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First Ex-Offenders Qualifies as Scaffolders in CITB-funded Training Scheme

The first fully qualified ex-offender scaffolders have graduated through the CISRS training scheme – in a CITB-funded program run by Fulcrum Scaffold Safety and Procure Plus.

Chris Hamlin from Liverpool has just passed his Part 2 CISRS Scaffolding Course with

Fulcrum Scaffold Safety in Holywell and is now collecting evidence for his NVQ and his journey as a qualified scaffolder. And he is not alone, with Stephen Spears from Manchester not far behind him – with more than 200 male and female scaffolding trainees in full-time employment with CISRS training, as a result of the innovative new scheme.

Dave Abraham, MD, Fulcrum Scaffold Safety said: “It’s a massively successful recruitment route for the scaffolding sector – providing a steady stream of much-needed talent to the industry, from ex-offenders leaving prison.

“Chris Halpin is the first to come through, but there are two more lads who have recently have come in and done their Part 2 training. We work on this recruitment project across a number of prisons and have well over 200 lads and lasses out on full time employment.

“It works because the lads and lasses want a second chance. They often don’t know what they wanted to do with their lives after prison. Like with Chris: he was serving a life sentence, but has done his time, recognises his errors and moved on to something positive and loves it.

“We originally wanted to go into the prisons in 2018, but COVID set that back. But once we got in there after that, we were off and now we get asked to go to all manner of prisons. The idea is to get a nice steady conveyer belt of skill coming through – some scaffolders, others working as logistics managers, labourers, designers... there’s lots of career options.

Fulcrum has been working with HMP Cardiff, HMP Berwyn, HMP Thorn Cross in Warrington and HM Prison Styal for women offenders over an 18-24 month period – offering scaffolding training courses to those who show the right approach.

And more recently, the scheme has been operating in Category D prisons, which allow release on a temporary licence, giving people a chance to gain employment work experience whilst still serving out their sentences, with a view to full-time jobs.

The scheme is open to all who show an interest and the right approach, but does not allow entry by sex offenders, terrorists or arsonists (who cannot be insured in the scaffolding sector).

Dave Abraham says: “It’s about giving back and getting these people back into society in the correct manner, so we are not creating victims with high chances of re-offending – because they need money and turn back to crime, because they can’t find employment. The CISRS training gives them the chance to get a trade, learn a skill and be part of a great industry.

“And when they have a goal in front of them, something to aim at and go for – with this second chance – they grasp it with both hands and really go for it.

“We know there’s a labour shortage in scaffolding and construction and these lads and lasses are finding their feet, filling a need and being part of a great industry. Some go on to be managers, others are labourers in the yard. Whatever they choose, they can start providing for their family and it’s a fresh start.

“For us at Fulcrum it was less about the skills gap and more about giving back. Speaking personally, if I never got a second chance in life, I probably would have been in and out of prison. So I understand the choices the face and this is a great opportunity.

“The work that goes on behind the scenes is massive. We set the business up with a view to giving back to the industry and wider community. This scheme allows us to still have sustainability and look after your trade, whilst giving people a second chance in life, with a great career in scaffolding.”



Employment opportunities are developed for the scheme candidates by Fulcrum and Procure Plus. Wiktor Morrell, Employment and Skills Manager for Procure Plus said: “Procure Plus help fund the prison courses and deliver them in partnership with Fulcrum. The funding is via the CITB’s ‘on site experience fund – ‘which is aimed at training people prior to organising work experience placements and job opportunities.

“There has been a skills shortage for some time now and we were working with prisons training and supplying the sector with rail operatives. Other sectors were asking for labour and there was no looking back after agreeing to do a scaffolding pre recruitment course with Fulcrum. We want to give people a second chance and working with HMP Thorncross we looked to work with people who are due to be released from prison a chance to consider scaffolding as a career.”

It was an inspired decision.

“This is where we thought using the CITB funding to plug the skills gap in the scaffold sector would be a good idea.

“We started at HMP Thorn Cross, where people due for release can be on licence and get day release to work. We ran a first course back in April 2022 and it was really successful – everyone passed the course, all got job offers and the majority went on to start work with a variety of employers.

“Then word started to spread in the prison that people were getting full time employment. And it was a win-win all round: with the prisoners getting employment on licence and on release and the employers getting trained and site ready people. It was basically a no brainer... and the whole process really helps the individuals getting a fresh start, not having such a daunting task, with a job, money and security provided from their release.

“The biggest reason people re-offend is when they have nowhere to live and no job, so no money... and this scheme stops that negative cycle happening. Having a job and the option of a new career really helps when leaving prison. This also helps when adapting and returning to society – working in a great job and earning good money.”

The scheme is now a huge success in the North West region.

Wiktor adds: “There’s a waiting list for the course now, it’s proving to be that popular. A lot of people on licence get work doing various shifts or through agencies which is fine. However, this model is industry accredited training giving people the skills they need to get a full-time job and more importantly a pathway to a new career.

“The scaffolding industry has recognised that there’s a talent shortage and that this is one superb way to fill it. People who take part in the pre recruitment program are looking for a good week’s work with a decent rate of pay... which the life as a scaffolder can offer.

“And now we have secured some City & Guilds funding – offering co-funding for Part 1, Part 2 and Advanced scaffolder training – so the employer pays a percentage of the training costs and the rest is funded.

“If I was an employer, I’d be jumping at it... you are getting access to a new pool of talent and helping bring through job ready employees that the sector desperately needs whilst saving a lot of time and resource on training and recruitment.

“I don’t know anywhere else where you can get this level of support. It’s something very special for me to be involved with.”

Speaking about the recent success of the ex-offenders scheme CISRS MD, Dave Mosley said: “This is a brilliant and successful scheme giving second chances to ex-offenders with a rewarding and wide career in scaffolding. There are many positive stories to tell here, not least those of Chris and Stephen, who are the first to make it to Part 2 on this funded program. Long may the scheme continue to be a success – plugging the skills gap with homegrown, well trained talent and offering a rewarding, genuine career path for those leaving prison. Huge credit to CITB, Fulcrum and Procure Plus for making it happen.”

For further information on the courses and funding, visit: <https://www.procure-plus.com/>

& <https://fulcrumscaffoldsafety.com/>