

Gibran UK Ltd



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Y Loteri Genedlaethol

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The National Lottery®



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BIG LOTTERY FUNDING FOR EX-OFFENDERS PROJECT BRINGS WOMEN BACK TO WORK

A new project for Wales, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, hopes to make a major impact on the life chances of women released from prison after serving their sentences.

The five-year project, called Going Home, is run by the not-for-profit company Gibran UK. It will work with ex-offenders across Wales to help them face the major changes and long-term challenges that almost inevitably follow a jail term for women.

Going Home is based on an innovative idea – using ‘peer mentors’ to help ex-offenders, with those mentors being ex-offenders themselves.

Gill Hurley, MD of Gibran UK, devised the project. “The overarching goal is to get those women into real, useful employment,” she says. “Women who complete their sentence and leave prison face a number of problems, not all of them obvious ones. They may come from troubled or chaotic backgrounds. But typically they also have low self-esteem, aren’t good at communicating, and generally lack some of the life skills the rest of us take for granted.

“The point about peer mentors is that they’ll understand this – because often they will have been through the same experience.”

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The Going Home project will provide 300 ex-offenders with the skills they will need to get into work. “Going Home can also offer advice and can direct participants to the services available,” says Peer Mentor Manager Geraldine Reddington. “But it will be most important as a source of encouragement and support, over the phone or meeting in small groups.”

The ex-offender mentors will undergo several weeks’ training and will be carefully selected for their ability to empathise as well as explain and guide. Adds Geraldine: “It’s a very relaxed relationship between women with similar experiences who have overcome their difficulties, proving that change is possible.

Going Home is funded under the Big Lottery Fund’s Stepping Stones programme, which supports Welsh projects that act as stepping-stones for people with significant barriers to learning to acquire the life skills that will enable them to re-engage in learning, volunteering and employment.

Highlighting the importance of the programme, Big Lottery Fund Wales Country Chair, Huw Vaughan Thomas, said: “There is very little funding available for informal life skills work but Stepping Stones aims to fill that void. These projects will make a big difference in communities by enabling people to function independently, communicate and integrate with others and help them adopt healthy behaviours. In turn, these skills will help them participate in community life and maximise their training and employment opportunities.”

The project will be run from Gibran’s new offices in Llanover, near Abergavenny, but will be able to cover the whole of Wales. The project staff are now in post and referrals will be taken from September.

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