

Scheme launched to help ex-offenders in Scotland get better employment support

Speaking on a visit to HM Prison Cornton Vale, Scotland's only all-female prison, Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

The transition from life in prison to life back in work should be as seamless as possible. Getting ex-offenders back into work benefits the person, the economy and our wider society. And the earlier we get people speaking to jobcentre staff and supporting themselves back into work, the better.

Many people leaving prison don't have a job lined up or a strong support system around them, and this can push them to reoffend. The UK government is determined to deliver for Scotland and this commitment to Scottish ex-offenders does just that.

Amber Rudd also announced that working with the Scottish Prison Service the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will investigate how to best verify prisoner's identity and sign them up to start a new claim for Universal Credit so they are able to access finance once they leave prison.

Currently prisoners are unable to start a Universal Credit claim until they are released, and this can lead to delays in receiving support if they do not have proper identification documents, or are unable to get to the jobcentre to verify their identity.

Through the pilot, dedicated work coaches based in HMP Cornton Vale and HMP Perth will help prisoners fill in their benefit claims through restricted and supervised access to computers, and set them up with a jobcentre interview on the day they are released where they will be able to arrange a payment.

Work coaches will also help prisoners tackle other barriers to employment, supporting them to obtain IDs, prepare CVs and identify training, work experience and other employment support.

DWP and Scottish Prison Service are also exploring the use of prison documentation to verify people's identities, which is often a factor in the delay in receiving a Universal Credit payment.

Many prisoners face difficulties on release, and some of the biggest drivers of reoffending are failure to find work and stable housing. Latest statistics show that in Scotland one in 4 ex-offenders were reconvicted within 12 months of being released.

More than 186,000 people in Scotland are receiving Universal Credit, which

includes tailored employment support. It is helping record numbers of people into work, with on average 1,000 more people in the UK going into work every day since 2010.

Since 2010 the employment rate in Scotland has risen by 6.2 percentage points to 75.9%.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0203 267 5144

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