

Entrepreneur prisoners bid to turn back on crime

- prisoners compete for funding from business leaders in 'Dragons' Den'-style event
- new scheme gives prisoners skills to start their own businesses on release to cut crime
- figures show offenders who get a job after prison significantly less likely to reoffend

Proposals that were put before the attendees included a graphic design consultancy and personal fitness business, as offenders bid for start-up funding at a unique event inside HMP Thorn Cross, in Cheshire.

The 'Dragons' – comprising local entrepreneurs, the public and ex-offenders who have started their own companies – voted for their favourite plan to help get it off the ground once the prisoner is released.

The winner was announced today by Prisons Minister Damian Hinds and will receive a grant of £400 – backed by Entrepreneurs Unlocked – which will support them in getting their business off the ground upon release, helping them to stay on the straight and narrow. Runners up were awarded £300 each.

Minister for Prisons and Probation Damian Hinds said:

Getting ex-prisoners into work cuts reoffending and makes our streets safer.

Entrepreneurship drives our economy and can provide a promising path for those who are ready to turn their lives around. It is heartening to see prisoners demonstrate the skills needed to succeed in business and life.

The event, which took place in Global Entrepreneurship Week, is the culmination of a 12-week course run by charity Entrepreneurs Unlocked, which aims to give prisoners an insight into the realities of running a business.

Sessions include training in finance, marketing, sales planning and developing a product or service – providing participants with the skills they need to integrate back into society and put a life of crime behind them.

Entrepreneurs Unlocked founder David Morgan said:

The Hidden Entrepreneur event is the first of its kind to showcase the entrepreneurial talent of people in prison. We will highlight this pathway for people that not only reduces the risk of re-offending but also demonstrates the social and economic value of

entrepreneurship.

I am grateful to HMP Thorn Cross for allowing us to host the event, to all of our speakers for sharing their inspirational stories, and to all the businesses who joined us as together we can really make a difference in people's lives by supporting them on their new entrepreneurial pathway.

Attendees at the event heard from a range of inspiring ex-offenders who have been successful in setting up their own businesses. These included H.M.Pasties, a start-up which works to 'bring out the good inside' by employing ex-offenders to make and sell pasties.

Getting prisoners into work is a tried-and-tested way of cutting re-offending – with those who get a job after prison being up to nine percentage points less likely to reoffend.

The Government's Prisons White Paper sets out a strategy to reduce reoffending and keep the public safe, with a laser-focus on helping prisoners develop the skills they need to find work on release and turn their backs on crime.

The government is investing to reduce reoffending, which includes helping prisoners develop the skills they need to find work on release and turn their backs on crime.

The Prison Service's (HMPPS) [New Futures Network](#) has been set up to connect businesses with prisons so employers can find and train a pipeline of skilled, motivated workers to fulfil their recruitment needs within a variety of key industries.

Earlier this year, the government [changed the law](#) so prisoners in open prisons can apply for apprenticeships in vital industries – and in October 2022 the [first prisoners started their apprenticeships](#) at big-name employers including Timpson and Greene King.

Notes to editors

About Entrepreneurs Unlocked

Entrepreneurs Unlocked helps individuals develop skills to become their boss and lead crime-free lives. For many people whose career prospects may be limited due to their criminal record, entrepreneurship and self-employment could be the best pathways to a better life.

The charity provides its services to 5 prisons; HMP Liverpool, Thorn Cross, Risley, Hindley, and Buckley Hall.

The course run by Entrepreneurs Unlocked gives prisoners the chance to prove that they are committed to staying on the straight and narrow once released. Once prisoners have completed the programme and have the basic tools they need to grow and develop, they are also given access to additional coaching

to further their learning. Upon release they can also continue to access support from Entrepreneurs Unlocked and its community partners, meaning there is guidance at every step of their journey to maximise the potential of success.

About Global Entrepreneurship Week

Global Entrepreneurship Week is run by Global Entrepreneurship Network and happens in the second week of November every year. It is a global campaign in which 200 nations come together to encourage citizens to consider the path of entrepreneurship.