



This document outlines a description of the intervention in the provider's own words and a response to the January 2026 evaluation of their intervention.

This wording is from the provider and does not reflect the views of the Justice Data Lab.

HMPPS CFO in their own words

“His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service Creating Future Opportunities (HMPPS CFO) formerly known as Co-Financing Organisation coordinates large-scale programmes to support offenders into employment. This work was financially backed by the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Union’s main instrument for investing in human capital and promoting equal job opportunities. The CFO set up the CFO Activity Hubs programme in 2021 to run alongside the existing CFO3 programme (which started in 2015); the Hubs being non-authoritarian dedicated spaces in the community compared to the CFO3 (and previous CFO programmes) provision which delivered within prisons and probation offices in England. Both the CFO3 and Hubs programmes came to an end in July 2024 and were amalgamated to create a more joined up and comprehensive provision for the existing CFO Evolution programme.

The Activity Hub provision had been designed to offer tailored support for offenders, particularly those who are disadvantaged and face multiple barriers to employment, and who are not fully supported by existing programmes. Offenders voluntarily accessed the Activity Hubs provision, and the Hubs were designed to provide safe and supportive spaces for offenders to reintegrate into society. The Hubs involved local organisations and community representatives with the aim of increasing participant engagement and to allow a space where participants could interact with positive role models and peers while developing plans to move forward and be supported into education, training and employment. The programme was split into nine ESF geographical delivery areas and consisted of 21 community Activity Hub locations offering bespoke services to offenders, during their community sentences.

The CFO Activity Hubs were designed to provide a positive atmosphere where participants could feel they wanted to take part in activities and training in non-traditional and non-authoritarian ways. The user experience was consistent with that of a community centre, youth club, creative hub or social club with lots of engaging social, creative and group activities readily available. The aim of the provision was to have a positive impact on reoffending and provide a supportive environment with a professional working culture, effective interventions and services.

The service provided included activities that give the participants a sense of self-worth, enabling them to develop positive plans for their future. These services fostered altruism and developed team working skills with a significant emphasis on contributing positively to the local community. Activities were also designed to build personal resilience, strengthen support networks, and upskill participants. These services provided the participants the tools, skills, and links to support, to overcome barriers such as lack of work experience, low educational achievement and weak family and community ties, as well as providing practical support to enable them to engage with mainstream services.”

Response from HMPPS CFO

"HMPPS CFO thanks the Justice Data Lab team for their work and welcomes the findings, which align with our own evidence. The CFO Activity Hub Programme was an ESF-funded pilot focused on social inclusion rather than directly reducing re-offending while relying on mainstream statutory services to address criminogenic needs. While quantitative and qualitative evaluations show it met its ESF non-reoffending objectives and generated potential cross-department savings, design decisions intended to avoid duplication with mainstream services, alongside its restriction to community-only delivery, meant its impact on re-offending was limited. The delivery model was not re-commissioned, but it generated valuable learning.

Lessons Learned

Continuity of support:

The first weeks after release are critical, as individuals face loss of structure, accommodation instability, financial pressures, and emotional stress. Without immediate support, those with low resilience and issues such as mental health or substance misuse risk rapid relapse into offending. The Hub programme lacked pre-release and through-the-gate support, often engaging people already in crisis.

Employment:

Employment strongly reduces re-offending by providing income, routine, purpose, and positive networks. Direct employment support was intentionally excluded from the Hub model to avoid duplication, leaving participants reliant on mainstream ETE provision that was not suited to the complex needs of this hard-to-help cohort. Those with any employment potential were typically redirected to the CFO3 Programme, meaning the Hub predominantly worked with individuals facing the greatest barriers.

CFO Evolution

CFO Evolution is the current CFO programme, which started delivery in August 2025. This new programme builds on the successful, evidence-based CFO3 model, which delivered tailored education, employment, and through-the-gate support from up to three years pre-release through to the community. Findings from the Activity Hub pilot, including the importance of continuity and employment, have been directly integrated. Pre-release and through-the-gate support are now central, with participants met at the gate, stronger custody to community alignment, and hubs more closely linked to prisons. ROTL visits, joint pre-release meetings, and strategic hub relocations further strengthen engagement.

Taking a lead from the CFO3 programme, not the Activity Hub Programme, employment support is now fully embedded within hubs and the wider programme, reducing reliance on external partners and ensuring a structured progression toward education, training, and work.

While the Activity Hub pilot's re-offending results are inconclusive, the wider benefits and learning were significant. The findings reinforce that removing key components, especially through-the-gate support and employment, greatly weakens any programme's ability to reduce re-offending.

It is also worth noting that nearly half of the CFO Activity Hub cohort was excluded from the analysis because their index date fell more than six months before they started the programme. As CFO supports individuals at any stage of their community sentence, whenever additional help is needed, it is worth considering whether the findings might have differed had these participants been included and a larger sample could have been used in the comparison."

Further information

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Other enquiries about the analysis should be directed to:

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