

5

Fantastic people on our Governance Board (4 Directors and our Treasurer)

4

Dedicated employed Staff Members delivering Services and Support to all our clients every week of the year

3

Service users who also now volunteer for GCCEO

2

Brilliant Prison Visitors who regularly go into the prison on our behalf

1

Amazing Team of Volunteers who help run Thursday Church, volunteer at the Caves, pray and accompany our Walking Group

2023 Annual Report

GUERNSEY

**CARING FOR
EX-OFFENDERS** LBG

Reintegrating individuals into the community

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Welcome to the Guernsey Caring for Ex-Offenders Annual Report 2023. It has been a busy and fulfilling year for the GCFCO team both in assisting those released from prison integrate back into the community and seeking to help ex-offenders find meaningful employment. On behalf of the board and the whole team, I would like to thank our supporters for their ongoing hard work and commitment. We hope you enjoy this review of our 10th year serving ex-offenders in Guernsey

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Welcome to our newest Director, Tamiza Pledge

Most people know me as Taz. I am an Indian Kenyan, by descent and birth, and moved to glorious Guernsey in 1996 as a Travel Agent. I later moved into the Finance Industry after my son was born. I am a Qualified Chartered Secretary and have done numerous courses on Compliance and Anti-money Laundering, and currently work at Apex Fund and Corporate Services.

I have always served at Trinity Church, in one way or another, whether it was kids work, or coffee and teas, and I have even been a mentor to two young men who needed help when GCFCO first started.

Being invited to become a Director came as a vision from Mary Hervé. Although it was a daunting prospect when I was first asked, it felt good and the right thing to do.

It is a privilege and an honour to serve God via GCFCO.



Graham Harrison
Chairman



Tamiza Pledge
Director

Overview

Support and Activities

The Caring for Ex-Offender's team has delivered a diverse range of support throughout 2023, from simply having a cup of coffee and a chat with an ex-offender, or walking the dog, to acting as an 'appropriate adult' or 'McKenzie Friend' (someone who assists a litigant in court) in police arrests/family tribunals, attending multi-agency meetings, support during minor medical procedures, help finding accommodation and employment etc...

An all-too-common problem experienced by many ex-offenders following their release from prison, particularly if they are without employment, is the absence of a constructive use of their time. GCCEO provides and encourages a range of activities; including weekly craft workshops, lunches and drop-in games sessions, a weekly walking group, coffee mornings and summer barbecues to name just some of our activities in 2023.

Service users are also supported by GCCEO in accessing various community-based activities provided by Holy Trinity Church, where the GCCEO office is based. During 2023 this included the community café, monthly community roast dinners, and for those interested in faith-based activities - a small Thursday evening church group, Sunday church services and various week-day courses and groups.

Accommodation

It is well documented that an important factor contributing to recidivism among ex-offenders is the lack of suitable accommodation. During 2023 GCCEO has supported 17 service users in sourcing, retaining and furnishing appropriate accommodation. This will sometimes involve fulfilling an advocacy role where conflicts have arisen between the landlord/Housing Association and/or other tenants and the service user. Individuals may also need help in sourcing deposits. To this end GCCEO works very closely with the Offender Deposit Assistance Scheme as well as helping individuals to access other sources of funding.

"This is the first time in my whole life I have had a home just like anyone else. It's the first time I've lived somewhere which has carpet on the floor."

Quote from one individual (36yr old) shortly after moving into the new flat

Volunteers

Our amazing team of volunteers are a major resource without whom the charity would simply struggle to run successfully. Volunteers fulfil a range of roles such as mentoring/befriending an individual service user, helping with craft workshop sessions, providing regular visits to prisoners who have little involvement from family and friends, supporting/leading group activities and offering practical assistance whenever called upon.

Funding

As with every charity, Guernsey Caring for Ex-Offenders can only continue to deliver its services through the availability of funds from external sources. The projected cost of running the service in its present form is approximately £120,000 per annum.

GCCEO has a Service Level Agreement with Employment and Social Services, this together with a substantial grant from Sarnia Housing, has made it possible for this vital service to be made available within the island. However, without all those individuals, organisations and churches who have also supported us through very generous donations during this past year, the service we offer would be considerably limited.

If you wish to support us financially, donations can be made directly via our Donate button on our website www.gcfco.org or get in touch with us directly using the contact details at the end of this report.

Caves Activities Centre

Our workshops are overseen by GCCEO Activities Manager, Michelle Stringer and GCCEO Activities Keyworker, Tracy Wilson. During 2023, we had 30 people overall who attended sessions in the year.



We had another great year at the Caves, with a variety of activities. The games sessions we introduced on Tuesday afternoons proved really popular. This is a good opportunity for people to socialise while playing board games, doing puzzles or jigsaws, or just coming for a coffee and a chat. Likewise, our Wednesday lunches have been really well received. Everyone gets involved, sometimes with preparation of food and setting the table and always with the washing up and drying afterwards.



We have provided a wide variety of Craft activities this year; including gelli printing, cardmaking, soap-making, painting, drawing and working with air dry clay and wood scraps to make houses and village scenes. We also had a concerted effort making Christmas decorations. Quite a few people took part in our group activity of creating miniature tiles of

artwork which were grouped together, framed and now hangs on the wall in our craft room.

A group of service users also went and hung the mosaics (made the previous year) in the community garden at Wesley Methodist Church. They were delighted with them and generously gave us a donation.

This year in our Caves garden, we grew beetroot, radish, green beans, aubergines, strawberries, shallots, tomatoes and figs – some more successful than others! We would benefit from someone regularly looking after this area as the care was sporadic at times. We planted some flowers too, the concrete area was levelled and we bought chairs, table and an umbrella so that it would be a lovely place to sit in the sun. This equipment was kindly paid for by a donation received from St Peters Church.



In August we had another successful week at the OSA Pop Up shop in Smith Street and in November we had a large stall at the Round Table Christmas Charities Fayre at Beau Sejour for the first time. We also sold goods at a couple of church fayres during the year.

These opportunities to sell what we make mean that we have been able to again cover our costs for the materials we buy and the food for the weekly lunches. We are also grateful for personal donations that we receive.

Employment:

We provided about 30 individuals with employment support throughout 2023. This work involves matching skills to available work opportunities, helping to create CVs, sending job applications, arranging interviews (sometimes accompanying clients to interviews) and continuing to support people once they have successfully secured employment. We made 162 job applications during the year and were pleased to have helped 14 clients into fulltime work during the year (although would always like this figure to be higher). We continued to provide support to another 14 clients who are in employment (some of whom started their new roles in 2023).

We are very grateful for the ongoing practical and financial support from the Job Centre Team at the department for Employment and Social Security.



“I have found it difficult to find work and [Guernsey Caring for] Ex-offenders have helped me to get job interviews and to help with my CV also.”

Quote from service user

Judge Softly

The following is a quote from a poem written in 1895 by Mary T Lathrap. Although the language may be a little dated we think it very much explains our motivation and values at GCCEO

Judge Softly

*Pray, don't find fault with the man that limps,
or stumbles along the road.
Unless you have worn the moccasins he wears,
or stumbled beneath the same load.
There may be tears in his soles that hurt
though hidden away from view.
The burden he bears placed on your back
may cause you to stumble and fall, too.*

*Don't be too harsh with the man that sins.
Or pelt him with words, or stone, or disdain.
Unless you are sure you have no sins of your own,
and it's only wisdom and love that your heart contains.
For you know if the tempter's voice should
whisper as soft to you, as it did to him when
he went astray, it might cause you to falter too.*

*Just walk a mile in his moccasins before you abuse,
criticize and accuse.
If for just one hour, you could find a way to see through
his eyes, instead of your own muse.
I believe you'd be surprised to see that you've been blind
and narrow-minded, even unkind.*

*We will be known forever by the tracks we leave in
other people's lives, our kindnesses and generosity.*

Take the time to walk a mile in his moccasins.



We take this opportunity to thank all those who support the work of GCCEO, through the giving of their time and for generous financial support. In addition to our regular sources of funding, we received several significant one-off donations in 2023 for which we are most grateful. We would particularly like to thank the charity Guernsey DriveAbility for making a donation of £13,196.25 to GCCEO, following their planned closure and transfer of services to the Traffic Licensing Department.



For further information please contact us at:

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