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HMP Bullingdon Community Connections Pilot

Final Evaluation

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OCVA

Find out about us

Table of Contents

Introduction 4
The Commission 4
The evaluation 4
The structure of this report 5
Chapter 1: Methodology 6
Introduction 6
The stakeholder launch event 6
Interviews with the link worker 6
Stakeholder views 7
Data identification and analysis 8
Participant feedback 8
Chapter 2: The project's development 9
Overview 9
Phase 1 Induction and Community Exploration (November 2022 – February 2023) 9
Phase 2 Testing the project model with prisoners due for release (March-May 2023) 10
Phase 3 Consolidation (June 2023 – February 2024) 11
Phase 4 Embedding and expansion (March 2024- October 2025) 12
Phase 5 Future-proofing, co-production and dissemination (October 2025 - now) 13
Project Timeline 14
Chapter 3 Activities and achievements 15
Overview 15
Projects and activities 15
Extent of activities 20
Funding generated 21
Chapter 4: Stakeholder and prisoner views 23
Introduction 23
Primary stakeholder interviewees 23
Other stakeholder views 24
The right skills for the job 24

A uniformed member of staff 25
A single point of contact 25
Making the system work 26
A catalyst and kickstarter 26
Linking inside and out 27
Work with officers 28
Networking and spreading opportunities 28
Seeding a positive culture 29
Disseminating the BCCP approach 30
Concerns 30
Participant feedback 31
Conclusions 33
Replication 33
Key learning points for developing a prison community connections project 35
Pre-Launch 35
Initial phase 35
Early delivery 35
Ongoing delivery 35
Key points for providers 35
Appendix One – Overview of purposeful activities generated by BCCP 37
Table One – Recurrent Initiatives 37
Table Two - Historic or One off Events 41
Appendix Two – The Mural 47

Introduction

The Commission

Russell Webster, an experienced criminal justice researcher, was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the HMP Bullingdon Community Connections Pilot Project (BCCP). The project was developed as a partnership between the prison and Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action, the local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations for the county.

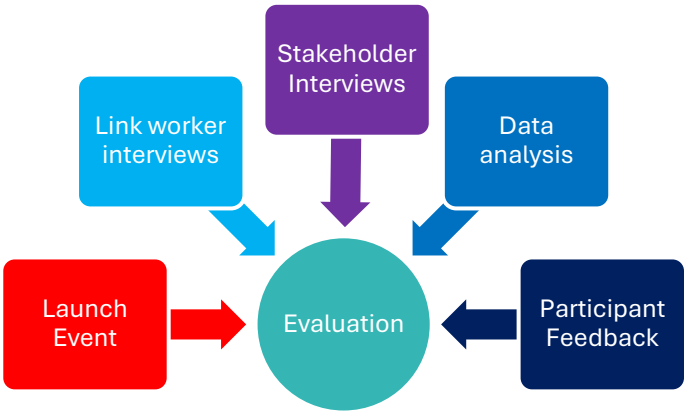
The pilot, initially funded for a two year period from November 2022 to October 2024, was established to address the challenges people face on being released from prison in order to reduce reoffending. The project was designed to connect people with a wide variety of Third Sector groups in the community within Oxfordshire. There was a specific focus on enabling 'keyworker' prison officers to link with these resources in a direct and practical way in order to enhance rehabilitation opportunities through emotional and relationship support. The project received continuation funding from the Dawes Trust from November 2024 to October 2026 and has now secured funding to continue its work for one further year.

The evaluation

The evaluation is a combined process and impact evaluation with four primary objectives:

1. To describe the evolution of the project with a particular focus on identifying successes and barriers;
2. To assess the impact of the project in terms of the greater involvement of community organisations in HMP Bullingdon and any increase in up-take of community services by prisoners released to the Oxfordshire area;
3. To assess the impact of the project against the expectations of key stakeholders; and
4. To produce a final report that can be shared with stakeholders and wider audiences highlighting the learning from the pilot.

The evaluation has been designed to undertake an action research approach, feeding back progress and issues of concern to the project workers and BCCP steering group in real time. It includes five key components. These are: an initial stakeholder launch event; ongoing interviews with the project workers throughout the life of the project; interviews with a wide range of stakeholders both inside and outside the



prison; identification and analysis of data sources which show the activities undertaken by the project; and feedback on individual activities from the people in prison participating in them. This evaluation model was formally sanctioned by the National Research Council of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). Further details of the methodology are presented in the next chapter.

The structure of this report

This report builds on the findings of previous evaluation reports and is organised in a straightforward fashion. Chapter 1 describes the methodology used in the evaluation. Chapter 2 describes the project and traces its development in detail. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the project's activities and achievements to date. Chapter 4 presents the views of a range of stakeholders and prisoners themselves on the impact of the project. Chapter 5 provides a summary and highlights key issues for the future of the project.

Appendix One provides a brief list of the many activities and initiatives developed by the project.

Appendix Two showcases one of these initiatives, a 73 metre long mural completed in 2026.

Chapter 1: Methodology

Introduction

As we have seen, there are five key components of the evaluation:

1. An initial stakeholder launch event;
2. Ongoing interviews with the project workers throughout the life of the project;
3. Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders both inside and without the prison;
4. Identification and analysis of data sources which show the activities undertaken by the project; and
5. Feedback from participants on individual activities and events.

These five components are described in more detail below.

The stakeholder launch event

The evaluator facilitated an online launch event on 13 February 2023 which was attended by 24 people of whom eight were from Oxfordshire third sector organisations, eight from statutory organisations and six were members of the steering group[1]. The event provided an opportunity for key stakeholders to hear about the project model and suggest input into the evaluation. It also included a message of support from HMPPS via its head of Third Sector Partnerships. The primary objectives of the event were to publicise the pilot and encourage stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary sectors across Oxfordshire to engage with it; specifically to encourage their services to become involved in supporting people released from HMP Bullingdon.

Interviews with the link worker

The evaluator has held over forty monthly (one hour) online video conversations with the project workers throughout the course of the project. The sessions included both workers with the expansion of the project after its initial two year phase. The conversations have focused on work undertaken in the preceding month and goals for the next month. The objectives of these conversations were:

- To ensure that the evaluator has a comprehensive understanding of the working of the project and is able to track changes as they happen;
- To record outputs and activities accurately (in particular, the provision of services by community groups);
- To feedback successes and challenges to the steering group in real-time.

[1] The other two attendees were the project worker and the evaluator.

Stakeholder views

The views of a wide range of stakeholders were collected throughout the course of the evaluation. These include a series of semi-structured interviews with a small number (five) of primary stakeholders at the start of the project to establish their understanding of the pilot and their hopes and expectations and at regular intervals over the last four years.

As the next chapter makes clear, while the overall aim of the project remained constant, its focus evolved in the light of the learning gained by the project worker and the evaluator. After the initial evaluation, the steering group adopted a new definition of the project:

The overall aim and focus of the Project is to build positive interconnections between the prison and the community that will support the rehabilitation of individuals. This will involve:

Initiating new projects and partnerships between the community and prison to open up opportunities for purposeful activity and individual support.

Facilitating effective working: assisting services to navigate the best route to delivery through introductions, connections, system navigation, information-giving and support for colleagues and partners

Enabling and supporting Prison officers to link individuals to services that offer social and emotional support on release.

As a result, the evaluator modified the evaluation methodology to focus on undertaking more interviews with those involved in running these new projects and partnerships and with prison staff in key posts where the project facilitated more effective working. These interviews replaced the original proposed interviews with frontline prison and probation staff.

In addition to the primary stakeholders, the evaluator has conducted interviews with 38 other individuals, ten of whom worked for the prison, five for the probation service and twenty three for other organisations. The stakeholder interviews focused on six key issues:

- Perceptions of the purpose of the project;
- Understanding of how the project operates in practice;
- Hopes about the eventual outcome of the project;
- Identification of critical success factors; and
- Identification of barriers to successful implementation.
- Views on the future development of the project.

The additional interviews examined:

- The work of the interviewee;
- The contribution of the project to that work;
- The strengths of the project;
- Areas that the project could improve; and

- Views on the future development of the project.

In addition to these interviews, BCCP held an event on 14 October 2026 for all the organisations and volunteers that have worked with the project to take stock of the last four years and plan project development. As part of that event, invited organisations were asked to register their interest and complete a short pre-event survey which asked a range of questions on their experiences of working in the prison. Thirty two people from sixteen different organisations completed the survey and the responses have been analysed for this report.

Data identification and analysis

At the design stage of the evaluation, it was decided that primary data collection would be difficult for a number of reasons. The Community Connections officer was not intended to have a direct caseload of prisoners. The project's "clients" are other prison officers and community organisations. Therefore, it would be difficult to gather data on which prisoners are in contact with community organisations both in prison and on release and to establish which are in contact solely (or mainly) because of the pilot scheme. Data collection is further complicated by the fact that the majority of Bullingdon prisoners are not released into the Oxfordshire area. Details of which community organisations released prisoners are in contact with will, often, be recorded on probation records but only at an individual case management level, making it extremely problematic to construct a reliable database for the evaluation.

However, a wide range of valuable secondary data has been collected which captures the evolution of the project. Three key data sets were collected with the help of the project workers:

1. A list of projects and activities involving community organisations working in HMP Bullingdon which have been initiated by the project workers;
2. Records of the number of people in prison attending this range of activities.
3. The amount of funding sourced or leveraged by BCCP to support the provision of activities.

Participant feedback

Increasingly over the last eighteen months the project has started to collect and collate feedback from prison participants on a range of different activities. Feedback has been collected in different ways including:

- Directly at the end of an activity by project staff;
- Shortly after the activity via the prison Launchpad digital system;
- From providers who routinely administer their own standard feedback mechanisms.

The evaluator has been able to source feedback from 248 individuals attending thirteen different activities. The findings from this feedback have been analysed and are presented in Chapter Four.

Chapter 2: The project's development

Overview

This chapter provides a brief overview of the work undertaken by BCCP, dividing it into five broad phases reflecting the main types of activity carried out by the project to date. Throughtout this evolution, it is important to note that the prison, including its senior leadership team and the steering group, have worked closely together to co-create the project and allow it to flourish according to the needs of Bullingdon's population.

Phase 1 Induction and Community Exploration (November 2022 – February 2023)

The original prison-based project worker, known as the Community Connections Officer, was an experienced prison officer who had worked at HMP Bullingdon for three years before his appointment. This meant that he had an extensive understanding of the prison system and the key staff, working practices and culture of HMP Bullingdon. Therefore, his initial three months focused primarily on:

1. Developing his knowledge of community organisations in Oxfordshire which would be able to help and support released prisoners;
2. Developing working relationships with other key external agencies working within the prison; and
3. Promoting the pilot with key staff members and departments within HMP Bullingdon.

Each of these three tasks is discussed in more detail below.

Community organisations

The project worker was greatly supported in this task of developing knowledge of and working relationships with community organisations in Oxfordshire by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) who also provided him with office space as and when required. Importantly, the project worker invested considerable time and effort in this task; not merely developing a database of helping organisations but going to meet staff at any organisation which responded to his contacts in order to get a full understanding of the work they delivered, referral routes and in order to start building working relationships. The project worker made contact with 61 different community organisations in this initial phase of work, 41 of whom responded. These organisations provided a wide range of services including help with housing; employment, training and education and health and wellbeing. Other services included arts groups, community cafés and spaces, mentoring and family support.

Key partners

The project worker was careful to spend more than half of his time within HMP Bullingdon in order to maintain the visibility of the fledgeling project in addition to prioritising close working relationships with key prison departments (particularly resettlement and the Offender Management Unit) and external partners already providing services in the prison and through-the-gate.

Project promotion

The project worker's third priority activity during this initial phase was to promote the project within the prison, particularly with frontline staff who were responsible for keyworking and helping prepare men for release. The project worker was careful to invest more time into this task once he had already identified a range of community resources so that he was able to share information about the different ways in which the pilot project would be able to support officers in this resettlement task.

The project worker was also kept busy developing a working relationship with the steering group and planning the stakeholder launch event which took place on 13 February 2023.

Phase 2 Testing the project model with prisoners due for release (March-May 2023)

The original model envisaged the project worker primarily supporting prison officer key workers by helping identify a range of relevant community services which could be matched to individual prisoners' needs prior to release. However, in order to test the model, the project worker decided to work directly with a small cohort of prisoners coming up for release. This approach was decided on for a number of reasons:

- In order to test the model, in particular, whether the range of community resources identified were the most appropriate ones for this cohort of people.
- To promote the project directly with prisoners and get feedback on its operation.
- To provide support to prison officers in their keyworking role, with the intention of continuing to promote the pilot project and its value to them in their everyday work.
- In acknowledgement of the fact that keywork was inconsistently delivered within HMP Bullingdon with the quality of the service provided varying considerably.

This last factor is not a Bullingdon-specific issue as a national joint inspection[2] published in November 2022 made clear. The inspectorates found that the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) was falling *"well short of expected standards"*. The inspectors were so disappointed with OMiC that they went to the unusual step of calling for the model to be overhauled. Justin Russell, the Chief Inspector of Probation at this time, did not mince his words:

"The Offender Management in Custody model was an ambitious idea to better support prisoners back into the community. But however admirable its intentions, it is simply not working. We found

[2] HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2022) Offender Management in Custody – pre-release

staffing levels at crisis point in some prisons and probation regions, and levels of pre-release contact with prisoners that was sufficient to reduce re-offending in only a third of the cases we inspected. The model must be reviewed, and overhauled, at the earliest opportunity."

The project worker provided this one-to-one keyworking role to 75 prisoners in the first two years of BCCP's operation.

The project worker also began to develop another facet of the project during this phase of work, becoming a key bridge between the prison and a wide range of community services. This work took on many aspects including:

- Aiding and supporting existing partner organisations to operate more effectively within HMP Bullingdon. Despite being commissioned by HMPPS, many organisations experienced very considerable delays in getting staff cleared by vetting to the level when they were able to hold keys – often critical to being able to access prisoners directly on the wings and provide their commissioned service. Like most establishments, HMP Bullingdon is still not able to deliver the full regime available routinely pre-pandemic, with the consequence that on-wing service delivery was even more important.
- Developing very close working relationships with large external providers such as Restart – designed to provide a wide range of resettlement support to people returning from prison to the Thames Valley region – and RECONNECT, which aims to provide continuity of healthcare for people leaving prison. This approach helped ensure that prisoners with multiple needs received a joined up service. As these working relationships improved, the pilot and these partner organisations were able to make direct worker-to-worker referrals which meant that prisoners could receive services in a much more timely fashion.
- Instigating, prompting or facilitating a wide range of new initiatives by acting as a catalyst and lynch-pin between the prison and community organisations. These new initiatives took a wide range of forms including the 46 examples provided by the project worker in a document attached as Appendix One to this report.

Phase 3 Consolidation (June 2023 – February 2024)

The third phase of the project involved consolidating this extending remit of the project. One significant element of work which took place during this phase was the Charity Fair organised by the project worker in order to promote the project further and to allow community organisations and prison staff to network and better understand how community organisations could benefit people serving their sentence in Bullingdon, both in prison and on release.

The event was thoroughly and professionally organised by the project worker who succeeded in getting 35 people from 14 different bodies to attend and present the work done by their community organisation with an emphasis on how this work could support prisoners. The morning of the event was divided into two sessions with 25 frontline officers (plus non-operational staff from the Offender Management Unit, Inclusion & Resettlement Teams) attending the first and a further 25 operational staff attending the second. After a lunch break (catering done by the prison), the event was attended by 15 prisoners.

The rest of the project worker's time during this third phase was spent on a combination of the following activities:

- Supporting uniformed staff in their keywork role;
- Keeping existing projects going and developing new prison-community initiatives;
- Facilitating better co-ordination between prison departments;
- Providing training to new prison officers.

The project worker continued to promote the project during this phase, focusing particularly on engaging probation community offender managers in its work, encouraging them to refer people prior to release.

Notable activities during this phase included:

- A new initiative for people in prison who had limited community support networks. In a new initiative christened "men without visits", the project worker organised for more than a dozen groups and organisations (internal and external) to meet with prisoners who do not receive visits in order to try to engage them with a wide range of support options both pre- and post-release. The event was (typically) well organised, received very positive feedback from all parties and has subsequently been repeated.
- The project worker has continued to promote the project with uniformed staff responsible for keywork and has received increasing numbers of requests for information about specific community services. One of the worker's first initiatives – identifying a grant opportunity from Unlocked to allow people in prison to telephone approved community organisations in order to make resettlement plans - was also finally implemented;
- The project worker was also key in developing a large gardening project which will significantly improve the prison environment and provide opportunities for people in prison to participate in gardening, several for the first time.

Phase 4 Embedding and expansion (March 2024- October 2025)

In February 2024, the project steering group was notified that it had been successful in securing funding from the Dawes Trust to continue the funding for a further two years from November 2024 and expand the pilot. This increased funding enabled the creation of a new Community Coordinator post, based in OCVA, whose role was to focus on supporting community groups, and to enable the project to expand the work to include community resources in the Thames Valley area for people released into that geographical area[3].

Although the two workers had distinctive roles, they quickly developed into a harmonious team. The Community Co-ordinator received training to enable him to hold keys in the prison and split his time between the prison and the community. By attending Reducing Reoffending monthly meetings, he quickly established a good working relationship with a number of key prison staff.

[3] Thames Valley is one of the most common release destinations for people released from HMP Bullingdon.

In addition, the permanent base at OCVA enabled him to reach out to many more voluntary sector organisations and engage them in providing services to prisoners.

This addition also resulted in OCVA having closer links with the prison senior management team and building a joint approach to managing and developing the work of the project.

This successful funding application enabled the project worker and steering group to plan more ambitiously for the final nine months of the pilot period and for the following two years of the project, to November 2026. The project workers prioritised four primary areas of work:

1. Embedding current initiatives so that they could continue without the need for them to be the primary organisers;
2. Continuing to develop new initiatives, involving both new and existing community partners;
3. Retaining a focus on supporting key workers in their work developing resettlement plans for those due to leave HMP Bullingdon; and
4. Undertaking initial research into key organisations in the Thames Valley area.

In addition to these four main activities, the project workers also leveraged their increasing knowledge of local statutory and voluntary sector organisations to organise free or minimal cost training for both staff and prisoners.

Phase 5 Future-proofing, co-production and dissemination (October 2025 – now)

The project steering group prioritised developing an enduring funding solution to ensure the continuation of the project and its integration into the day-to-day running of HMP Bullingdon. The group was successful in negotiating with HMP Bullingdon and regional managers at HMPPS that the prison itself would provide ongoing funding for the prison officer role from November 2026. The steering group also once again secured funding from the Dawes Trust for funding of the community worker role for a one-year period from November 2026 and is looking to augment this funding in the near future.

The governance structures of the project have been updated to reflect this change with the creation of a new management group under the combined aegis of HMP Bullingdon and OCVA with each organisation retaining responsibility and decision-making authority for matters that fall within its own governance, legal and organisational responsibilities. The existing steering group has evolved to become an advisory group, with the purpose of *"providing independent strategic advice to support the continued development of the project."*

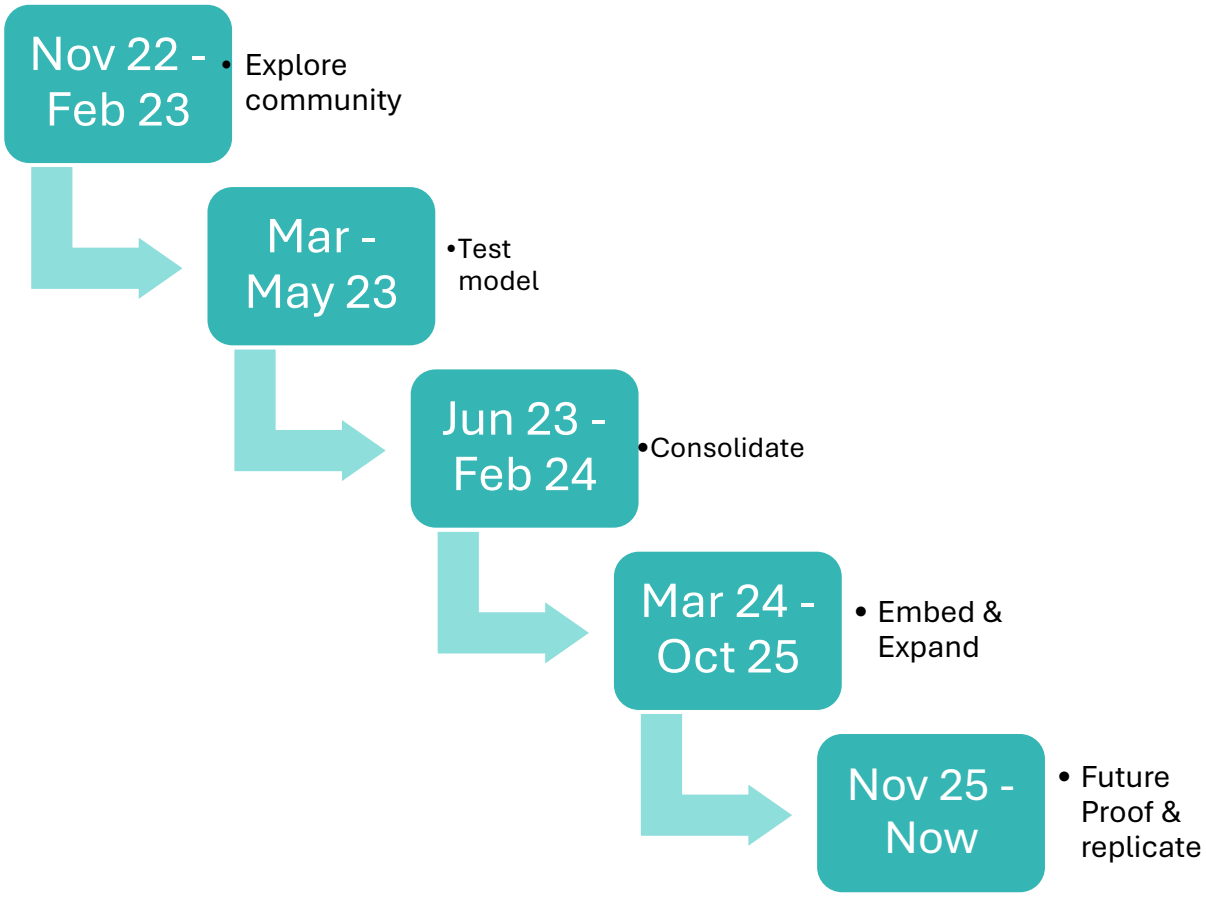
During this last year, the project has also succeeded in both consolidating key areas of provision and expanding the range of activities provided (more details provided later in this report). The project has been able to provide activities to a greater proportion of the prison's population (including those designated as vulnerable prisoners) and has started to realise its aspirations of actively involving people in prison in the co-design and co-development of activities. The first of these initiatives is the co-production of a new entrepreneur programme reflecting the wish of several people in prison to explore forms of self-employment/entrepreneurship on their release.

The project has also stepped up its efforts to disseminate the programme to other establishments, often at the request of HMPPS, other prisons or other charities working in the justice space. Examples include:

- Presenting the model to the HMPPS changemakers conference;
- Supporting the prison charity PACT to launch a version of the Community Days (originally called "men without visits") initiative in a range of other prisons;
- Presenting to the Prison Reform Trust Emerging Leaders Course group.

These five phases of work are summarised in the timeline below:

Project Timeline



Chapter 3 Activities and achievements

Overview

With the help of the two project workers, the evaluator collated a wide range of secondary data to illustrate the impact of the project. Information was collected on three key areas of work:

1. A list of projects and activities involving community organisations working in HMP Bullingdon which have been initiated by the project.
2. Records of the number of people in prison attending this range of activities and the total number of hours of purposeful activity created by the project.
3. The amount of funding leveraged by BCCP.

This chapter lists the activities and achievements of the project under these three areas.

Projects and activities

As outlined earlier, the project workers have been particularly successful in initiating a wide range of new initiatives and activities for people in Bullingdon prison. There are too many new developments for them all to be described in this report although Appendix One provides a brief overview of 46 of them.

However, it is important to give a sense of their sheer scope and variety. They include small arts and crafts activities such as the fortnightly origami sessions held in the prison library and sports sessions designed to connect people in prison to their home communities – the Boats not Bars rowing programme.

The project workers have also developed much larger initiatives; four examples of which are described briefly below.

Community Days

"Community Days" (an initiative originally called "Men without visits") are held quarterly, prioritising socially isolated prisoners with the objectives of improving their quality of life inside and of engaging them in a range of opportunities and support systems both within HMP Bullingdon and on release. The most recent community day attracted 46 prisoners and workers from 11 different organisations and 7 prison departments. Since the initiative started, there have been 11 community days attended by a total of 245 people in prison.

Recent feedback from men who have attended includes:

> *"It was helpful, I was approached and welcomed and had an interesting conversation that made me feel comfortable. In addition, it was something different to do and relaxed environment."*

"I met Gilbert the dog and a really nice law student from Oxford, it definitely helps my mental health to get out of the cell and have normal conversations."



Community Day with a Pet Therapy dog

Perhaps the most important achievement of the Community Days is that a key partner organisation has extended the initiative to a further six prisons in the region where it delivers services.

New gardens

The prison-based worker was also the catalyst for a substantial project improving the environment both within the prison grounds and around the visitor centre. He has been the key facilitator in two prison garden projects delivered by the Nature Effect organisation. An initially modest proposal has been scaled up with the project worker providing information and support which has enabled the project to leverage substantial external funds with the prison providing only a small proportion of the costs.



Charndon Garden Plan © The Nature Effect

Mural

The Old Fire Station creative art charity in Oxford designed a 73 metre mural in consultation with a group of prisoners who also executed the mural over the period of an intensive week of work. The project was only possible because of the high regard that the project is now held in by HMP Bullingdon's senior management staff since the organisation required the closing of walkways while the painting was being done and considerable extra work for security and other staff.

The group of prisoners involved designed the theme of the mural (better experienced via Appendix Two of this report) which shows the prison journey. In the words of one of the participants:

> *"Basically it was about the first day you get into prison and the transition from being in custody to being released – the help you can get on your journey. A lot of people don't know there is help available here, you just need to want it. If you were new here, walking past that, you're gonna know roughly what the story's telling you. That prison is not really that bad if you wanna*

change. If you look for ways to better yourself while you're here, so when you get out you're not in the same predicament."

The project is also testament to the benefits of the project's longevity and the fact that it is now embedded at the heart of HMP Bullingdon's regime. The whole project – from original idea to fund-raising to planning and execution – took two years to complete. In addition to making a lasting change to the prison environment (the prisoner participants deliberately chose vibrant colours to represent hope and positivity and as a contrast to the grey tones of prison life), the mural also inspired other staff and prisoners within the prison with several departments taking advantage of left over paint to undertake smaller decorative murals in different areas across the prison.



Departure Lounge

One of the project's significant ongoing achievements is the development of a *"departure lounge"* for people being released from HMP Bullingdon. The project workers built on their work with a range of partners to enhance the services on offer to families using the visitor centre, to develop the idea

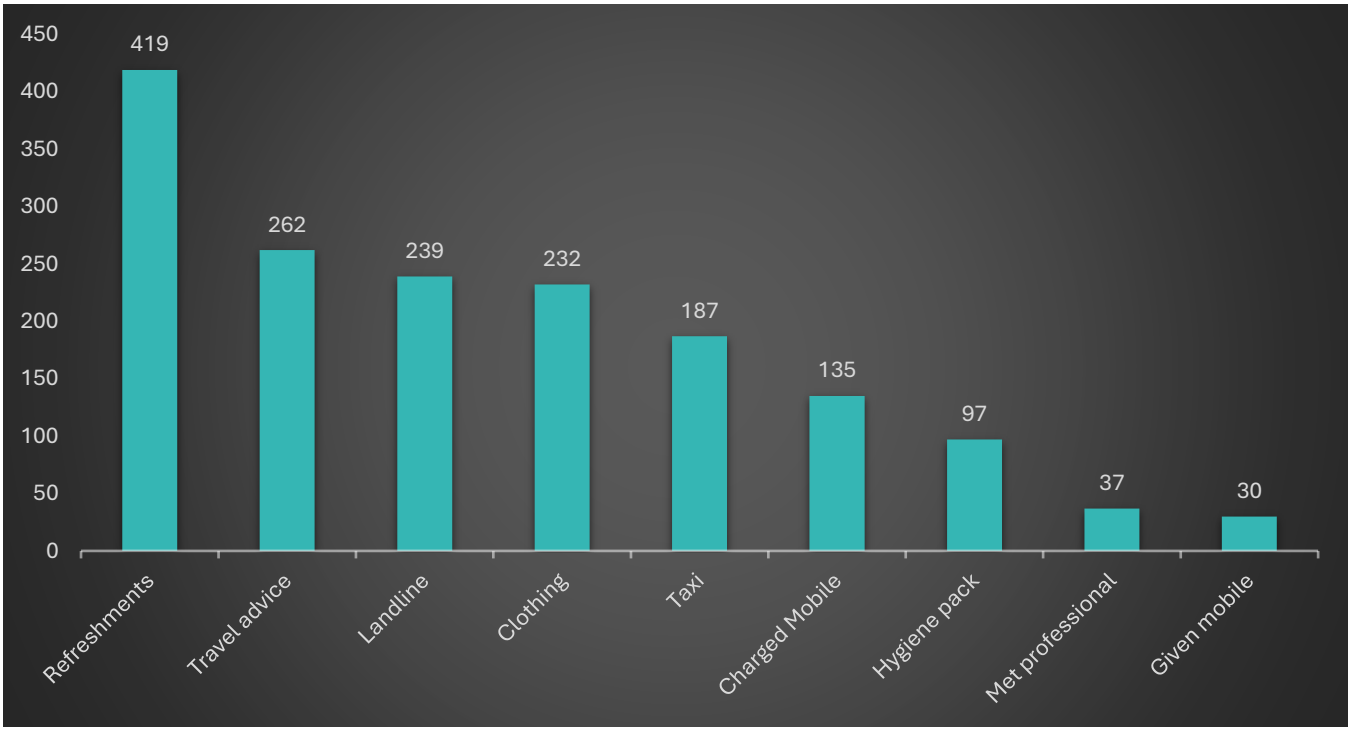
of a departure lounge for people being released from the prison. This service is also based in the visitor centre and provides a range of practical services, information and support for prisoners on their day of release. It took more than a year to establish the facility and for the first few months, the operation of the departure lounge was often reliant on a project worker staffing it.

However, in line with many other initiatives, the departure lounge has now been integrated into the core service delivery of the prison. The service has been supported by approximately 50 people including prison and probation officers, including both staff from a variety of organisations and volunteers from local communities. The departure lounge operates on the four days per week (Monday – Thursday) when releases are scheduled.

As a local prison, HMP Bullingdon releases an average of approximately one hundred people per month. In the nearly 14-month period from 17 July 2025 – 9 September 2026, a total of 748 men released from Bullingdon made use of the facility (approximately 60% of all releases). These people made use of a wide range of services, described below and illustrated in Figure 1 below:

- 419 (56%) received refreshments of a hot or cold drink and biscuits provided by Oxford Food Hub.
- 262 (35%) got advice on how to travel to their release destination.
- 239 (32%) used the telephone facilities to make a call – with a high proportion of these calls made to their supervising probation officer or accommodation to reschedule arrival times (many prisoners are released late or have to wait up to two hours for a bus).
- 232 (31%) received clothing donated by Apollos and other charities (many people are released in just shorts and a T-shirt).
- 187 (25%) booked a taxi to start their homeward journey.
- 135 (18%) charged their mobile phone.
- 97 (13%) received a hygiene pack (this represents about 30% of people who were released homeless).
- 37 (5%) met with a professional from the police, probation or DWP services.
- 30 (4%) were given a simple mobile phone, charger, SIM card & credit provided by SOFEA and Getting Oxfordshire Online.

Figure 1 Use of Departure Lounge Services (n = 748 released prisoners)

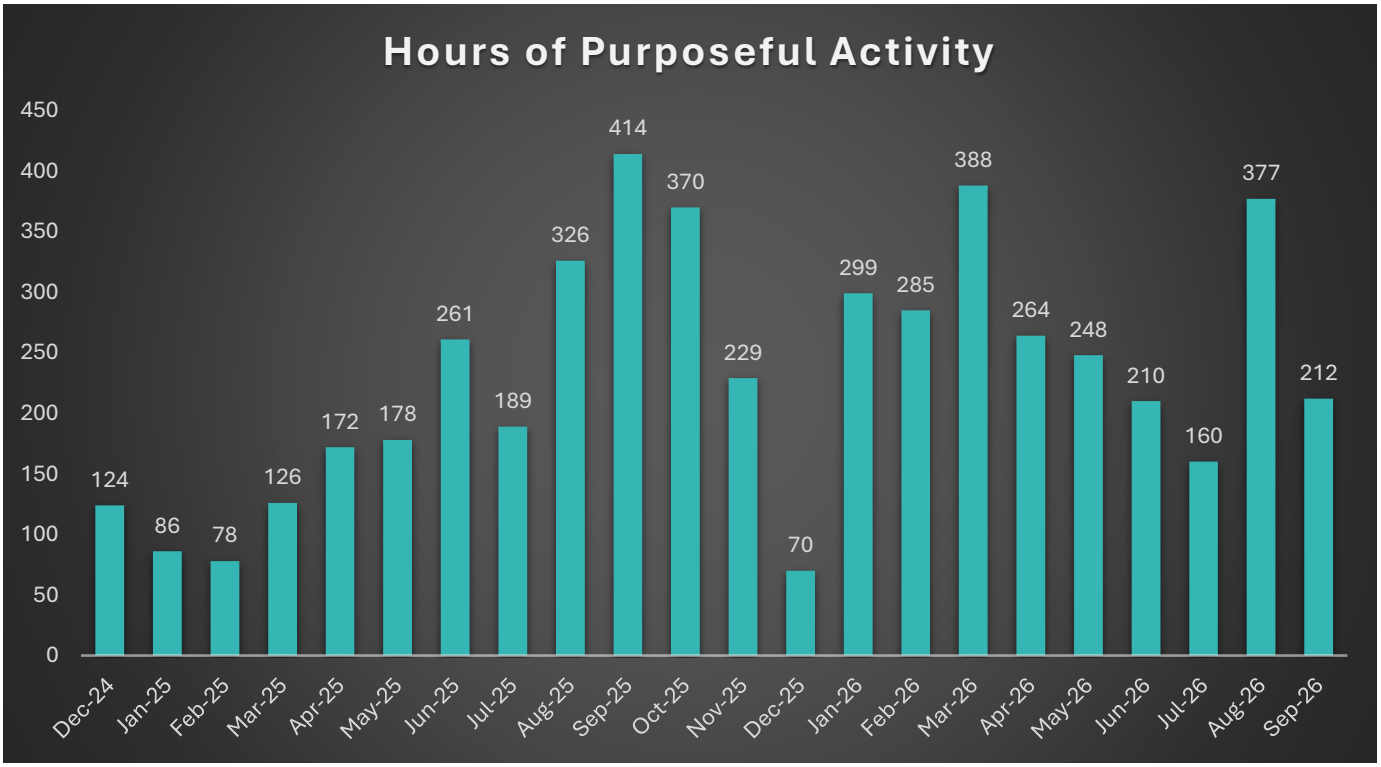


Another feature of the Departure Lounge common to BCCP's approach is that it has generated additional provision for other establishments. The Apollos charity has been able to roll out its provision of clothing to three other prisons in the region (HMPs Aylesbury, Springhill and Winchester). Once they were able to inform these establishments that the charity was actively supplying HMP Bullingdon with clothing for people being released, it was much easier to organise the same service elsewhere. Indeed, the charity (supplied with data on the uptake of donated clothing by BCCP) has recently been successful in securing lottery funding which will enable it to improve the current service to these four prisons and extend their service to the fifth prison in the South Central Region (HMP Huntercombe). The strategic housing specialist at the HMPPS region is seeking to further develop the initiative by finding a dedicated building (which would enable the departure lounge to run for longer hours) and a permanent member of staff.

Extent of activities

Many of the activities developed by the project are informal and have become integrated into the fabric of HMP Bullingdon's regime; as such their usage is not always formally recorded. However, over the last one – two years, the project has invested time in recording a wide range of activities. The project workers supplied information correct on 30 September 2026 showing the number of purposeful hours of activity the project has delivered over the last two years.

Figure 2 Hours of Purposeful Activity



The extent of this provision has continued to grow steadily from an average of 179 hours per month in the first one year (Oct 24 – Sep 25) period to 259 hours monthly in the most recent year (Oct 25–Sep 26).

As we have stated, the range of provision varies considerably and more than one interviewee commented on the added benefits of many of the BCCP-generated activities:

> *"There is an important distinction between work and education activities provided by the prison service, and the purposeful activities that Bullingdon Community Connections have enabled. In the ISFL garden the therapeutic features that develop through the men having agency in their own decision making is one of the most rewarding elements that can stimulate transformation. It is the decision by the individual to make an active choice that facilitates change"*

Funding generated

BCCP has been enormously successful in raising funds for purposeful activities in a range of different ways.

- A number of charitable organisations have raised funds to be able to deliver services at HMP Bullingdon. Nine different organisations succeeded in raising a total of **£126,695**.
- The funding raised by the BCCP steering group and administered by OCVA has supported thirteen different initiatives for a total of **£18,621**. In many cases, charities or volunteers provided their services for free with the project merely meeting travel expenses.

- His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service recognised the value of BCCP and devolved **£20,000** funding to help support a total of four initiatives[4].
- BCCP supported the Apollos charity in their successful funding bid to the Lottery to secure **£20,000** to enhance their provision of clothing to all five prisons in the region.
- Many charities also donated their time and equipment for free.

The total of funding leveraged to date is: **£185,316.**

[4] Boats not Bars, Cherwell Collective Cookery Workshops, Marlow & Fulham Rowing Relay. Old Fire Station Mural Project & Oxford United in the Community.

Chapter 4: Stakeholder and prisoner views

Introduction

This chapter shares the key views of a wide range of stakeholders collected throughout the course of the evaluation. These include a series of semi-structured interviews with a small number (five) of primary stakeholders (all members of the BCCP steering group) at the beginning, middle and end of the pilot period.

In addition to the primary stakeholders, the evaluator conducted interviews with 38 other individuals, ten of whom worked for the prison, five for the probation service and twenty three for other organisations. These interviews focused on the interviewee's interaction with the project, their views of the effectiveness of the project and any recommendations for improving its operation.

In addition to these interviews, the evaluator analysed the views of the 32 people from sixteen different organisations who have facilitated purposeful activities in HMP Bullingdon and who completed the survey at the community event that BCCP held in October 2026. The views from these surveys are integrated into the findings from the interviews which are set out below.

The last section of this chapter shares feedback from 248 people in prison on thirteen different BCCP-initiated activities in which they have participated.

Primary stakeholder interviewees

The primary interviewees all held a shared opinion that the project had been successful and indeed more successful than had originally been anticipated. They agreed that the original purpose of the project was to help released prisoners resettle in their local communities (within Oxfordshire) by putting them in touch with a range of community organisations to meet their individual needs, but acknowledged that the change of focus formally agreed after the submission of the interim report was appropriate and resulted in an accurate description of the project as it had evolved. As previously outlined, this evolution expanded the project's focus to include two other objectives which were regarded by these interviewees as equally important to that of supporting individual resettlement:

1. Initiating new projects and partnerships between the community and prison to open up opportunities for purposeful activity and individual support.
2. Facilitating effective working: assisting services to navigate the best route to delivery through introductions, connections, system navigation, information-giving and support for colleagues and partners

Some interviewees described initial concern that it had proved difficult to deliver fully on the individual resettlement objective, while acknowledging that the organic evolution of the project which had resulted in the creation of so many new services and a much better co-ordinated pre-

release and resettlement service had surpassed their expectations of the impact of an initially one-worker project. After two years it was clear to the steering group that one worker could not continue to manage the extensive growth and popularity of the project. This led to the proposal for a community based worker to support the project. Interviewees also talked of being increasingly impressed by the support given to the project by the prison governor and senior leadership team which they felt had made a big difference in embedding the work of the pilot within HMP Bullingdon's operational structures.

Since November 2025, the steering group has focused on cementing the project's funding for the immediate future. In this it has been successful with the prison committing to fund the prison-based BCCP worker post and the steering group securing funds to fund the community-based worker to the end of 2027 with additional funding to support community groups wishing to provide services in the prison. As one of HMP Bullingdon's senior management team said in interview:

> *"Community Connections has proved so valuable to us that the prison has decided to fund the post itself."*

Other stakeholder views

The other 38 stakeholders interviewed all had direct contact with the project and were universally positive in their assessment, praising many aspects of the project and almost never finding fault. Many of this group had experience of working in or with a number of different prison establishments and were consequently well-placed to make comparisons. The project was visited by a team from the Prison Reform Trust headed up by their Chief Executive (previously a No. 1 Governor) who was so impressed that she sent a congratulatory email to the project, part of which is reproduced below:

> *"It was such a pleasure to see the work in action. To say that we were impressed was an understatement. Every resettlement prison needs this provision, but the crucial bit is not the design but the attitude. The project worker is the epitome of the 'hidden hero' and it was so obvious that he is well regarded and respected in Bullingdon."*

Interviewees identified ten key strengths of the project discussed in turn below. Each strength is illustrated with direct quotes from these interviews.

The right skills for the job

The current project was run for the first two years by a lone worker, so it was natural for interviewees to frequently equate the positive impact of the project with the worker's individual qualities. The project worker was considered by all to have a personality and skill set which aligned very well with the project's needs. The most common attributes highlighted were the worker's:

Passion, energy and commitment to the role

"He is like a Duracell bunny, keeps going and gets so many things off the ground. It's easy to get ground down and so many prison initiatives just die off before they really get started."

His reliability, industriousness and general tenacity

"It really takes someone's job to make it happen. Because it's new, without someone that owns it and makes it work. He owns the initiative & makes it work It's such a labyrinthine system without someone to help you navigate it."

Ability to make and maintain positive relationships with prisoners, prison staff and outside agencies

"Everything he does helps to make us more effective. When he has been taking me round, I've seen how well he is respected by everyone at every level of staff and by prisoners. Approachable and so empathetic, yes he's an officer but he can do what the prison service is supposed to do in terms of understanding someone's journey and helping them resettle. He has the emotional intelligence to pick up what is going on in terms of change – he doesn't just wade in, he talks and listens. The frontline staff love him, it is not just what he can do for us, he is such a nice guy and so approachable by everyone."

An understanding of prison culture and how to engage different people in a range of initiatives.

"It's always about getting the best service for the men, it's never about him, he's always keen to praise every contribution by anyone else. He's very good at engaging people in a new initiative and taking them with him"

A uniformed member of staff

There was agreement that it was important that the prison-based worker was a uniformed officer. A number of key benefits were identified; in addition to a clear understanding of HMP Bullingdon's culture and procedures, uniformed staff hold more credibility when negotiating and arranging access to the prison by external organisations in terms of ensuring that security protocols are fully observed and security officers involved in approving events and services. The fact that the co-ordinator had worked on a wing in Bullingdon for several years and was well known to and, critically, well-respected by, both prisoners and staff proved invaluable.

A single point of contact

Many interviewees talked about how useful it was to have a reliable single point of contact at HMP Bullingdon to progress work – both group activities and individual casework. Several described the communication problems they had experienced as a community organisation at other establishments without this facility.

"The worker has been amazing at facilitating contact with case managers, which was a real problem."

"He's our point of contact for all sorts of enquiries – is someone still in prison, does the prisoner know that someone will be meeting them on release?"

"The worker has been 'our best friend' in the prison. He's identified many of our referrals. Not only is he great at sharing information (appropriately) but he's equally good at preventing duplication."

"Because of the project we have ended up working with more partners, we have better relationships with those partners and we are looking after them better, not something we've always been able to do."

"The Bullingdon Community Connections project highlights the important of local community groups and providers, and the value they bring when they are supported to work together with their local prison. We facilitate sessions in over 50 different secure settings and prisons in UK, and this project has proven how having an allocated staff champion is a huge factor in the success and smooth-running of purposeful activities."

Making the system work

Another facet of the role highly valued by both community organisations and prison staff was the prison-based worker's ability to co-ordinate and facilitate, often to unblock relatively minor but fundamental obstacles. The worker mainly achieved this by simply going and talking to different parties instead of relying on sending an email. Interviewees provided literally dozens of examples of this kind of work.

"He acts as a bridge between the prison service and the healthcare service, booking rooms, organising equipment. Outside training providers require a member of prison staff in the training room. These are typically not available so he volunteers and the training can go ahead."

"He has facilitated things like key training which we spent ages trying to organise."

"He organises the prison to do what they are supposed to do."

Interviewees also emphasised that the project has consistently benefited all prisoners, not just those who are to be released locally in the near future, but those serving much longer sentences too.

A catalyst and kickstarter

As readers can see from the long list of new initiatives at Appendix One, the project workers have been very successful at establishing new services and initiatives.

"He contacted us initially and helped got the whole garden project off the ground."

"He just called me up and three weeks later, I visited a prison for the first time and was teaching origami."

"The Departure Lounge wouldn't be possible without him. Although the resettlement manager and myself are supporting him, we wouldn't have time to make it happen. But the Community Connections worker is leading."

Linking inside and out

Linking the community and the prison was obviously the driver for the whole project and interviewees were very clear that the first worker prioritised this work. The work of the project has also been strengthened significantly by the addition of a second community-based worker (hosted by OCVA) since November 2024.

In addition to expanding the range of community organisations providing services in the community, both workers have developed into an effective team, working in parallel to encourage and support community groups to deliver services in the prison, and effectively covering each other's primary duties when necessary. This has meant that many regular activities within the prison now run without interruption.

The greater involvement of OCVA in the project through the day-to-day management of the community-based worker has substantially increased the level of support provided to third sector organisations working in the prison.

The development of a two-worker team has also resulted in a much more equal partnership between the prison and OCVA.

"We have gone from bringing voluntary organisations into the prison between to advancing how the prison and voluntary sector work together".

"One of the things that stood out was their embracing of the community connection. We normally work with local prisons but Bullingdon understands that importance of community connection throughout their sentence. The worker is the manifestation of that concept."

"He has overcome the perception that it's hard for outside agencies to come in. As long as you have a [worker's name] to facilitate it, it's not that hard."

"The project has worked both inside-out and outside-in. Not only are prisoners much more connected to their local community but we as a prison are more connected."

"I've been running and delivering BNB since 2019, and it's astounding that Bullingdon is the only prison (that I work in) which has this level of support for purposeful activities and community engagement. It should be everywhere!"

In the last year, the project has been increasingly successful at building a network of community providers interested in providing a service to people in prison in HMP Bullingdon and, sometimes, on their release. This network was consolidated by the BCCP team at the Modern Art Oxford engagement and consultation event held in October 2026, which was attended by 34 participants from 21 community organisations.

> *"There was so much energy and enthusiasm. And one more "e" word: I came away thinking how EFFECTIVE Bullingdon Community Connections is! Both in terms of the benefits that it provides, but also in the way that it delivers them. There are so many obstacles and frictions to overcome to get a Voluntary Sector partner into the prison. But you are managing to do it. And they're not all delivering knitting projects! Some of them are big, audacious and creative ideas!"*

One interesting finding from the community providers survey (distributed ahead of this event) was that they said their understanding of the criminal justice system, particularly prisons, had gone up from an average of 3.43 (on a scale from 1-9) before becoming involved with BCCP to an average of 6.84 afterwards.

Work with officers

It is obviously impossible for the prison-based project worker to undertake one-to-one resettlement work with all Bullingdon's prisoners. He has therefore invested considerable time and effort working with prison staff responsible for keyworking. He has developed training materials and been key in creating a directory of both community services and different prison teams. He also provides regular briefing and training sessions for the large numbers of new officers as part of their induction into the work of HMP Bullingdon:

> *"Interestingly, it's even harder to join up the internal dots than the community dots."*

> *"The benefit for staff has been huge, they now have someone to talk to about an individual prisoner's needs and to get advice and support. It helps them do the resettlement part of the job when they are under so much pressure."*

Networking and spreading opportunities

As the project has progressed, the workers have developed a core approach of encouraging the network of supportive services to grow organically. They routinely encourage different organisations to make direct contact with each other, often resulting in new services or enhanced referral routes.

> *"Our department was quite isolated, BCCP has widened their perspectives and helped them see the range of activities in the prison and the access to new community resources."*

"They are always making everyone aware of the range of helping services, both men in prison and staff. I went to the first Men without Visits day and learnt about lots of new community resources."

BCCP has not limited its work to current prisoners and has worked closely with the local probation approved premises. The workers have been instrumental in improving referral processes so that workers can visit prospective residents pre-release and in facilitating residents' access to a wide range of community support services.

"They have bridged the gap between prison and coming to us – we often can't make any referrals until someone has been released. Now people are coming out to a structured regime with things to do, rather than getting bored and disengaging."

Seeding a positive culture

The evaluator felt that he detected a change in prison culture from his regular conversations with the project workers during this fourth phase of the project. He asked interviewees whether there had been a change in the willingness of prison staff to work with community organisations or to embrace new initiatives. Many interviewees concurred and this change in culture has become increasingly evident over the last year (described as the fifth phase of the project earlier in this report):

"Opportunities for men both inside and on release have really increased. He keeps raising the overall standard of the services we can deliver and you can tell people listen properly when he has a new idea."

"The culture has definitely changed to being more positive. I think it's true for prisoners too; if people engage more inside, then that change of mindset makes them more likely to engage in help on release."

"I think the huge range of new and very visible activities has helped staff develop a different attitude to the men. Instead of just seeing them as men who need supervising and locking up, they have had the chance to see them as ordinary human beings in quite different but normal settings."

"Pilot fatigue has just not applied to this project. It has already gone mainstream, staff have been inspired to do things/try things themselves."

"The project has really sparked positivity, when we are so busy managing the population, our main priority is finding cells for everyone. We lose track of rehabilitation, safety and security become our primary business. The focus on the individual needs of the men has been kept alive by the worker and the project."

"People smile about it, people feel good that we have got this off the ground ourselves. People feel proud about it. This little pocket of brilliance when everything else is so different."

"It has been a real success story. I can honestly say I haven't seen any downsides."

One member of the prison's senior management team talked about the challenges of working in an over-stretched and under-resourced prison service and how the achievements of BCCP has been a continuous source of positive energy for staff:

"We spend all our time trying to fix what has gone wrong, so to be walking round the prison and seeing the mural, or men playing chess or in the garden makes a huge difference. We are a local prison with a huge turnover of men so we don't see big transformational impacts here but if we can send everyone out with a little enhancement to their life, that is a big achievement for us all."

Disseminating the BCCP approach

We have already discussed how the project's work has been the stimulus to the development of similar initiatives at other prison establishments with both the community days for isolated prisoners and clothing provision for people being released exported to other prisons. However, in addition to this organic dissemination, BCCP and its steering group have also worked hard at encouraging the prison service to consider adopting the project model both regionally and nationally. In addition to numerous formal and informal discussions with senior HMPPS managers at a regional and national level, the project hosted a seminar attended by 90 senior level HMPPS participants sponsored and introduced by the lead non-executive on the HMPPS Board. In June 2026 the community project worker made a formal presentation to an HMPPS changemakers event, and in September 2026 a presentation was made to the Prison Reform Trust Emerging Leaders course. These presentations set out the model and its critical success factors.

Concerns

Interviewees discussed concerns about three issues. The most significant one, raised by a number of community organisations, was that despite the project workers' best efforts, men released from prison had not turned up as arranged.

"The worker has tried very hard, I have spoken to four or five people on pre-release video, but they haven't turned up. The worker gave a really good picture of our service and was willing to meet them in the community but..."

"We have had a couple of referrals direct from the worker but none has come to fruition yet."

The second issue raised by a number of interviews was simply the scale of unmet need. These interviewees discussed the challenges in providing purposeful activities to such a large group of people in prison, many of whom were only at HMP Bullingdon for a few weeks or months. The limitation on the length of time prisoners were out of their cells and the number of available work

spaces also sometimes curtailed opportunities. However, in the summer of 2026, the prison was able to extend the hours of its daily regime and has been innovative at finding new locations to hold events with two wings now hosting mini-library spaces in addition to the main library.

Finally, there was some concern that although the project increasingly flourished as an equal partnership between HMP Bullingdon and OCVA, it is the prison which benefits most (mainly because prisoners are resettled across a wide geographical area with a minority returning to Oxfordshire). This comment was not intended as a criticism but as an important reminder both for the current project and any others replicated in other areas that the role of a local voluntary sector infrastructure organisation is critical to the project's success and requires resourcing from project funds.

Participant feedback

As we stated earlier, over the last eighteen months the project has started to collect and collate feedback from prison participants on a range of different activities on an increasingly regular basis. The BCCP workers have shared feedback from 248 individuals attending thirteen different activities which has been evaluated for this report.

Most of the feedback focuses on participants' experience of a particular activity – cooking, chess, art, etc. – and therefore the detail of that feedback is of more interest to the activity providers rather than for the readers of this report.

However, several feedback exercises asked participants to share any benefits they derived from getting involved and four main themes emerged:

1. the benefits to mental health;
2. the chance to be less isolated and mix with others;
3. the opportunity to do "normal things" and be treated as a human being rather than a prisoner; and
4. the chance to get to know prison staff and improve relationships.

All four themes are illustrated with direct quotes from participants below; sometimes participants derived many benefits from participating in one activity.

> *"Really good for the mind. I think there should be more stuff like this as really good for prisoner and for people like myself who have ADHD. I'm surprised how much it did help as I'm waiting for trial. Can I do more ?"* (feedback on Brookes University session run by law students).
>
> *"I think the day went really well and I'm enjoying the boats not bars activity. It has been a massive help in my confidence and mental health, we should do this more often. Thank you."* *(feedback on rowing session, delivered by Boats, not Bar).*
>
> *"I enjoyed the art class, as it allowed me to process emotions I have struggled with recently"* (feedback on art classes delivered by Modern Art Oxford).

"I've learnt self-control and my own ability to challenge myself and go further" (feedback on rowing course, delivered by Boats, not Bar).

"I was able to express myself, learn new skills and meet new people" (feedback on creative lyric writing, music production and self-expression course delivered by Creative Reset Collective).

"Thank you so much for this tournament. It was the best day here since I came here in April, it helped me a lot because I have depression and also helps me to strengthen my relationships with staff." (feedback on football tournament delivered by Oxford United).

"Just being in a happy environment. Being creative helps massively." (feedback on session delivered by the Gardens, Libraries & Museums department of the University of Oxford).

"I felt a strong sense of joy from participating, it felt like I had my liberation again which is a huge compliment to the event organisers. For prolonged periods I did forget that I was in prison and all the worries that come with it, prison seem to temporarily evaporate. I do believe the tournament had a bonding effect between the staff and the prisoners; with both realising that the other counter part aren't so different after all and that there is more that brings us together than that which pulls us apart, and once you take of the uniforms and keys we are all the same." (feedback on football tournament delivered by Oxford United).

"It gave me knowledge and helps my mental health feeling included and talking to normal people as opposed to other inmates." (feedback on community day).

"It lifted my mood a lot, because it gave me purpose to get up every day. Being able to see the progress of it, seeing it go up on the walls, you feel a sense of pride. And now, just going down to F Wing every day, I'm like: 'Us boys have put in a good bit of work here'. It lifts your spirits." (feedback from a man involved in painting the mural facilitated by the Old Fire Station).

"I fervently enjoyed it. It is incredible for mental health, to be able to talk to people from outside the prison about things that aren't all prison related is a breath of fresh air. It is also a great chance to network and actually talk to many of the people that can help you within the prison too. Everyone there is so friendly and helpful, you almost feel like you're not in prison for a short time." (feedback on community day).

Having shared the views of a wide range of stakeholders and the feedback from people in prison themselves, we now move to the final chapter which summarises the key findings and sets out a short template for prisons and organisations considering replicating the successes of BCCP.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Replication

Conclusions

The overall finding from this evaluation is clear; the Bullingdon Community Connections Pilot project has been overwhelmingly successful.

In particular, the pilot has:

- Substantially increased the range of support services available to prisoners at HMP Bullingdon.
- Engaged many more community organisations (of all sizes) in the work of the prison.
- Built an effective partnership between OCVA and the prison senior management team.
- Developed a network for community organisations wishing to provide services to people in prison.
- Improved the co-ordination of many key mechanisms and processes, particularly those focused on resettlement.
- Linked the prison more closely with the Oxfordshire community within which it sits.
- Leveraged a significant amount of additional funding and resources for a wide range of projects and services.
- Generated a feeling of positivity among prison staff and community organisations that it is possible to initiate and maintain a range of positive activities within HMP Bullingdon.
- Disseminated its findings and secured the interest of both HMPPS and many individual establishments in replicating the BCCP mode.

That the project has succeeded in achieving this range of outcomes during a period in which both HMP Bullingdon and the entire prison system has been under-resourced and has faced continuously growing demands is remarkable to say the least.

Replication

The overall aspiration for the Community Connections project has always been to test and prove an effective concept for enhancing the involvement of community organisations in prisoners' resettlement journeys (both while incarcerated and on release). The current model has been tried and tested over a four year period and has succeeded in becoming such an integral part of the prison regime that successive governors at HMP Bullingdon have committed to fund the prison-based worker out of their own budgets going forward.

There has also been considerable interest from both the central and regional management of HMPPS and a number of individual prison establishments. There is a strong consensus among the HMP Bullingdon senior management team, the BCCP Steering Group and the evaluator that the impact of the project is to a large extent attributable to the fact that it has been owned by the prison

from the start and that it has been co-created to meet the particular needs of HMP Bullingdon and has evolved to address new challenges such as the large remand population.

Senior management team members interviewed over the last four years have been unanimous that a formal centralised HMPPS-imposed model is unlikely to have the same level of success and that individual establishments should build on the core principles of the model to develop an approach that works for their institution.

Another critical aspect to a successful partnership delivering a prison community connections project is to find a suitable voluntary sector infrastructure organisation to host the community component and facilitate access to a wide range of community organisations. There is a network of voluntary sector infrastructure support organisations all over the UK but these sorts of organisation, like the vast majority of charities, have found it increasingly difficult to source funding since the "austerity years" started and it is important to ensure that their costs are recognised in any funding bid.

In order to support any prisons wishing to develop their own community connections initiative, the project workers, steering group, community providers and evaluator have developed the short template on the following page.

Key learning points for developing a prison community connections project

Pre-Launch

- Invest in a full-time officer who will not be asked to cover other duties.
- A uniformed officer will be best place to navigate prison systems, understand security protocols etc.
- Recruit someone who wants the job and has good interpersonal skills.
- Before launch, develop a partnership with a key local voluntary sector infrastructure group which is a hub for local charities.
- Create a small pot of money so providers/volunteers travel expenses can be met.

Initial phase

- Worker to split working week between prison and community. It's important to be visible in the establishment and to go and talk in person with voluntary sector providers to build relationships.
- Research HMPPS and voluntary sector potential funding pots. Even small amounts of funding can facilitate the delivery of much provision.
- Talk to colleagues about possible venues for provision (library, gym and any spaces which are sometimes unused).
- Ask people in prison what they want or need, try out ideas with them first and recruit redbands/orderlies/peer workers & mentors to support.

Early delivery

- Work may need to be hands on and pro-active in facilitating security approval, collect providers from gate, key training, being present during session. (Look to pass on these duties at later stages to create time to develop new activities).
- Consider holding a community fair inviting in lots of charities to a half day at the prison to build their confidence at working within prison walls and raise profile of the project.
- Ask early providers for ideas for others, encourage them to suggest ideas and develop partnerships.

Ongoing delivery

Stay positive, persevere, some ultimately very successful projects take a long time to get off the ground, plant many seeds in the knowledge that not all will come to fruition. The more activities that happen, the more colleagues will support and get involved.

Key points for providers

- Be patient and persevere, be happy with little wins. It takes time to win trust.

- Allow 45 minutes between arrival and session start. Check you had your ID and the prison worker's number before leaving. Remember you can't take your phone in, so download anything you need beforehand.
- Be flexible, no day is predictable in prison.
- Go in with an open mind, talk to prisoners like anyone else, try not to judge and don't ask about people's offences.
- Remember that not everyone can read and write easily and not everyone's first language is English.
- Get ideas from prisoners for future sessions.
- Remember that prison regimes are very limited at the moment, your contribution is bound to be appreciated.

Appendix One – Overview of purposeful activities generated by BCCP

This appendix is split into three sections:

1. The first lists the nineteen different initiatives that were developed by BCCP since its inception and continue to be delivered on a constant or regular basis.
2. The second sets out the initiatives developed by BCCP which were standalone initiatives.
3. The third lists initiatives which have been planned and will be delivered between October 2026 to March 2027.

Table One – Recurrent Initiatives

Sing Inside Workshops

Oxford University music students in this charity provide singing workshops

- Four half-day workshops between September 25 and January 26
- Four half-day workshops started in May 26 and finished in August 2026
- Numbers of attendees for the choral workshops averages 20

Retirement Club/ Older Prisoners Group

A volunteer provides workshops for older people, The volunteer is key trained and vetted.

- Fortnightly sessions with activities varying from quizzes to art sessions. The average attendance of the sessions is 10 men.

ISFL Garden project

BCCP Initiated large full-scale collaboration between the prison, PACT, and Nature Effect CIC. The multifaceted project aims to give men on the incentivised substance-free living spur an opportunity to build and maintain the green space. The greenspace is also accessed by those men who are at risk of self-harm and suicide, and those located in the segregation unit.

Nature Effect:

- designed a garden to occupy a space in between two wings with seasonal plants, herbs and vegetables
- the aim is also to connect men to green spaces and organisations (employment and voluntary) in the community.
- Nature Effect have also designed and built a greenspace in the visits centre to give activities to children and families before their visits
- BCC also facilitated multiple visits from Oxford City Farms and Restore to go onto the Arncott and assisted Drug Strategy Governor to support the organisations and groups in the garden itself

This project is now lead by the Drug Strategy Governor

Prison Phoenix Trust

Facilitated link with this Yoga and Meditation charity

- Completed 18 mornings comprising of 36 sessions of yoga. This was spilt up into three sets of six weeks and split funding between HMP Bullingdon and Community Connections OCVA fund.
- Average attendance of 6-8 men every session. Great uptake for the yoga as it is run on the wings
- First set of 26/27 workshops ongoing

Men Without Visits (Quarterly Community Days)

Working in partnership with Peer-Support Network and PACT: Charity Fairs in the prison

- 10 -12 support organisations send volunteers who engage with prisoners
- 30-40 men attend and feedback from the men, external organisations, and the prison has been excellent.

HMP Bullingdon and Oxford Brookes University Partnership

Link with Department of Law and Criminology to increase understanding of prisons. Feedback from Brookes Law Department is that this experience as made a great difference for students. Various activities facilitated:

- One student now regularly volunteers on the Boats Not Bars course
- 8 students have played a football match in the prison against the men
- 2 celebration events
- Basketball match
- Brookes' students have been invited to all Community Days.
- Partnership for 26/27 on going.

Orientation sessions with new keyholding Staff

Community Connections Officer gives 90-minute training session each week to every Prison Officer who has completed their training focussed on:

- Resettlement pathways
- Interdepartmental and external sources of support for prisoners
- On-going support for key working Prison Officers regarding local resources.

Departure Lounge

Large scale project working in partnership with the Prison Employment Lead (PEL) and Pre-Release Team SPO to offer support and advice immediately on release in the Visitors Centre. Opened in September 2024.

- Centre set up with clothes, toiletries, signposting information, phones, and charging outlets to support men being released. This service focusses on simple support that is impactful and human focused
- Three volunteers who are vetted and working in the DL around 2 times a month each. Programmes and Activities staff assist when able. Several charities also send volunteers on a regular basic: Connections Support; Catch-22 ; local Bicester funeral directors; Citizen's Advice
- External collaborators: Oxford Food Hub, Community Dental Services, Stop for Life, Emmaus, Release Mates, SOFEA, Probation, Connections Support, PACT, Apollos, Citizens Advice.

Working with the Strategic Housing Lead, to write a business plan for 15-20 hours a week paid position.

Aston and James:

Clothing charity

- Donation of 100 coats in late 2025 to the prison that will be divided up between the DL and reception. This is the third year HMP Bullingdon have received coats from the clothing drive.

Apollos

Clothing charity in Witney

- Now regularly delivering clothes to the DL and reception.
- They are also donating shoes to the prison, men in healthcare unit clean the shoes, are paid to do so, and these are given out by reception for releases

Oxford University Criminology Students

Supporting students and their lecturer

- to run a book discussion with a variety of prisoners
- inviting opportunities for students to volunteer and be more involved
- Compact document created to ensure safety of students and promote their understanding of HMP Bullingdon

Bullingdon Chess Club

Started September 2023 through BCCP links.

- 22 men attended the first Bullingdon Chess Group and this enthusiasm has continued throughout
- The Chess Club now meets once every two weeks
- Chess puzzles incorporated into in-cell laptops

Origami Club

Started in partnership with Library manager and supported by resources from the British Origami Society (BOS)

- Run by an origami volunteer who teaches at local Chipping Norton schools
- The club has average 8-12 prisoners per fortnightly session

Boats Not Bars

The purpose of this programme is to provide rowing training and facilitate contact with rowing gyms outside prisons to provide through the gate support.

- Eight sessions completed as of April 2026.
- A Brookes student from Marlow rowing club to assists and a race/relay with the community club was completed
- Three prisoners have connected with BNB after release and now row on the Thames
- Workshops planned for 26/27

Gardens, Libraries, and Museums (GLAM)

Oxford University project already in Bullingdon and needing help navigating regime hurdles. Working with Librarian

- GLAM outreach worker supported by BCC and key training facilitated
- Group workshops and a 6 week series of 'In the Frame' workshops continue
- Workshops planned for 26/27. This has been changed from a six week to a four week course.

Approved premise Clarks House

Premises in Oxford who needed better access to prisoners being released into the approved premises. This project is on-going, having cleared a logjam in terms of the prison's communication with the AP.

- Clarks House staff continue to come into the prison to visit men who are allocated to the AP after release
- AP workers are now keyholders and can use wing office to see men and connect with the pre-release team
- Introductions made to band of Brothers, GLAM, and Restore and others

Feedback from staff at AP regarding the links to the prison made through our project is excellent.

New Bridge Foundation

A charity which connects people in prison with volunteer befrienders through regular letters and visits, reducing isolation, supporting emotional wellbeing, and helping individuals maintain a positive connection with the outside world.

- Attended the Men's Social Visits in January 2025.
- Now invited to all Community Days every quarter to link with men

Marlow and Fulham Rowing relay

In collaboration with the gym

- a morning on the 16th July 26 of rowing relay between the Boats not Bars graduates and Marlow rowing club. This has been repeated with a crossfit inspired session
- Wanting to repeat the relay and waiting for dates.

Cherwell Collective Cookery Workshops

A local charity promoting healthy cooking

- 8 cooking sessions delivered which were enthusiastically received by the men
- Many said they would now use community larders – having previously been reluctant
- Due to the feedback and successful delivery, the Head of Education, Learning, and Skills has agreed to fund future courses. Estimate late 2026 start.

Table Two – Historic or One off Events

Modern Art Oxford:

This was a one-off whilst Bullingdon Art Teacher vacancy continued, arranged through BCC contact with MAO

- Three-day art workshops Assisting the prison by providing creativity workshops whilst the art teacher vacancy continues. Following the 'tester model' of three sessions.
- Fantastic feedback collected.

Onwards and Upwards

Link with London charity XO

- Supporting sponsored bike ride where 120 riders raising money for London charity XO Bikes stopped at the Departure Lounge on the 08/05/2026
- Promoting Ged Fed Coffee van involved and volunteer. at the DL to support the event

Football Community Day

In collaboration with the gym and charities concerned.

- Successful day event 20th August 2025. 4 prisoner teams, 1 staff team, and a community team took part in an all-day tournament
- Organisations that took part were Emmaus, Narcotics Anonymous, Berkshire Fire and Rescue, Oxford Health, Fulham Reach Boat Club, and Oxford United in the Community. Nai's House and Browns Community Services were also in attendance
- Oxford United in the Community coaches held a staff vs workshops graduates match on the 6/11/25 resulting in a 3:1 victory to the prisoners. Staff newsletter write up completed, images sent to those from the community, feedback collated.

The plan is for this to be a recurring event, perhaps once a year.

Old Fire Station Mural Project.

OFS is a local arts charity with a focus on reaching all sectors of the community.

- BCC negotiated with OFS to create a 70 x 6 ft mural on the upper walkway. This co-production project with Bullingdon men at its centre involved working with many internal and external stakeholders.
- The mural on the upper walkway is complete. The result is a vivid and colourful mural that the men involve in its creation are proud to have been a part of the project . Mural entered into the Koestler Art's competition.
- Narrative Evaluation completed by Old Fire Station, demonstrating the level of pride in the achievement experienced by the men.

The Gatehouse

Local drop in centre for homeless people. A member of staff heads the Lived-Experience-Advisory- Forum LEAF and assists men with finding accommodation.

- BCC introduced her to Ingeus, Reconnect, and the pre-release team.
- Monica's vetting was declined- I have supported her through this decision from SSCL. She will re-apply in a year and I will support her.
- Andrew from Ingeus taking over contact and linking Monica to service users.

Gary Little Comedy Workshop

Gary Little is a comedian from Glasgow and has run stand-up workshops in Scottish prisons.

- Organised 5th May 26 in collaboration with the library. Within this workshop of ten prisoners, we are concentrating on storytelling and presentation skills.
- 8 men attended the workshop that went on from 9am-2pm. Fantastic feedback from the men who attended, and they would all come again.

Here 2 Help Mentors Training

Here to Help Mentors are a group of prisoners who are trained to support new prisoners with information and advice

- Organised for 'Make Every Contact Count' MECC training from Oxfordshire County Council to deliver training for Here 2 Help mentors in motivational interviewing techniques in 2023 and 2024.

Kestrel Theatre.

Kestrel regularly works with prisons on drama productions.. They had funding specifically for a project in Oxfordshire working with a prison.

- Kestrel ran 4 consecutive days of workshops in digital story telling for 8 men in collaboration with the Oxford County Council library. These stories have been produced, edited, and sent out to the men's families and the DVD was sent to the men as well.

- Kestrel are keen to come back and work with the prison and the library but this will likely be later in the new year.

Armed Forces Day 25/06/2026 – pre-release team event

- Supported the pre-release team inviting different local organisations amongst our contacts to the event designed at supporting staff. Oxford United in the Community and Ged Fed Food-truck also attended.

Oxford United in the Community

Football workshops

- Football workshops completed with two sets of five-week workshops. Each set ended with a match between the men and Oxford United Legends.

Funding agreed to repeat these workshops in Autumn/Winter 026/27

Ark-t

An arts charity

- The group was contacted to deliver art activities within the prison. Their first session took place in February , forming part of the continued testing of the three-day BCC model.
- Fantastic outcomes from some men who haven't been off the wing for months.
- Could be further developed.

Storybook Dads and Mums

A Stratford Literary Festival charity

- Bedtime Story workshop to provide 10-12 prisoners a series of sessions so they can write their own stories for their families, which is then produced into a comic and sent out to loved ones.
- Workshop was promoted and organised by the library, but only four men attended.

Table Three – Forthcoming Initiatives

Oxford Literary Festival

Link with Dr. Stephen Law of OLF to arrange at least 5 speakers at Bullingdon

- Considering a mini Bullingdon Literary Festival in the New Year 2027
- OLF will use own funds to pay speakers a fee and expenses
- Dr. Law has offered sessions gratis before Christmas.

Oxford University Lifelong Learning

Working alongside the Head of Education, Skills and Work

- Two lecturers ran workshops about creative writing and reading in collaboration with the library.

- High attendance from men, 16 and 8 in two sessions.
- Two guest speakers scheduled to deliver sessions on of 6th and 7th October

Human Story Theatre (HST)

HST facilitated a forum to discuss interest in various projects and activities

- HST delivered its full set of four workshops focusing on themes of masculinity and mental health
- Further creative sessions booked weekly from 10th September for four weeks.

Nai's House Mental Health

Mental health and suicide awareness training for Here to Help and Safer Custody Representatives – in development for a long period of time.

- Nai's House delivered a six-session programme over the course of a week
- Six prisoners successfully completed the training 10.9.26
- Nai's House facilitators will return to conduct an evaluation session
- Funded by a local Trust.

Chess Event

- Building on Chess Club introduced by BCC HMP Bullingdon has been invited to participate in a national prison chess tournament on 27th October and 3rd November.
- Participants will have the opportunity to qualify for the International Prison Chess Championships.

Community Albums

A music production initiative introduced by BCC to complement the music already being taught at HMP Bullingdon

- 3-full days of facilitation and a track produced with the theme recovery – uploaded to launchpad
- Seeking new dates.

Chinnor Rugby Workshops

BCC introduced gym to Chinnor RFC

- Community coach has been approved by Security to deliver more than three visits while his vetting is being processed
- Going live on the 22nd of October with gym facilitating and Employment Lead engaging to provide employment support for men involved.

Entrepreneur Peer-Lead Group

Supporting a peer-led initiative to run a fortnightly group to show men how to create their own business and what they need to be self-employed. Awaiting dates

- The volunteer to facilitate the group is vetted.
- External speakers found by BCC who can support the group

Creative Reset Collective

Oxford based community group involved in youth projects and marginalised groups

- Three day music creation and production workshops completed on the 1st, 8th, and 15th of April, following the 'tester model' of 3 sessions
- Great feedback from men and service- momentum for future projects.
- Facilitator is vetted as of October 2026 and ready to take forward again.

Edgcott Unemployed Engagement Sessions with Oxford Brookes

- Oxford Brookes student now key trained and delivering activities with men on E-wing in parallel with the Older Prisoner Group to focus specifically on younger, unemployed men who are not currently engaged in other activities
- The sessions are two-hour blocks designed to build confidence and routine, offering mindful colouring, bingo, board games, basic arts and crafts, and similar low-barrier activities that encourage participation and social interaction.
- 10 session completed in September 2026 and attendance from 6 men who greatly appreciated the time out of cell and time to connect with others
- Looking for further dates for volunteer to enter on her own.

Lived Experience in Bullingdon

Facilitating Connections Support Charity

- To lead a lived experience talk for 2 hours to co-inside with Recovery Month. 12 men attended and the talk was a great complement to the other lived experience talks which concentrated more on abstinence and not an individual's journey
- Discussions with the volunteer regarding the delivery of a joint staff and prisoner workshop to promote awareness of "the small things" that contribute to a positive environment and explore how everyday interactions influence culture and how this, in turn, affects the cycle of reoffending.
- Two half day workshops scheduled for October in, partnership with two different prison departments (Safer Custody and Drug Strategy).

Jessies Art Shed

- Two sessions of creative making on one day, offered once a week, over four weeks, will provide men the opportunity try new techniques and develop their work between sessions.

Fusion Arts

- Six two-hour sessions exploring creative techniques including collagraphy – creating images from sunlight

Author, Author – Caper Books

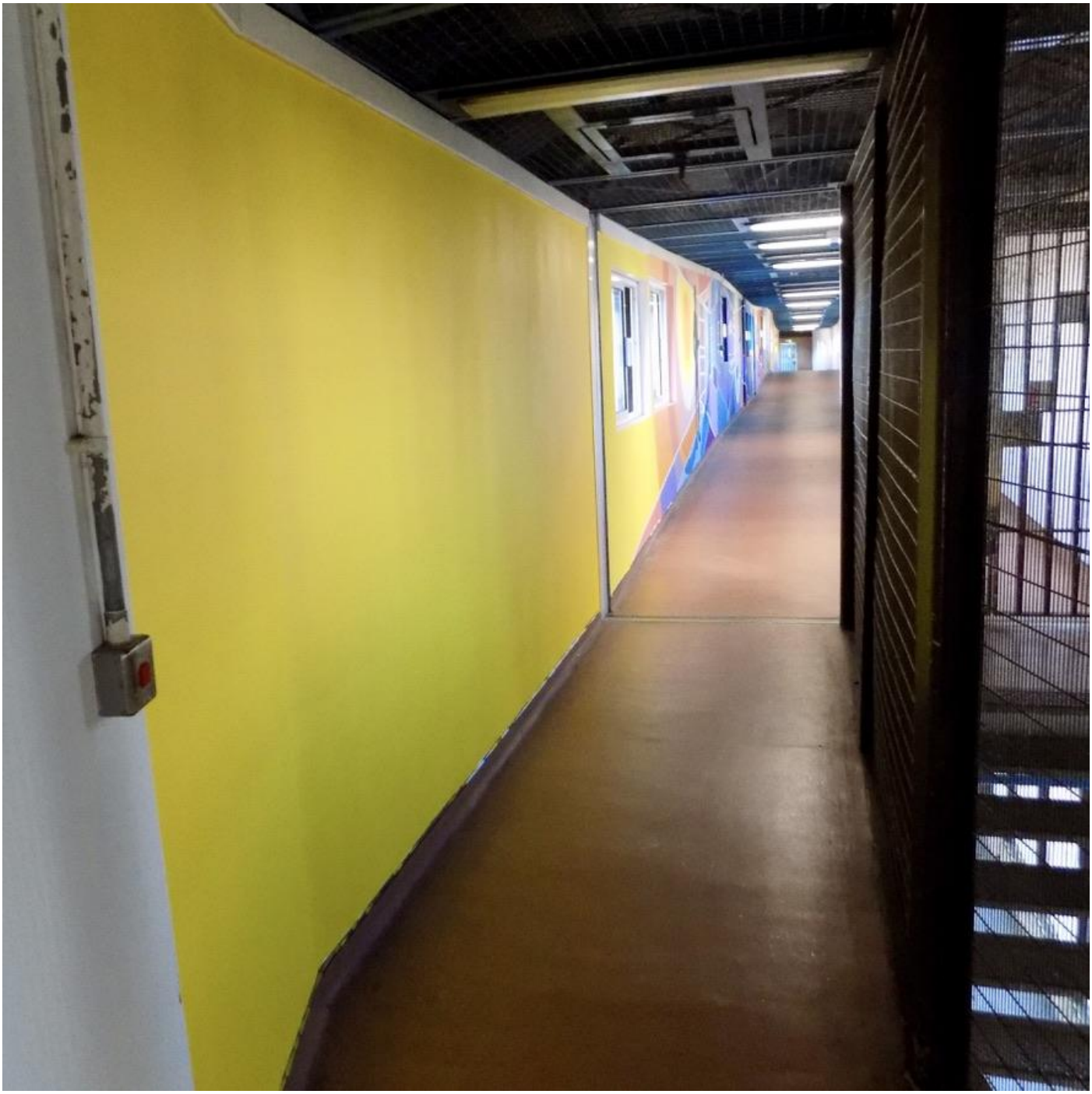
- Opportunity for men to read books provided by best-selling local Oxfordshire authors, then meet with the writers to discuss their stories, and to develop their own storytelling.

Capturing Movement – Summertown Arts

- Progressing from observing dance & movement, to capturing their impressions in dynamic drawings, to throwing their own moves for others to portray in their own illustrations. (There is the opportunity for those images to be part of an exhibition being curated by Summertown Arts in spring 2027)

Appendix Two – The Mural

As you leave Reception and walk towards Induction



You move from outside...



To inside



Alone with your thoughts



But there are others here



To help carry the load



To listen,



To exercise with,



To help you set goals,



And stretch your mind.



So you can paint a better picture of yourself.

