

Sodexo partners with construction consortium to lay building blocks to employment for prison leavers

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An innovative project is providing skills-based training to prisoners ahead of their release to support future roles in the construction industry.

Funded by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Constructed Pathways has brought together a consortium of industry experts to work with Sodexo-run HMP Peterborough to provide solutions to two key challenges – prisoners struggling to secure stable employment and a severe labour shortage in the construction industry.

Research shows that stable employment is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of an individual committing further offences post-release. Reoffending rates for adults in the UK are currently 25.6% within the first 12 months – for those serving sentences of less than 12 months, this increases to more than 55%.

Sodexo is committed to working with employers, both through innovative collaborations and its '[Starting Fresh](#)' programme, creating opportunities for prisoner-leavers. The consortium of HMP Peterborough, Constructed Pathways, Urban&Civic and NHBC will create a 'source to sea' approach, working with offenders throughout their training and onwards into gainful employment.

Launched in March 2025 in the female prison, the first course provides prisoners with the opportunity to gain industry-standard training in bricklaying, as well as learning about self-employment and gaining the CSCS card, which is needed to work on a construction site. The curriculum was written by NHBC, verified

by Constructed Pathways against current academic standards and implemented into the Skills Bootcamp criteria.

The construction industry has been facing a labour shortage for a long period of time. Constructed Pathways is working with Urban&Civic through the CITB's National Skills Academy for Construction to support innovative opportunities for people furthest from employment to access the many different roles on construction sites across the county.

This partnership, and the support put in place by HMP Peterborough, will enable the construction industry to employ skilled and motivated site-ready workers they might not have previously considered.

Dan Edwards, Director of Constructed Pathways, said: "Individuals nearing release may not be the first group of people that employers consider when facing a labour shortage. But by working in partnership with the prison, we are able to ensure that we're working with people who want to turn their lives around, work hard in their training and who we know we can recommend as motivated, site-ready workers. We're looking forward to getting to know those taking part and finding out about their backgrounds and the work the prison is doing to support their rehabilitation, and help change their opportunities for a more positive future."

Part of the pilot scheme includes working with Urban&Civic contactor, Breheny, who provided resources and labour and housebuilder, David Wilson Homes, who is providing materials and equipment for the first courses taking place.

Lisa, one of the learners on the first course, said: "This course is changing my life - it's made me realise that I can get a trade to better my life and support my kids. I find bricklaying therapeutic and I'm definitely looking for a career in this. It's made me feel that I'm worth something and has given me a new lease of life."

Working with HMP Peterborough, the partnership will create a sustainable pathway to employment, providing trade-specific training and education to individuals while they are in prison. This, in turn, will create a flow of trained, employment-ready construction workers who are ready to start a new job.

Ralph Lubkowski, Director of HMP Peterborough said: "Sodexo is committed to creating opportunities for prisoners to develop skills and knowledge that will enable them to secure employment when they are released, significantly reducing their risk of reoffending. We are delighted to partner with Constructed Pathways and the wider consortium on this transformative initiative that will change the lives of the participants. We welcome such innovation, both as direct partnerships and through Sodexo's Starting Fresh programme, maximising the opportunities available to support individuals for a positive future."

A Starting Fresh construction skills toolkit with information about the vocational skills being taught in Sodexo-run prisons is available to download from here: <https://sodexouki.info/42SUdD0>