

STATES OF JERSEY



FREEDOM FOR LIFE MINISTRIES: GRANT FROM CRIMINAL OFFENCES CONFISCATION FUND

**Lodged au Greffe on 25th June 2014
by Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources, following consultation, as required, with the Attorney General and other persons or bodies (including other Ministers) as he considers appropriate, to make a grant of £200,000 from the Criminal Offences Confiscation Fund to the Freedom For Life Ministries to cover the one-off cost of refurbishing their Life Centre drop-in facility (formally Nelson Hall, Nelson Street, St. Helier) for ex-prisoners and other ex-offenders.

DEPUTY M.R. HIGGINS OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Treatment of offenders after their release from Prison following completion of their sentence

Society can be very unforgiving of those who have committed crimes, and especially those who have been imprisoned for their offences. Many are given little chance to turn their lives around after Prison because of their past behaviour and because people do not delve into the circumstances that led to them offending in the first place, or of the difficulties we put in their way to prevent them re-integrating back into society following completion of their sentences. They are often treated as outcasts, lepers and pariahs, and are subject to all forms of discrimination, not least when it comes to getting accommodation, employment, and insurance. Often, this discrimination lasts for the rest of their lives and we should not be surprised, therefore, to learn that many ex-prisoners return to their old ways and end up back in Prison within 2 years of their release.

Our failure to deal with these issues condemns many ex-offenders and us to a never-ending cycle of crime, punishment and re-offending. I believe it is time we try to break this cycle by helping organisations like the Freedom For Life Ministries with their excellent work helping ex-prisoners leave their criminal past and re-integrate back into society.

What is the Freedom For Life Ministries (FFLM) and what does it do?

FFLM is a local charity established in 2008 that works primarily with prisoners and ex-prisoners of Her Majesty's Prison La Moye – in order to help them break free of their criminal past and help them re-integrate back into society. Its founder, Kevin Houiellebecq, is a registered Social Worker and former Probation Officer. The charity operates on Christian values and principles, although it does not require those who avail of their services to follow the Christian faith. Its services are available to all regardless of background or belief. It employs 2 workers who, despite having contracts of 27 hours and 32 hours respectively (this has dropped from full-time hours due to availability of funding), consistently work above and beyond these hours. It also has a small number of volunteers and is funded, with the exception of a small one-off States grant, by donations generated by their own fund-raising efforts.

Whilst not minimising the seriousness of a person's past actions, FFLM believes each person's life has value and it operates in a non-judgemental, future-focussed way, mentoring/befriending ex-prisoners and helping them deal with their practical and emotional issues, and their other day-to-day problems. It treats people with respect and without prejudice, listening to their stories and trying to understand their issues and building up a trusting and honest relationship with them.

It works very closely with various States agencies, such as the Police, Prison, Probation Service and Social Security, receiving referrals from them in addition to the self-referrals and the referrals it receives from family members. It has been a member of JMAPP, which deals with the management of the most serious and high-risk offenders on the Island since 2012, and is a trusted Key-holder at La Moye with access to most parts of the Prison.

Work in the Prison

FFLM works both inside and outside of the Prison, dealing with all categories of prisoner. Examples inside the Prison include –

Youths

For over 3 years it successfully held weekly discussion groups (called “Life Matters”), focussing on important life issues, and delivered courses that explored the importance of right values and principles. The latter was concerned with the development of character rather than behaviour as they believe that good behaviour will come out of good character. Examples of the topics covered include –

- Restraint
- How to handle emotions
- Criticism
- Hard Work
- Ambition
- Listening
- Anger.

Women

Female volunteers from FFLM provide weekly discussion groups with women prisoners modelled on the successful youth program. Relationships built up through these sessions often continue once the prisoner has been released, offering continuity of support in the community.

Adults

Time is spent each week with inmates on the various Wings on a one-to-one basis. These are both pastoral and practical in nature, the latter helping prisoners nearing release with some of the problems they are likely to face re-settling back into the community. FFLM assists by helping find accommodation if it is required, liaising with Social Security regarding any benefits which they may be eligible to receive, and with family, friends and other agencies in order to make the transition back into the community as successful as possible.

Work outside of Prison

FFLM continue their support of offenders who have been released from Prison, which in many cases is the time they face the most difficulties and need the support the most. Please read the accompanying testimonials and the comments made by FFLM in the following pages to appreciate not only the work that they do, but also the importance of it.

Purpose of Grant

After working from various unsuitable coffee establishments, lacking privacy to discuss the issues facing ex-offenders, FFLM have managed to secure Nelson Hall, an old workshop in need of refurbishment in Vauxhall Street in St. Helier. It is to be used as a dedicated drop-in centre, meeting rooms and offices, from which to carry out and extend its community work.

The purpose of the grant is to cover the costs of the renovation of the building so that the work of this important charity not only continues, but so that it can also expand its range of services and the support it gives ex-offenders and their families.

The premises were acquired on 1st March 2013. FFLM have been raising funds to pay for the building, with now just £75,000 left to pay. This will continue to be an important focus of various fund-raising initiatives. Planning permission has been granted for conversion of the building.

The ground floor space would be developed into a drop-in facility and social area with alcohol-free/coffee bar. This is essential, as individuals who want to break free from drinking alcohol or taking drugs are left with very few options in which they can socialise. So much socialising for this client group revolves around the pub and club culture where alcohol is often excessively used. FFLM believes that having a positive alternative will provide a much greater opportunity for individuals to move forward with hope and purpose.

A kitchen area would also be used for teaching life skills for those leaving Prison and going into their own accommodation. There will be full disabled access and toilets, including a lift to the first floor.

The first floor would be developed into meeting rooms, counselling rooms and office space. There will also be a separate kitchenette area, toilet and shower to allow the first floor to be used independently of the ground floor, if required.

The cost of the refurbishment is in the region of £200,000 and FFLM are hoping that ex-prisoners will become involved in the renovation work. They intend to utilise the skills and availability of ex-prisoners, many of whom are currently finding it very difficult to secure employment or training. This will give them a sense of purpose and ownership, as well as provide an environment to develop a positive work ethic and increase their employability.

Economic argument in favour of grant assistance

Whether one agrees with helping ex-offenders or not, the economic argument for supporting this scheme is overwhelming.

This grant should be seen in context. The current cost of incarcerating an offender in La Moye Prison for one year is £79,000 (based on the size of current Prison population), which means that if FFLM are successful in helping just 3 ex-offenders from re-offending and going back to Prison they not only justify the grant they will be receiving, but will also be saving the taxpayer money.

In reality FFLM are saving taxpayers a great deal more money than these direct costs, as the true cost of offending needs to be taken into account, which includes the amount of Police time and resource devoted to catching the offender, the costs of trying the offender in the criminal justice system, i.e. court, prosecution and defence costs, Probation, and possibly health reports; and Social Security support for the family of the prisoner once he has been jailed.

The more people whose lives they help to turn around, the greater the saving to the Jersey taxpayer.

FFLM in their own words

Kevin Houiellebecq, the Managing Director of FFLM Jersey, has written to many of the people in authority in the Island over the last few years for support for FFLM and its activities. These are just a few excerpts from the letters he has written. I hope with your help we can provide the support he seeks.

1. Situation of prisoners leaving Prison

- (a) “I have discovered that people leave prison with their bag of possessions, a few pounds in their pocket but a significant amount of fear and anxiety. At FFLM we try and offer the kind of support that will help allay these fears as much as possible and stand by them in the early days and weeks as they resettle into the community. Due to their offending behaviour many of them have no family or friends to go back to, some are isolated due to being from outside Jersey. We have found that alongside the need for practical assistance, many need emotional support, the value of which I do not believe can be overestimated. Some simply want to talk about their fears and anxieties, to look for a way through the “fog” of their circumstances without reverting back to their old ways. I have had many a conversation with an ex-prisoner struggling greatly to adjust to life “on the out”. They often do not want to go to a statutory agency to talk about such issues for fear of being seen as unable to cope and possibly a higher cause for concern regarding possible re-offending. This one to one support is therefore key in helping people stay on track”.
- (b) “When I first started in FFLM, I was amazed at the number of people who would leave prison with no-where to stay, no money to live on and no job to go to. They just ‘hoped’ things would work out, but in reality for some, no preparations or plans had been put in place. It was no surprise therefore that many returned to their old associates, their old lifestyle and ended back at La Moye. At FFLM, we are trying to reduce the likelihood of such an occurrence”.

“On a practical basis, we help inmates with their Income Support claims in order that they can receive money on the day they are released. We try and set up accommodation mostly through the private sector, so they have a bed to sleep in on the first night of their release into the community. For those who request it, we meet them at the Gate upon their release and take them into town, or for those who have lifts, we meet them in town at the Social Security office to help them deal with finalising their Income Support claims and accommodation.

All our work requires a lot of networking with other agencies, including Prison, Probation, Social Services, Social Security, Alcohol and Drug Service, Shelter, Police, accommodation agencies, private landlords, schools, Jersey Archives, Banks, Grace Trust charity, Sanctuary House, Salvation Army as well as others. We try and ensure that the work we do dovetails with the work that is already

taking place and want to make sure we do not duplicate anything already in place”.

2. *Difficulties getting work or training; possible work schemes; consequences of inaction*

(a) “I am very aware of the difficulties there are at present for many people trying to find work or training. For those who have been in prison this difficulty increases many times over. It is my hope and plan that in the near future a work scheme will be established to help those in such difficulty find appropriate work placements and meaningful activity to occupy their time, whilst working to develop positive attitudes towards employment and therefore create a strong work ethic.

(b) “Many individuals we meet hold little hope of ever finding work. The current economic market and lack of job opportunities make it difficult for most unemployed people to find work. Add to that a prison sentence as part of their CV and it becomes so much more difficult. Consequently, some people fall into a cycle of frustration and despair which can often result in them returning to old, destructive coping mechanisms, with crime often being associated with that”.

“This again brings about all the various costs associated with crime, Court proceedings and possible imprisonment. One of the keys to reduce this cost is to engage ex-offenders in meaningful activity, help address the difficult issues of their past and give them hope for their future. These are some of the aims that assist the vision of FFLM. By engaging ex-prisoners who are looking for employment or work experience, enables them to develop a good work ethic, as well as develop new or existing skills”.

“I am aware there is much to do to help those we meet. For some people they feel their future is extremely bleak and they fear never being able to move out of their current circumstances. As a charity we believe all things are possible, and we will do all we can to help those wanting to change. But we need support in order to fulfil our work”.

3. *Quality of life in Prison facilities in La Moye; paucity of out-of-Prison support*

“HMP La Moye does a great job in helping the inmates develop new skills, interests, pass examinations, keep fit etc. The staff at the prison, the programmes that are provided and the facilities that have now been established are excellent and a huge improvement from a few years ago. . . . However, what I have experienced, especially in the last five years working with Freedom For Life Ministries, is that in comparison to what is provided for serving prisoners at La Moye, the amount of help and support when prisoners are released is minimal. As a result, a number of people choose to behave in such a way that they return to prison, without any consideration of the financial costs to the States and taxpayer”.

“Many such individuals need intensive help and support. I believe it is unrealistic to expect the Probation and After-Care Service to provide for individuals in this way. I believe that its why FFLM receive a number of referrals and requests for help from the Probation Service. As a former Probation Officer I am aware of the high demands placed on the Service and I can understand the reasons why Officers chose to contact us for support for their clients.”

4. *Institutionalisation of prisoners and anxieties and fear on release*

- (a) “I believe there has to be greater investment for people coming out of prison. I have worked with prisoners who have served many years in prison. They would be considered hardened criminals. Yet I have met with some as they literally cry because of fear and anxiety as they find it so difficult to cope with life on the outside and they lack so much practical and emotional support. People in prison get used to a regime where everything is laid on for them – food, education, social time, TV, vocational courses etc. But when they are released, suddenly everything is gone. And for many that can be very scary and causes many to re-offend in order to get back to a place of provision and safety. It’s not that they want to re-offend. Many genuinely want to change and move away from crime. It’s often because they have not had enough support around them when they are released to help them succeed.

For the sake of the individual ex-prisoner and society as a whole, more investment is needed upon their release”.

- (b) “I have met many people at La Moye Prison who are in their teenage years, their twenties, thirties, forties and beyond. I am shocked by the many times I have been told by a prisoner that they wanted to go to La Moye rather than serve a community sentence. Some of the comments that have been made to me are:

“It’s no problem. It’s like being part of a 24 hour youth club.”

“It’s good to be back.”

“I needed a break.”

“I needed to sort my head out.”

“It’s easier than being out.” ”

5. *Size and impact of the problem*

- (a) “The number of offenders are small in comparison with other sectors of our society but their impact in a negative way to our Island community can be great. FFLM believes that the greatest way to reduce crime and disorder on the Island is by helping those who are involved in such behaviour change their lifestyle. This would have a major positive impact on the quality of life for people in Jersey, it will build a safer society and also save significant amounts of money to the taxpayer”.

“I am convinced that if there was a greater level of investment for people who are released from prison, in order to help them settle back into the community in a positive way, there would be far fewer people returning to prison.”

- (b) “I appreciate there are many good works being carried out in the area of crime-reduction and rehabilitation which attracts States funding. In regards to FFLM, we continue to receive increasing referrals to support those leaving prison and those struggling to adapt to life in the community. These referrals are pushing us to the limit with our current resources and we recently had to make the decision to restrict the referrals coming from the prison. March 2014 was the second time we have had to put a restriction on the number of referrals being accepted.”

“In my work, I come across many people in prison who are desperate for their lives to change. There are many people wanting that second chance and are hoping that they can make something of their life. However, many realise that due to their past behaviour and reputation this can prove extremely difficult. . . . we are committed to see all who want to change their lifestyle given as much opportunity to do so as possible”.

“I do hope the information above will give you a greater understanding of our work. As an organisation we are committed to helping people find freedom from their previous criminal lifestyle and live full and satisfying lives. This is beneficial for them, their friends and family, and the Jersey community as a whole”.

Testimonials and comments relating to the work of the Freedom For Life Ministries

“The Freedom For Life Ministries Charity has worked closely with the Probation Service for a number of years. We have been most impressed by the provision of a range of practical and emotional support for clients who are either trying to resettle in the community following prison sentences or require ongoing help in their lives. Our experience is that the interventions of FFLM are timely, relevant and appreciated not only by clients but also by Probation staff who acknowledge the important contribution towards rehabilitation. So often the provision of hope and the allaying of anxieties are necessary for clients to fully consider a life without offending. The Probation Service commends the work of FFLM and looks forward to an ongoing partnership in the future.”

- Assistant Chief Probation Officer

“The work of charities such as FFLM is invaluable to those preparing to leave prison. Many leave with high hopes and some practical support but the missing link is someone to help keep them together as a person. What FFLM does is extend a hand of friendship which is both realistic & dependable, through the good times and the bad. They never give up!”

- Prison Chaplain

“At the prison we are very grateful for all the help and support that FFLM provides to the prisoners when they leave us. We believe they are of great benefit . . . Many services recognise the good work done by FFLM and they are involved at a high level with the JMAPP team and with liaising with Social Services and Housing.”

- Head of Custodial Care at HMP La Moye.

“The FFLM team gave me hope when I reached rock bottom and everyone else seemed to have given up on me . . . without their continued support I dread to think where I might be.”

- Ex-Prisoner

“I don’t know what I’d have done without your help. Previously, I left prison with my stuff in a sack, a few quid in my pocket and nowhere to live.”

- Ex-Prisoner

“When you leave [after the appointment] I never have a bad day and I always have a good sleep. I would have to go through a hell of a lot to have a bad day after I’ve met you. You have definitely been helping me.”

- Mr. P – a recovering alcoholic.

“I have felt encouraged and inspired by the vision that Kevin Houiellebecq has to establish an organisation which focuses on people whose lives have been broken and mostly through no fault of their own. His vision is to enable transformation in the lives of individuals so that they are able to integrate into society and thereby contribute to the community as a whole. FFLM is being established on the foundations of excellent principles, sound values and models of best practice.”

- Grace – Caring for Ex-Offenders
(Holy Trinity, Brompton, London)

“The Freedom for Life Ministries worked with around 25 prisoners at any time prior to their release and more after release. ***It was disappointing, however, that the service was not funded by either the prison or the councils of Jersey and was dependent on donations; as a result, the support could not necessarily be relied on in the long term.***”

- H.M. Chief Inspector of Prisons –
in his 2013 Report on La Moye Prison

Jim's story

“FFLM received a referral from the Prison to support Jim (name changed to protect his anonymity) upon his release. We met with him several times before his release from prison. He had nowhere to stay, no job and had absolutely no support network. The statutory agencies were very concerned for his future due to his potential isolation upon release, and the possible increase of offending as a result.

Just before his release we found Jim accommodation so that on the day he came out he had somewhere appropriate to stay. We then met with him several times a week. Over time we helped him build a new support network and he began to make new friends. We helped him in developing new skills and were there to support him when things became tough, as well as being there to celebrate his successes.

After a few months Jim was put on a work placement and has since been successful in securing a full-time contract. Three years after his release Jim continues to enjoy his work, has settled into a new flat and meets with his new friends. Although there have been various challenges and difficulties to work through, he has admitted that he could never have imagined life would turn out so positively.”

Financial and manpower implications

It is proposed that the grant shall be paid from the Criminal Offences Confiscation Fund, which was created under Article 24 of the Proceeds of Crime (Jersey) Law 1999.

The Fund is a special fund for the purposes of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2005 and does not form part of the annual income of the States.

The Fund is managed and controlled by the Minister for Treasury and Resources who is required, under Article 5 of the Law, to consult with H.M. Attorney General and other persons or bodies (including other Ministers) as the Minister for Treasury and Resources considers appropriate.

Under Article 4(a) of the Law, the Fund shall be used in promoting or supporting measures that, in the opinion of the Minister for Treasury and Resources, may assist –

- (i) in preventing, suppressing or otherwise dealing with criminal conduct,
- (ii) in dealing with the consequences of criminal conduct, or
- (iii) without prejudice to the generality of clauses (i) and (ii), in facilitating the enforcement of any enactment dealing with criminal conduct.

The work of the Freedom For Life Ministries in working with ex-offenders with a view to preventing or reducing re-offending falls completely within these provisions, and therefore qualifies for assistance from this Fund.

So that Members can be aware of how the Fund has been used to date, I have included in the **Appendix** a breakdown of how the Fund has been used since 2003. Please note that the inconsistency in the information is due to the method reported to members over the years, making figures and expenditure as clear as mud. The figures are also inconsistent over the years in answers to questions posed by Members.

APPENDIX

Year	Purpose of Expenditure	Amount £
2003	Law Officers – Salaries	94,859
	Law Officers – Rent	133,066
	Law Officers – Overheads	50,257
2004	Law Officers – Salaries	133,066
	Law Officers – Rent	94,859
	Law Officers – Overheads	50,257
2005	Law Officers – Salaries	159,686
	Law Officers – Rent	156,261
	Grant – Greenfields Centre	750,000
2006	Law Officers – Salaries	304,119
	Law Officers – Rent	157,270
	Law Officers – Overheads	90,482
	Viscount’s Department – Overheads	20,000
	Judicial Greffe – Salaries	90,000
	Magistrate’s Court – Building and Staff costs	200,000
	Grant – Home Affairs – Regulation of Investigatory Powers Law	145,000
2007	Law Officers’ Department	1,768,000
	Viscount’s Department	158,000
	Judicial Greffe	1,580,000
	Bailiff’s Chambers	139,000
	Home Affairs Department	612,000
2008	Law Officers’ Department	1,843,000
	Viscount’s Department	86,000
	Judicial Greffe	553,000
	Bailiff’s Chambers	96,000
	Home Affairs Department	456,000

Year	Purpose of Expenditure	Amount £
2009	Law Officers' Department	1,864,000
	Viscount's Department	50,000
	Judicial Greffe	1,235,000
	Bailiff's Chambers	187,000
	Home Affairs Department	275,000
2010	Law Officers' Department	887,909
	Judicial Greffe and Viscount's Department	310,000
	Grant – Egmont Group Secretariat	4,316
2011	Home Affairs – Fire and Rescue “No impairment of Service” Agreement	404,000
2012	Judicial Greffe and Viscount's Department	506,000
2013	Home Affairs Department – CCTV	70,515 (88,000)*
	Upgrade Drunk and Incapable Unit	17,748
	Judicial Greffe (Magistrate's Court) – Domestic Violence training	20,000

*Two different figures for this expenditure have been given in 2 written answers to Members.

In addition to the above, the sum of £340,000 was awarded to the Jersey Financial Services Commission in 2007 and 2008.