

Prisoners turn over new leaf through innovative farming scheme

The scheme, being run at HMP Hewell in Worcestershire, is part of a landmark trial between the prison and farming technology company, LettUsGrow, that will see prisoners grow leafy greens, salad and herbs in high-tech 'vertical' farms.

Vegetables are grown in compact towers using aeroponics using an air or mist environment rather than soil.

At the forefront of farming, this advanced technology produces more plants, more quickly and with 98 percent less water than conventional methods.

Most importantly, the scheme will train prisoners up in the jobs of the future, such as farm management software, plant science and food safety. This will help them find a job on release in new and emerging technologies and dramatically reduce their chances of reoffending.

This is just the latest move in the government's strategy to make sure prisoners use their time behind bars to get the skills they need to find work once through the gate and back home.

Prisons Minister Stuart Andrew MP:

This innovative scheme is just the tip of the iceberg in our drive to equip prisoners with the practical skills they need to get a job on release – ultimately cutting crime and keeping the public safe.

Up there with education, family ties and addiction treatment, stable work holds the key to a life free from crime and safer communities for us all.

Ralph Lubowski, Governor of HMP Hewell:

I am delighted to partner with LettUs Grow in this fantastic initiative, which will give our prisoners the opportunity, confidence and training to turn their lives around.

Vertical farming is an innovative, emerging industry and this partnership highlights our commitment to ensuring that prisoners are skilled up to find work on release.

The latest figures show the number of former offenders in work six weeks after release has increased by nearly half, whereas proven reoffending has fallen to just over 25 percent – making huge progress in tackling the £18

billion cost of repeat offending and keeping the public safe.

Notes to editors

- [The latest statistics](#) from the Ministry of Justice show that the proportion of persons released from custody who were employed at 6 weeks from their release rose by 6 percentage points to 16 per cent between April 2021 and March 2021. This is an increase of more than half (57 per cent).
- New data shows that over the last 10 years, proven reoffending has decreased from 30.9 percent (2009/10) to 25.6 percent (2019/20).
- The [Prisons White Paper](#) – the Deputy Prime Minister’s strategy to reduce reoffending and keep the public safe – puts a laser-sharp focus in getting prisoners into work both behind bars and on release.
- Learn more about LettUsGrow [here](#)