

Prison partnership results in student pedal power

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HMP Peterborough has partnered with ARU Peterborough to enable students to access their studies while also supporting the rehabilitation of prisoners.

Staff at ARU Peterborough have recognised that some of their students need additional help to enable them to travel to campus, either due to financial reasons or difficulty accessing public transport.

HMP Peterborough has a fully operational workshop where prisoners are training to recondition discarded bicycles and they are providing several of these bikes to ARU Peterborough who, in turn, are supplying them to the students who will benefit most.

The bikes that are reconditioned by the male prisoners come from a variety of sources, including those abandoned at local shopping centres and the householders waste recycling centre. The men work on the bikes and train to either bronze, silver or gold standard under the Velotech Bike Maintenance course.

Head of reducing offending Wayne Peters said: *“By completing this course, the men are able to leave prison with an employment-ready skill, providing them with greater opportunities and reducing their risk of reoffending. They are very keen to be involved in projects such as the partnership with ARU Peterborough as they can see the tangible benefits of their work and know that what they are doing has a positive impact in the local community.”*

ARU Peterborough Student Union’s Rebecca Holmes said: *“This scheme is a great way for us to be able to support our students. We have lots of members who are looking for support with their transport, so this is a brilliant solution, not only helping them but also supporting prisoners in their rehabilitation.”*

ARU Peterborough assistant principal Dr Tom Williamson said: *"Our aim is to improve people's prospects and this partnership enables us to do that not only for our students, but also for the prisoners who work on the bikes. Affordability and access to transport can be a challenge for some of our students and being able to provide them with a reconditioned bike opens up opportunities."*

Providing employability skills to prisoners during their time in custody helps to prepare them for release. Research has shown that prison-leavers who secure employment, accommodation and have a positive support network are less likely to reoffend in the future.

Sodexo states that its Starting Fresh campaign is supporting industries in overcoming skills shortages by creating real employment opportunities for ex-offenders.