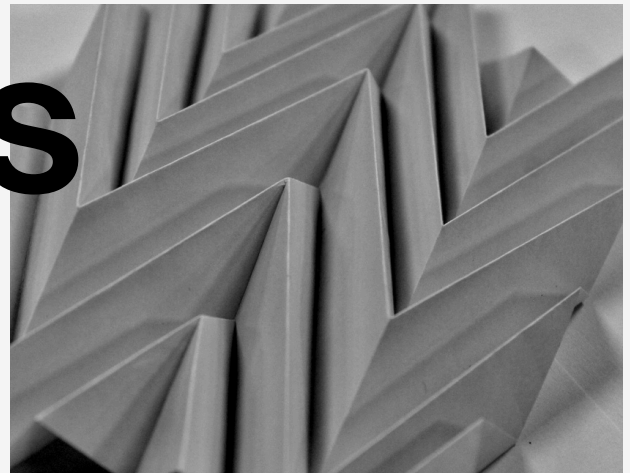
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Unlocking Employment

Supporting New Futures Network in unlocking employment in the community.

Unlocking is New Futures Network's (NFN) flagship, national recruitment campaign. It aims to increase the number of prisoners and prison leavers taking up employment opportunities and securing jobs on release.

There are two Unlocking campaigns in 2026, covering construction and hospitality. Each will give participants the opportunity to get a feel for the sector/employers, find out about the types of jobs on offer and meet with employers who are actively recruiting.

CFO complement these campaigns by supporting participants into long-term employment, or helping them build towards entering work.

A person-centred approach is taken, helping people build the confidence, skills and readiness needed to engage meaningfully with employment opportunities where these align with their goals and circumstances.



Skills Academy

By supporting participants with their confidence and motivation, they are more likely to engage in learning, training and work. This is supportive of Skills Academy, and ensures consistency and positive outcomes for participants.

Skills Academy brings together all learning, training and work opportunities, improving outcomes for people in prison through meaningful learning opportunities.

Whether it's developing literacy, digital skills or receiving personalised careers advice, CFO are able to support individuals engaging with Skills Academy to achieve positive, employment-focused outcomes.

But don't just take our word for it, turn the page to see the data behind CFO delivery...

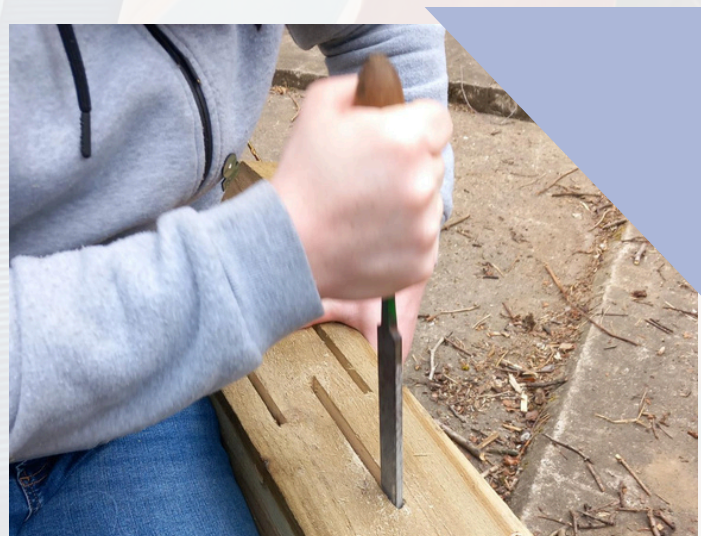
Through this approach, CFO supports informed and positive engagement with Unlocking activity where appropriate, helping individuals progress towards sectors and opportunities highlighted through the campaigns. This complementary approach strengthens the overall employment pathway by aligning readiness support with NFN-led employer engagement.

Speaking about this delivery, Ehab Elkaffass, Chief Executive Officer of New Futures Network said: *"I am so proud to see partners coming together through CFO Evolution and New Futures Network to support the Minister's ambition to increase employment and reduce reoffending."*

By aligning our efforts, we are creating a clearer, more effective pathway into sustainable work and giving people the opportunity to build stable, crime-free lives."

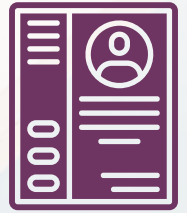
Practical employment activities are available in all custody and community CFO locations, to find out what is available within your region please visit:

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





Employment support from CFO includes:



CV Writing



Disclosure Support



Job Searching



Practical Courses



Interview Preparation

Construction

In addition to employment activities, CFO support the Unlocking Construction campaign with courses that are regularly delivered at CFO locations. These courses move participants closer to construction roles.

This includes supporting participants to gain CSCS cards, a vital first step in being able to work in the sector. The card serves as a tangible proof of competence to work in construction, helping to maintain safety and quality standards. For a CFO participant, gaining a CSCS card can not only be a significant boost to employability, it can raise confidence, motivation and self-belief.

Aaron* for example, who engaged with a CSCS course in the South West, said: *"CFO have helped me sort my CSCS and Traffic Management tickets and CV. Because of that, I landed a full-time job. Having a job has given me routine, confidence, and a clearer idea of where I'm heading."*

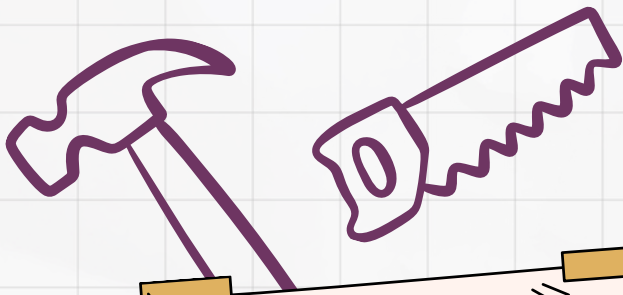
Meanwhile in London, Hayden* was supported into a construction role and said: *"The Hub has helped me a lot. I have had help with various courses and job help to turn things around for me. They have directly got me a job, and a few months ago I didn't think I would be working for a long time."*

Construction courses and activities are available in both custody and the community. Support Workers also help participants to transition through the gate with a pre-release inventory. This ensures that participants' progress is tracked, including building on construction qualifications and skills learned.

To make a referral for a participant who wants to engage with construction and employment activities, please visit:

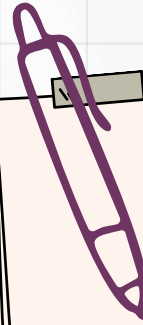
[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Referrals](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/CFO-Evolution-Referrals)

Since the launch of CFO Evolution, participants have experienced many employment and training outcomes, here are just some of the statistical highlights.



Tailored support

Employability support is tailored to the need of each participant - sessions have been delivered on self-employment, business start-up, volunteering and more



1,861

Participants entered employment

EVIDENCE EMPLOYMENT

5,634

CVs have been created or updated

Moving closer to employment

By engaging with CFO, participants reported improved physical health and reduced psychological distress

23,573 employment activities have been delivered throughout CFO Evolution - 62% have been delivered in the community (14,805), with 38% occurring in custody (8,768)

53.5%

Of participants increased their level of social inclusion by engaging with CFO

2,921

Moved from economic inactivity into looking for work

6,422

Activities have been completed around disclosure to employers

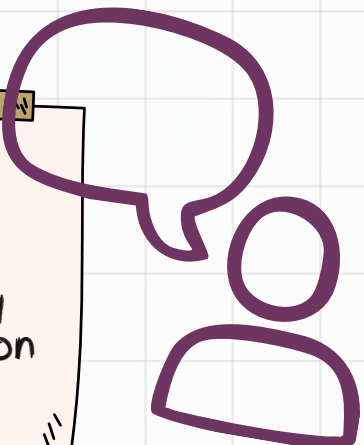
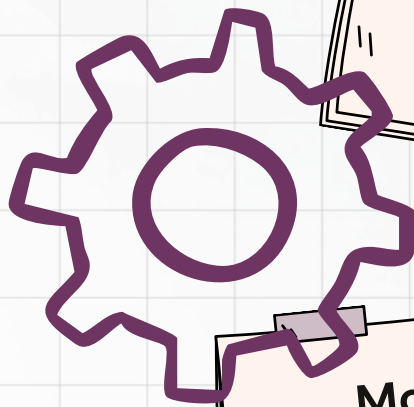
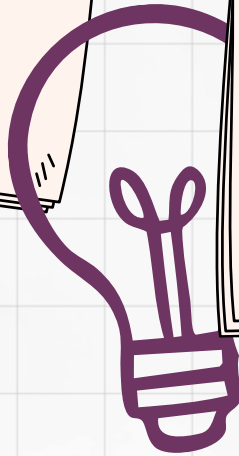
6,964

Improved their highest level of education

2,987

Employment-focused courses have been delivered

**FINANCED
EMPLOYMENT**



In-work support

Participants can continue to engage with CFO for in-work support, to ensure a continuation of progression

More statistics

For more work by the CFO Research and Statistics team, please visit:
[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/Research-and-Statistics](https://www.gov.uk/Research-and-Statistics)

Women-Only Careers Fair

Supporting women into work.

Careers fairs have been taking place across CFO Activity Hubs, with each aiming to link participants to offender-friendly employment and training opportunities. Recently, the Croydon CFO Activity Hub innovated on the approach, and hosted a women-only careers fair.

CFO delivery is gender-informed. By hosting women-only employment fairs, participants are able to engage with potential employers in a comfortable, safe environment, at a pace which suits them.

The employers and services present are also tailored towards participant wants, including women-only services such as Smart Works, who provide women with interview clothing and support.



Employment and Training opportunities included:



Peer Mentoring



Barista Training



Barbering



Catering

Creating a different environment

Creating a women-only careers fair has different obstacles to address than a male version. Speaking about why gender-informed delivery is important for their employment fairs, Jasmina Vulic, Through The Gate Coordinator, said: *“First, they probably feel it's a safer space for them because it's only women attendees. It gives time to stall holders to really go deeper into the conversations as well.”*

Jasmina also addressed that the female participants have different challenges to prioritise when returning to the community, including parenting and accommodation. This makes addressing employment challenging for women, as Jasmina stated, saying: *“I think it's for them to see that they have options. Because I think a lot of times obviously they think no one would want them because of their offence. And we keep telling them, we work with employers who are happy to talk to you.”*

Employment outcomes are important for the women, and the careers fairs help them to take the first step on their employment journey, moving closer to the labour market through engagement.

Strong impacts

The first employment fair of this type was a success, with 25 participants in attendance – ten times more than the number of women who usually attend – including residents of London's female Approved Premises.

These events encourage better engagement amongst the women, as they can reduce trauma-based anxieties, increase psychological safety, allow participants to build trust with professionals and, ultimately, move women closer to the labour market.

Similarly, activities are available at the London CFO Activity Hubs (and nationwide) for women to work on employability and personal skills, including motivation and confidence. Please visit: [CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/Contact](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/Contact) to find out what is available for women in your region.



What Makes a Good Employment Referral?

How can CFO help people you work with?

CFO work with participants who face significant barriers to progress, providing holistic support, paired with tailored employability guidance. This support increases motivation to succeed, confidence in finding work and reduces social isolation.

Participants can be referred at any stage of their rehabilitation journey – whether in custody or in the community – provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

Eligibility criteria

Participants must:

- Be aged 18 or over
- Have the right to live and work in the UK
- In custody: Be serving a custodial sentence or held on remand, within 3 years of release
- In the community: Be on licence or serving a community sentence (courts may also refer in some areas)



Suitable employment referrals

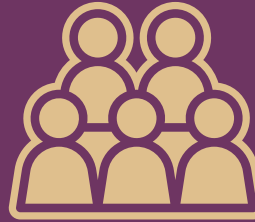
CFO is particularly suited to individuals who are:



Struggling with
independent
living



Lacking skills
required by
employers



Socially
Isolated



Facing complex
barriers linked
to reoffending

Support Workers deliver tailored employment (and holistic) sessions to help tackle specific barriers in a participant's rehabilitation journey. Whether they are ready for work when first engaging with CFO, or need additional support to regain confidence and motivation to advance, CFO support is available.

This includes supporting participants who are finding it difficult to engage with core HMPPS services – such as Probation, DWP, or CRS. CFO support is complementary to these services, helping participants to engage with these organisations.

To learn more about how CFO engage with different stakeholders to deliver positive participant outcomes, please visit:

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

**Participants
can contribute
to 30% of
Unpaid Work
hours by
engaging with
CFO.**





Warm Handover

Through the gate support for participants at Approved Premises.

CFO support people living in Approved Premises (AP) across the country with additional support along their rehabilitation journey.

To maximise engagement and ensuring continuity of support from custody to the community, staff in Yorkshire and the Humber have been engaging participants on their first day (or as early as possible) of release at the AP.

Engaging participants on their first night at the AP has resulted in significant positive impacts, including:

- Increased likelihood to engage with CFO, including attending CFO Activity Hubs
- Better understanding and expectations of what AP life will be like
- Better engagement with AP staff
- Immediate accommodation and housing support, meaning more participants being housed following their stay at the AP
- Repeating their story less, and starting in an advanced position through the gate
- Consistent support with wraparound activities

Before arriving at the AP, CFO Support Workers engage participants in custody, preparing them for release and introducing them to a community Support Worker to ensure a smooth transition to the community.

On the success of the collaboration, Operations Manager Teigan Higgins said: *“It’s feeling more confident about release, knowing what to expect, knowing what that AP might offer compared to a different AP, and it’s that friendly face. They’ve done the pre-release inventory with someone whilst in custody, they know who they’re going to meet on release.”*

Teigan added: *“APs have actually lifted signing times, they were able to change that so a participant could actually do a course at the Hub,”* which is a significant benefit to participants for routine and progression in the community.

Alfie* was engaged by CFO at an AP, facing challenges around moving on from the residency. His Support Worker reviewed additional accommodation support options and met with a housing provider to complete an additional referral. This saw Alfie* move into his own tenancy following his time at the AP.

By moving into supported housing Alfie* enhanced his independent living skills, which were lacking otherwise, and he avoided homelessness thanks to CFO engagement at the AP. Speaking about his experience, he said: *“It’s weird leaving prison, you feel like everything’s going to fall into place and you’ll be able to get on with life. It’s the opposite, you have that many appointments that you don’t actually know what’s going on. Thanks to these, I got my own place, if I hadn’t, I’d have ended up doing something stupid just so I wasn’t on the streets.”*



Relationships between CFO and Approved Premises staff have also improved through this process, with referrals taking place to the programme. Staff from Deer Park AP said: *“The support provided by CFO was invaluable as quite a few residents struggle with the adjustment on release, particularly around anxiety. Therefore the outreach and CFO staff coming to the AP has seen a real positive impact on participants here.”*

To refer a participant to CFO for through the gate support, please visit:

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

PEL & CFO

Working with Prison Employment Leads to achieve employment.

CFO take a collaborative approach when working with custodial services, including Prison Employment Leads (PELs). CFO staff are regularly co-located with PELs in custody, leading to more collaborative working and to successful outcomes for participants, including moving into employment.

Ross* was one of many participants to benefit from this collaborative approach. He worked with CFO at HMP Downview having been recalled to custody.

Ross' Support Worker helped him to produce a new CV and disclosure letter. They also walked through the job search process and delivered interview preparation sessions. With steps taken to move closer to the labour market again, his Support Worker liaised with PEL at HMP Downview to line up an interview with Ross' previous employer.

Ross secured his previous role as a depot cleaning operative, and was ready for a smooth transition back into the community thanks to the work of the PEL and his Support Worker – he said: *“Super grateful for the support that CFO have shown me whilst being in custody and I am glad I have been able to keep my job in the community with the help of CFO.”*

Elsewhere, PELs and CFO have been working together to identify appropriate referrals for scaffolding (and similar) courses, supporting with ROTL engagements and attending employment advisory boards together.

To learn more about how CFO can collaborate with you, please visit: **[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/Working-With-CFO](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/Working-With-CFO)**



HMPPS CFO ViCSO Award Evening

**Celebrating best practice
working with veterans in
custody.**

Veteran in Custody Support Officers (ViCSOs) play a vital role in supporting veterans throughout their custodial journey. They deliver this work alongside their primary roles, often going above and beyond to ensure veterans are identified, supported and rehabilitated.

CFO are thrilled to celebrate the incredible work that these individuals carry out at the HMPPS CFO ViCSO Award this July. We are also pleased to include community ViCSOs in the awards for the first time.

Awards will cover outstanding support, innovation, wellbeing and rehabilitation, lived experience, partnerships and collaboration and creating a veteran-friendly environment.

To learn more about the work CFO undertake with veterans in custody and the community, please visit:

**[CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk/
Armed-Forces-Covenant](https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/Armed-Forces-Covenant)**



Make a Referral

Referrals can be made to CFO 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

All identifying features removed from images and consented in line with HMPPS media guidelines.

CreatingFutureOpportunities.gov.uk