



The Oswin Project Newsletter:

June 2021



Café 16: Coming Soon to Newcastle Cathedral

Following the success of Café 16 in HMP Northumberland, we are soon to open a second café 16 in Newcastle Cathedral. It will be managed by the Oswin project and provide training, mentoring and employment to a team consisting exclusively of prison leavers.

The New Café will follow the Oswin model; with employment and training utilised as a vehicle to independence, personal growth, and ultimately fulfilling lives away from offending. The Cathedral Café will be supplied by Café 16 in HMP Northumberland's bakery, increasing production demand and so the number of prisoners we are able to employ. Café 16 at the Cathedral is also planning to employ staff Released on Temporary Licence. ROTL allows prisoners into the community for specific purposes



such as to engage in employment or to maintain family ties. It forms a bridge between the prison and work setting, better preparing individuals for release. Research suggests such an approach has potential to reduce post-release arrest and reconviction rates. We are working closely with our partners at HMP Kirk Levington to assure the robust selection of candidates for ROTL. We hope to establish a similar initiative with our partners at HMP Northumberland in the near future.

Café 16 in HMP Northumberland: A Haven for All During The Pandemic

Despite the challenges posed by COVID, café 16 in HMP Northumberland was only closed briefly. It has largely remained open as a takeaway service. This enabled those working in it to continue to gain experience, be supported and mentored, train, and achieve qualifications in catering, baking, cleaning, and other aspects to café operations. Those on the programme have provided extremely positive feedback, reporting increased self-confidence, perceptions of competence, and a growing optimism regarding life after prison. Many also commented on the value of the Café 16 environment, providing a sanctuary of normality during the crisis. This feeling is shared by prison staff, who during this incredibly challenging time, greatly appreciated the calm atmosphere in the Café and the opportunity to purchase good food. The Oswin Project was one of the very few outside organisations allowed into the prison at the height of the pandemic, showing how highly it is valued.

To keep up to date with Oswin's work, follow us on:

Twitter: [@OswinProjects](https://twitter.com/OswinProjects)

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The determination of the team, hard work of Oswinners, and support from HMP Northumberland staff, has seen Café 16 in HMP Northumberland get off to a great start in spite of hugely challenging circumstances.

“Farming on the Out” Providing Opportunities in Agriculture

Getting food from the field to the table has become one of the greatest challenges the agriculture industry is currently facing, made more difficult through the twin factors of Covid-19 and Brexit. Many farm jobs cannot be automated, with seasonal harvests the most labour intensive. It is widely reported that the industry needs 70,000 recruits alone this year to satisfy need. With the reduction in EU workers, who made up a significant portion of the workforce, the industry faces a huge challenge with potential for real impact on society.

One solution is to recruit from a section of society that often finds obtaining work difficult – ex-offenders. Every year about 60,000 people are released from prison, most into unemployment: a proven contributor to re-offending. Many prisons, particularly the category D ‘open prisons’, even have areas devoted to horticulture in which prisoners work and train, so ex-offenders often have experience of planting and picking.

Seizing this opportunity for widespread benefit, the Oswin Project has partnered with the New Futures Network, a specialist employment team working within Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), for our ‘Farming on the Out’ campaign. This

partnership has two clear aims; to assist successful rehabilitation for ex-offenders through providing work on release, and to support the national need for farm workers.

The ‘Farming on the Out’ campaign is targeted at those ROTL, ex-offenders and enlightened business owners who see the benefit in rehabilitation. The partnership will engage with and provide information to farm owners, growers and managers that will enable them to promote their vacancies in prisons. It will also help prison staff to guide and support those who want to work on farms or for the seasonal harvest on release through the application process.

On 28th June 2021, what is hoped to be the first of a series of open days held in prisons specialising in farming and horticulture, will take place at HMP North Sea Camp Lincolnshire (for further information please contact Fiona.sample@oswinproject.org.uk)

Gardening Initiative Grows as Covid Restrictions Ease

Our gardening and maintenance team have come out of lockdown to a flying start. The team is working flat out to meet demand, welcoming new recruits and showing their developing skillset with increasingly complex projects and consistently satisfied customers. Well done to the team, we look forward to seeing the results of all the great projects to be undertaken throughout summer 2021.

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Oswinner Case Study: Jo's Story

When Jo came to Café 16 he was quiet and lacked confidence but worked extremely hard and showed great commitment. When his release was imminent there did not appear to be a clear way forward for him. The Oswin Project prides itself on always finding the right employment for every individual. When asked what his dream job would be Jo replied 'to work in a racing stables'. We organised this and he has never looked back. A number of stable staff have been furloughed but not Jo, he is considered integral to the operation. He has gradually been given more responsibility. With his job comes accommodation and security. When this picture was sent, we thanked the racing stables for their willingness to employ an Oswinner and for their care and encouragement. The reply came 'Thank you, for you and your team for recommending him (big star)'.

Jo's story is a fantastic example of how, with the right support, mentoring and opportunities, ex-offenders can go on to be passionate, hardworking employees; improving their own lives while contributing to their workplace and community.



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New Team Members

A warm welcome to our new team members; Mark Mosley, Chantelle Fitzpatrick, and Angus McVittie. Mark and Chantelle will be heading up the team in Café 16 Newcastle Cathedral, as manager and assistant manager respectively. Both have extensive experience in café operations and are hard at work getting everything prepared. Angus has joined us as Project Coordinator, leading our fundraising efforts and developing systems tracking the progress of our Oswinners and the social impact of our work. Angus joins us part-time, in the final stages of writing up his PhD thesis exploring educational pathways from the perspective of disadvantage young people.

Mark, Chantelle and Angus are fantastic additions to the Oswin team; bringing further skills and experience and helping us provide the best possible support to transform lives.

Keep Up With Us on Social Media and at www.oswinproject.org.uk

We are working hard to increase our presence online. We are in the process of redesigning our website and have also begun blogging on a monthly basis. Following us on twitter ([@OswinProjects](https://twitter.com/OswinProjects)) and Facebook ([The Oswin Project](https://www.facebook.com/TheOswinProject)) really helps support our work and keeps you up to date with exciting developments.

A Huge Thank You to Our Funders and Supporters:

Our work would not be possible without your generous support, together we transform lives.

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The Kerry Grassroots Fund
The Marsh Christian Trust

The National Lottery Community Fund
The Purvis Foundation
The Robert McAlpine Foundation
The Triangle Trust
The William Leech Charity
The Woodroffe Benton Foundation

The many individuals who have made significant donations but wish to remain anonymous, the regular givers, the fund raisers' and our volunteers who generously donate their time and enthusiasm.

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