



Reimagining futures



**When we reimagine rehabilitation,
we reduce reoffending**

Reimagining places
for people to thrive

Reimagining futures

Wates Group has been directly supporting prison leavers for over a decade as part of our commitment to our purpose – reimagining places for people to thrive.

What we’ve learnt could help to reduce reoffending in the UK: assisting people to rebuild their lives, reducing public spending and helping communities to thrive.

Our programme



Facing the challenge

16%

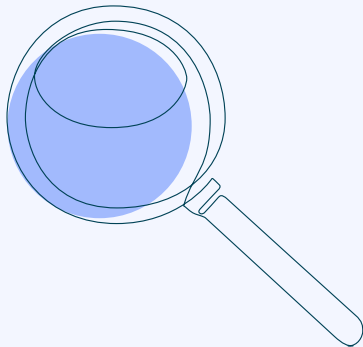
of prison leavers don’t have a home to go to.*

Homeless prison leavers are twice as likely to reoffend than those who are housed.**

Unemployed prison leavers are more than twice as likely to reoffend as those who are employed.**

£18.1 bn

The estimated annual cost to the UK of prisoner reoffending, according to the City & Guilds Foundation.***



* Government statistics www.gov.uk
** MOJ report, 2024
*** City and Guilds Prison Impact Report

Reimagining talent

In 2023, we launched our Reimagining Talent programme, which helps prisoners to prepare for the workplace and find a job. To date we have trained 63 people and 11 of those have secured employment in construction and other sectors. Some of these roles are with our supply chain, where we continue to promote job opportunities for prison leavers, as well as identifying roles within Wates.

Reimagining Talent is delivered by our social value managers. To date, six prisons have run this ongoing programme:

- HMP Stocken
- HMP Lindholme
- HMP Feltham
- HMP Warren Hill
- HMP Highpoint
- HMP The Mount

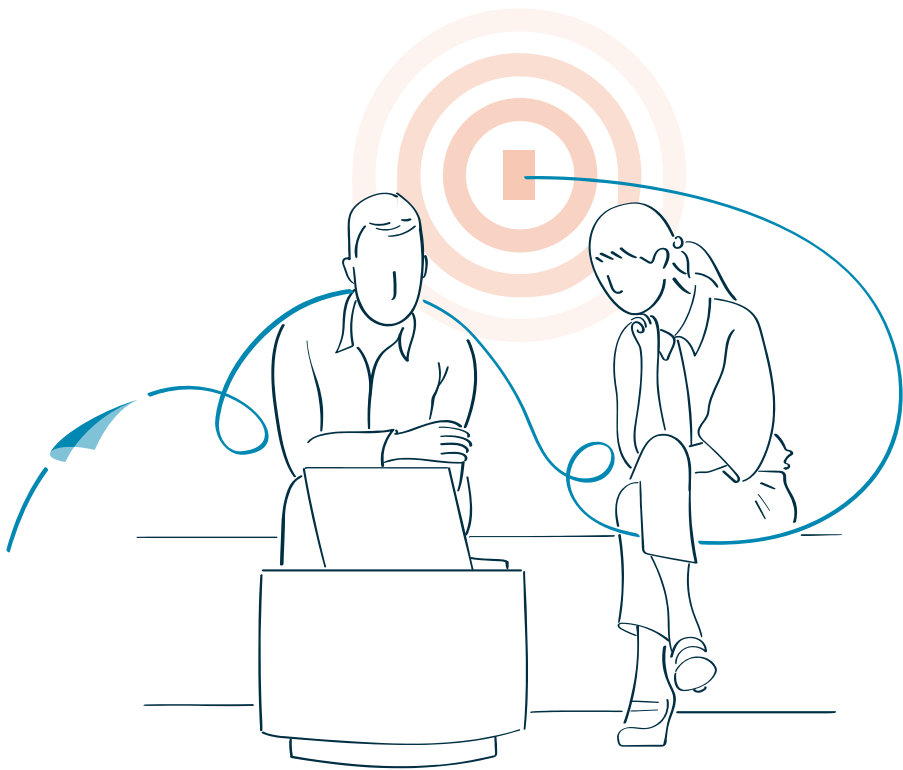
Pathfinders

It’s much harder to hold down a job when you don’t have a steady home and Ministry of Justice research tells us that homelessness is a major risk factor for reoffending. With that in mind, we’re enhancing our programme with a pilot initiative to help 50 prison leavers with the deposit and first few months’ rent, so they are more likely to stay both employed and housed.

With the average annual cost of £51,724[^] to provide a prison place in England and Wales, every prison leaver who can find sustained employment and stay in the community makes a meaningful contribution to the economy.

[^] MoJ statistics, March 2024

“ We want to reduce reoffending and enable people to thrive when they leave prison and enter the workplace. ”



Reimagining talent

>> Case study

HMP Feltham

The social value team delivered this six-week programme at HMP Feltham for four men who were due for release within six months. Learning outcomes included increased knowledge of:

- The construction industry and Wates
- Employment expectations and use of AI in recruitment
- Criminal record disclosure (what/how/when)
- Interview skills/techniques, including interviews with Wates' labour agencies
- Sustaining employment, onboarding and employment expectations.

“ I wanted to thank you on behalf of the men and the Employment Hub staff for your time, expertise and enthusiasm over the past six weeks. Your commitment to supporting the men in gaining a valuable understanding of employment in construction, development, and property services has made a significant impact.

We truly appreciate the positive influence you've had during this programme.

Pamela
Prison Employment Lead,
HMP Feltham

Impact:

When asked 'How confident do you feel about gaining employment?'

The increase in confidence post programme was an average of 69 per cent.

When asked 'How confident do you feel about disclosing your criminal record to a prospective employer?'

The increase post programme was an average of 106 per cent.



£8,360 worth
of social value generated

What our trainers experience on this programme

Some of the challenges of delivering the programme

- The environment presents multiple challenges. For example, inmates have to be returned to their cells for two or so hours in the middle of the day, and if you lose track of time this can happen with little or no warning! Also, there are doors banging and keys clanging constantly!
- You have to be able to think on your feet and without the use of Google! Questions pop up as you go along and it is frustrating sometimes not to be able to give an immediate answer.
- It is tough for them to know that they might face multiple rejections when on the outside, and I do see it as our job to prepare them for that – as anyone would face rejections in the job market.

“ Working with all the learners has been wonderful and, with a little support and opportunity, seeing it grabbed with both hands has just been fantastic. Going into a prison can be daunting sometimes, but at the end of the day they are all just people, and now they want to tread a different path. It is a privilege to support them to do it.

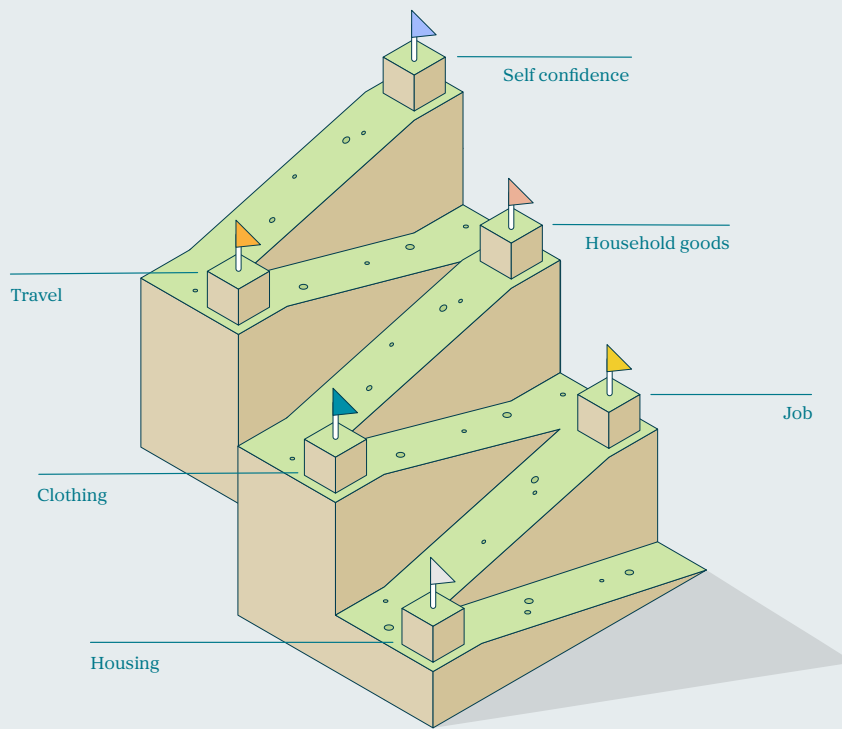
Wates
Social value manager

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The barrier fund

We work with third-sector partners to find ways to break down the barriers prison leavers face while finding their feet in their new workplace. The barrier fund provides small bits of funding for essentials that will make all the difference.

Just one example is a nightwatchman whose performance at work was seriously affected by a lack of sleep during the day, to the point where he risked losing his job. The barrier fund enabled him to buy some blackout blinds, sleep during the day, feel fresher and more alert, and thus keep his job.



Reimagining talent - case study

How lucky am I?

These are the words that prison leaver S lives his life by. Every morning he is the first person to arrive on site and unlock the site gates, before welcoming visitors, handling deliveries and taking care of subcontractors. He is also trusted to lock up the site once work is done for the day.

“For someone like me who has been on the other side of a locked door, that trust is transformational,” he says.

S started working with Wates in 2022 while completing his sentence. He spotted the opportunity on a flyer and, while out on day release, approached the recruiter.

“I worked hard and used every window of opportunity I had to gain the qualifications I needed for the role.”

When he explained his circumstances during the application process (which wasn't easy), “they listened to me... and saw that I was very genuine about reintegrating into society and making the most of a job opportunity. So they said, ‘we'll give you a chance.’”#

S's manager, Tom, says that S's warmth and personality set the tone for the project as he is often the first person that people meet when they arrive on site.

Three years after leaving prison, S told an audience of 150 colleagues and subcontractors how meaningful employment after prison had changed his life for the better and why prison leavers make a positive contribution to the workforce. The talk resulted in two more prison leavers being offered roles.

“Employing a prison leaver will have a positive impact on your business.”

because you are giving them an opportunity, and for people who have been in custody and who have had to tick the offenders box when applying for a job, that's often as rare as hen's teeth,” he says.



#Today, prison leavers are not required to disclose their status until they are offered a job – that process was not in place when S was applying for work. Wates educates prison leavers on what and when to disclose as part of the Reimagining Talent programme.

Reimagining talent - case study

At Wates, people see me for my work, not my past.

After graduating, G took two jobs to pay off his university debt.

“I had literally been working day and night, and I would find time to sleep at the weekends. So I thought to myself, if I just do this one illegal thing for a short amount of time, I can pay my debt off and I can set myself up. I knew it was a risk, and I got sent to prison for it.”

G spent every moment in prison thinking about what he had lost – and how to get it back.

“I thought – I can spend my time in prison being resentful, or I could accept the consequences of what I had done, pick myself up and learn from it.

“I took up every opportunity to learn that came my way.”

A life-changing opportunity presented itself when he was offered a place on the Wates Reimagining Talent programme. It helped him to tackle his job hunt, sharpen his interview skills and shape up his CV.

Vitaly, it also taught him how and when to disclose his offence in order to secure the best shot at finding a meaningful role.

“Once I understood that, I felt empowered instead of scared. It took away a lot of the anxiety.”

When an opportunity came up to work at Wates, G was well prepared and managed to secure the role within eight weeks of his release. His new role gave him the security he craved and, piece by piece, he started to put his life back together.

“Once I started, it was like a breath of fresh air. People see me for my work, not my past. That's all I ever wanted: a fair chance to prove myself.”

He has a powerful message for employers: “There's just so much talent in prisons – there are people who are smart, hardworking, creative – they just need direction and someone to believe in them. If more employers understood that, we'd see fewer people going back inside.”

Wates is committed to the fair treatment of people with criminal records, whether existing or potential employees. We do not apply mandatory exemptions for specific offences. Once candidates reach the job offer stage, we review the circumstances of each case and the suitability of the candidate for the role.



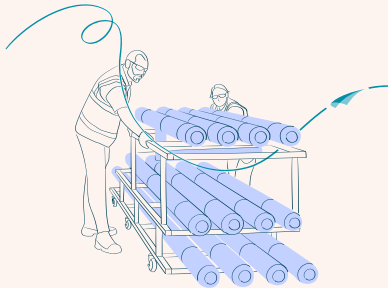
When we reimagine rehabilitation we reduce reoffending

We're proud of our achievements and, like the prison leavers we support, we learn from our experiences and keep looking for more ways to help.

Job-ready skills learned in prison

Inside HMP Stoke Heath, Wates has created a mini replica of its own factory in Coventry, so that prisoners can learn new skills and boost their chances of securing a job on release.

Prisoners work for a minimum of six weeks, putting together pipes and tubing modules that will be used in our programme of works for the MoJ. The workshop is supervised by trained prison staff and managed by our factory team, with six spaces available on a rolling basis.



“ As well as supporting our social value activity and MoJ KPIs and objectives, this provides opportunities for people who are furthest from the workplace to thrive. Creating meaningful employment and supporting prisoners to build their confidence can have a transformative effect, helping people to look forward to a brighter future.

Rob Clifford
Executive Managing Director, SES

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Improving brain health

Wates has sponsored the Enhance programme at HMP Stoke Heath, the first European pilot of cognitive training in prison. Three initial cohorts have provided promising results, as well as some learning points for future training.

The programme is designed to reduce reoffending by helping participants make better decisions and sustain healthy lives in their community, with improved employment prospects a secondary outcome. It has already had positive benefits. Those taking part have seen improved cognitive skills, a drop in reported negative behaviour, including adjudications, use of force and self-harm.

Prisoners themselves have reported improvements in their confidence and digital capability, as well as reduced anxiety levels.

The £30,000 investment saw Wates transform a room in the prison into a suitably welcoming environment where up to three people at a time can take the screen-based training.

Creating a home from home at HMP Send

Our Leatherhead office is building a long-term relationship with HMP Send, a nearby women's prison, as part of our social value strategy.

Our first project together is to refurbish a house owned by the prison, just outside the gates, to offer a place for women entering prison or those on temporary release to meet with their families in a comfortable and homely environment. It will also offer a respite space for prison staff members.

Experts from our SmartSpace and SES teams will manage the project, working with volunteers from Volunteer it Yourself.

“ ...made me forget about things that were stressing me.

...I find it a lot easier to learn in other classes.

My behaviour since joining has improved.

...read more in the last month than in my whole life in prison and out.

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“ It's a really good opportunity and I'm really excited about it.

Esther Dainton
Governor at HMP Send

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Social enterprises

We are proud to work alongside multiple social enterprises that support prison leavers. These include:



Beam
AI powered services to help tackle social problems.



Beating Time
Supporting people in custody to set them up for success after release, with initiatives to improve mental health, social inclusion and employment opportunities.



Evolve Education
Delivers the ENHANCE neurocognitive development programme to improve brain health and cognitive function.



Forests with Impact
Creating opportunities by establishing commercial tree nurseries in prisons, providing sustainable income, employment pathways for prisoners and prison leavers, and increased biodiversity.



Inside Job Productions
Film production company that provides training and employment opportunities for those underrepresented in the film industry, supporting those in the criminal justice system and engaging marginalised communities.



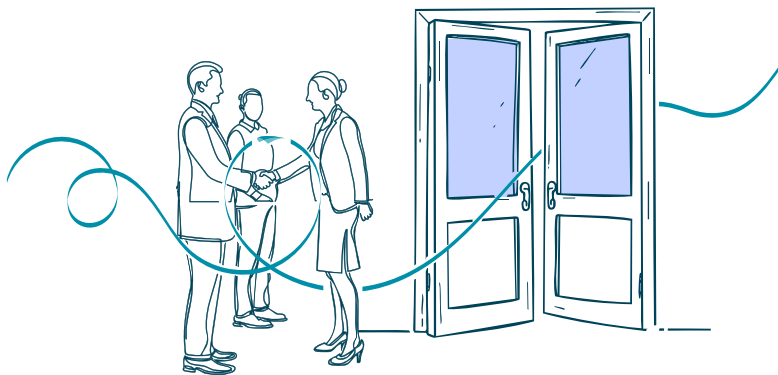
Koestler Arts
Inspiring participation in the arts by people in prisons and beyond and building public recognition of their creative work.



Off Ploy
Improving employment outcomes for people with convictions.



The Clink
A rehabilitation charity, providing training opportunities and rehabilitation support to people in prison and those at risk of offending, via catering and horticulture.



Lessons learned

1.

Direct contact matters – human support from people outside the prison makes a step into employment on release feel possible rather than aspirational.

2.

Myth busting is essential – for those who’ve been in custody for years, a range of assumptions will have taken root, and grounding the sessions in fact helps remove barriers.

3.

The dots need to be joined – preparing someone for work doesn’t automatically lead to them finding an opportunity. Supporting people to build resilience and make the right steps after the training is essential.

4.

Prepare our staff members well– going into a prison and working with those in custody is an experience that can have both a positive and negative impact. Our employees should have the right level of support and in-custody training for this work.

5.

Prison leavers need more than employment – a stable home environment while adjusting to the world could be transformational for those acclimatising to a non-institutional setting.

6.

Feeling secure and trusted – people leaving custody need to feel safe and secure in what they should and shouldn’t disclose, and be able to talk about their past as little or as much as they want to – line managers need to understand individual preference.



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for people to thrive

Discover more at wates.co.uk