



EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
European Social Fund



PRESS RELEASE

20 August 2007

NEW FUNDING HELPS PEOPLE LEAVING PRISON REBUILD THEIR LIVES

A project in South Sefton, Merseyside, helping people who have been in prison or who have served a community sentence to rebuild their lives and find jobs, education or training has been extended.

This follows a new funding agreement for the 'Getting Sefton Working' project run by employment charity, Tomorrow's People. The Liverpool Paradise Foundation, set up to support good causes in Merseyside is providing £45,000 over a period of three years. A further £70,000 of European Social Fund support has also been provided by the Government Office for the North West.

Tomorrow's People runs the project in the five most deprived wards in South Sefton, in a bid to help many people who are struggling to find and keep a job. It specifically helps people who are leaving prison or finishing sentences in the community, as it has been found that employment is a significant factor in reducing re-offending.

The initiative provides employment support to anyone aged 18 or over, who is leaving prison or finishing a community sentence, and whose home address or accommodation is in one of South Sefton's most deprived neighbourhoods - the Pathways' areas of Bootle, Linacre, Seaforth, Orrell and Dunningbridge.

Individuals are helped by Tomorrow's People specialist employment advisers – Sarah Thompson and Danielle Carubia - who provide one-to-one, confidential advice and guidance on CV preparation, interview techniques, confidence and motivation building, job searching, help with answers to difficult questions like the disclosure of criminal offences; and on how to match their skills to relevant employers, including those who do not advertise job vacancies.

The project operates from offices at Hawthorne Road, Bootle, with employment advisers based at other sites within the South Sefton neighbourhoods, like community and training centres and hostels. The advisers also offer weekly outreach support from the Bootle and Waterloo offices of the National Probation Service and also from their Drug Rehabilitation and Requirements (DRR) Unit.

Other close working relationships are maintained with key support workers and advisers representing South Sefton Partnership, Sefton @ Work, Hugh Baird College, Connexions and various Sefton Drug Intervention Programmes (DIP) and Drug Alcohol Awareness Teams (DAAT).

Tomorrow's People advisers are also being introduced to prisoners before their release through the resettlement units of prisons in the North West including HMP Liverpool in Walton, and through pre-release job fairs and other network partners. By working in partnership with other organisations, Tomorrow's People is able to offer a holistic, tailor-made approach to ex-offenders, supporting them into sustainable work and independent living.

A report by The Social Exclusion Unit, "Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners" (July 2002), found, employment reduces the risk of re-offending by people who have been in prison by up to 50 per cent, which is why a project of this kind is important in helping reduce crime and its associated costs to society.

As well as helping job seeking ex-offenders to find work, Tomorrow's People ensures that the people supported remain in employment by offering a minimum of 12-months In-Work Aftercare Support. The Tomorrow's People employment adviser remains in touch even after an individual has started a job, helping them and their employer to overcome any teething troubles that may occur when starting work after a long period of unemployment. This has been so successful that on average, 76% of people helped by Tomorrow's People remain in employment after 12 months.

Chris Jones, Tomorrow's People's Operations Manager for Merseyside, said: "We are helping many people with a history of offending to rebuild their lives and have more positive futures. As our service is independent of government employment programmes, it reduces mistrust of the establishment inherent in many ex-offenders, helping them to stay engaged with the project.

"The Tomorrow's People service is designed to provide a long-term solution, rather than a short-term fix in supporting and developing clients who have a history of offending. Ultimately we want to help the individual transform their life and find and keep a job, which is the most significant way of reducing re-offending. When people are in permanent employment, the risk of re-offending is dramatically reduced. This can only have a positive impact on their lives individually and on society as a whole."

Tomorrow's People, with a 22-year track record of helping people out of long term unemployment, provides a number of additional programmes across Merseyside including into-work support programmes for excluded young people and help for people out of work for health reasons and claiming incapacity benefit. The Merseyside operation has the Matrix Quality Standard awarded by EMQC, the national accountable body for the delivery of advice and guidance to adults.

For further information about these employment projects please contact Tomorrow's People by telephoning 0151 255 1400 (Liverpool office) or write to Tomorrow's People at 1st Floor, Marybone Community Association, Addison Way, Liverpool L3 2EW or email the Local Manager, Chris Jones, at cjones@tomorrows-people.co.uk

CHRISTOPHER'S STORY

“With the right support, people with drug addiction can turn their life around...”

Chris, an ex drug addict, aged 33, from Merseyside has rebuilt his life thanks to the 'Getting Sefton Working' project.

Chris left school at aged 16, with no qualifications and joined the Royal Navy, where he completed basic training to become a naval seaman. Like many young people, Chris was unsure what he was going to do with his future. He went onto complete an NVQ in Business Administration and began his career as an administrator in an office environment.

Subsequently, Chris has worked within a warehouse environment for twelve years, off and on, interrupted by various criminal offences relating to his drug habit.

Chris was referred to the Tomorrow's People 'Getting Sefton Working' project by Sefton@Work, a service providing high quality information, advice and guidance to South Sefton residents aged 16 plus.

When Chris started with Tomorrow's People he wanted to gain employment as a support worker, working with individuals who had gone through a similar experience as himself. He is currently undertaking qualifications in drug and alcohol awareness and has begun paid training with a jobcentre plus accredited driving organisation.

Danielle Carubia, Client Adviser at Tomorrow's People Merseyside said: “Chris is determined to succeed and to encourage young people not to exclude themselves from learning. With the right support, people with drug addiction can turn their life around.”

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Notes to Editors:

Tomorrow's People

Tomorrow's People is a national charity with a 22- year track record of success in helping people out of long-term unemployment, homelessness, welfare dependence including incapacity benefits, and into jobs and self-sufficiency. It has helped change the lives of more than 400, 000 people across the UK who had been resigned to long-term, even life-long, unemployment, since it was established in 1984.

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