

# News by North West

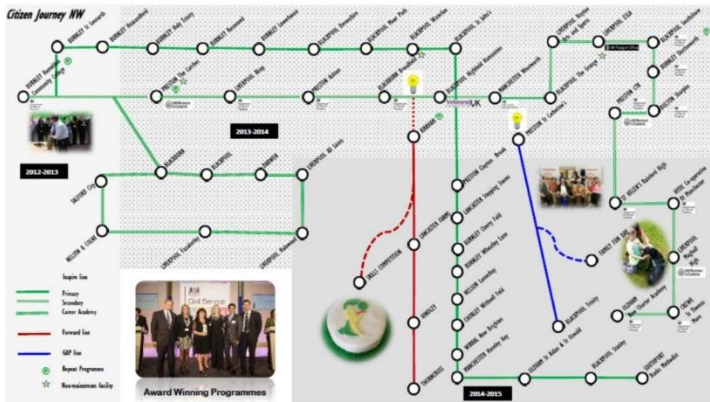
*Our people, Our places, Our programmes, Our news*

April 2015



**Hello, I'm Jayne Krol and my role in Civil Service Local North West is to look after all our citizen-facing projects and cross-government networks.** If you haven't heard much about this before, I hope reading this newsletter (and our [blog pages](#)) will give you an overview of what we do, why we do it and how you can get involved.

Through our citizen-facing activities, we deliver the Reform agenda by encouraging civil servants like you to reconnect with groups in our local community. We create opportunities for you to volunteer and develop your skills through offering innovative ways of working with school students and offenders, or by bringing essential and valuable support to patients and carers in local hospices. We're always looking for extra volunteers as we come up with more new ideas. In this edition of News by North West we focus on our Going Forward project, so read on to find out more about what our teams have been doing in prisons across the region.



The North West Citizen journey, so far . . .

The best part of my job is definitely the people I get to work with. Without passionate and talented people, we couldn't build such a successful programme. I love seeing ideas taking shape and our projects always develop into more than I expected. Our approach isn't as traditional as many civil service business areas, and we know it can seem overwhelming at first.

But, as we start a new year and look to set new objectives for personal development, I'd encourage you all to explore what we offer at CS Local. It could be just what you're looking for so I hope to meet some of you soon to deliver our projects in 2015/16.



<https://civilservicelocal.blog.gov.uk/>



**Civil Service  
Local** North West

## Working with prisons to provide hope for the future

**Our Going Forward Project uses civil servants to work with offenders in local prisons, helping them to develop new skills and prepare them to return to the world of work and society.** We checked in on teams working with offenders at two prisons in the North West, Thorn Cross in Cheshire and Kirkham in Lancashire.

[The Thorn Cross team](#) includes staff from the Legal Aid Agency, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). They brought together their different skills and experiences to teach offenders to write a CV, learn about workplace behaviour, improve their ability to communicate, and how to manage money.

These are skills that many of us take for granted, but offenders can often come from difficult backgrounds where they are lacking, and equipping them for the outside world can lead to a reduction in re-offending rates.

Rachel Turner from HMRC spoke about the moment she found out she had been accepted on to the project.

She said: "All different emotions are running through my mind. I'm going into a prison! I have never been in a prison before. I will be completely out of my comfort zone. Am I having second thoughts? No, but I am wondering what I have let myself in for ....."

Rachel's first surprise was that the governor was not a "well-built strapping male" but a "petite female". The second was the sight of offenders wandering freely around the prison grounds in their own clothes – jeans, trainers and hoodies instead of the sort of prison uniform we have come to expect from films and TV.

The offenders - or the lads, as they're called by the staff and team members - also politely held doors open, again perhaps running counter to media stereotypes.

After a security briefing, the team members met the lads for the first time. Rachel said her "stomach was in knots" waiting for them. Some of the offenders were equally nervous, unsure what to expect. Rachel's attempt to talk to one of them "was like pulling teeth", while a couple of the lads quickly said it was not for them and left.



Kirkham – one of the prisons we work with



Mandy Morris from HM Courts and Tribunals Service led a Going Forward team at Kirkham prison, and although she had been a team member on a prison project before, this was the first time she had taken the lead.

Mandy said: “Although the prison system was not new to me as I had worked in a closed prison environment at HMP Hindley, Kirkham was completely different with its open-gate structure. I struggled at first to stop myself from going around locking doors!

“That wasn’t the only challenge I faced. I had never led on a project before, so establishing working relationships with my project team and the offenders - the lads - required strong organisation and communication skills and led to a few moments of madness!

“I thoroughly enjoyed watching the increasing confidence of the team members and the lads as they achieved any task set for them, by pushing themselves out of their comfort zones, challenging ideas, discussing choices, and sharing experiences. We also ate a lot of chocolate along the way!”

The teams’ efforts were appreciated. One of the offenders said of the experience: “I can honestly say I wasn’t looking forward to doing it myself. I just felt it was another course I will have done while in custody but I’m very happy and glad I’ve participated in it. I’m personally more confident about going for an interview for a job. I feel more confident about getting employment when released.....I feel confident I’ve got the skills and techniques.”

Another of the lads agreed: “When I first heard about the course I thought it wasn’t for me - my job confidence was very low and I thought, *What’s the point?*

“I gave it a go - it was a little awkward at first but after meeting the people they were friendly and engaging, which settled everyone straight away. I started to look forward to coming every month. It was a well thought-out and structured course that has been invaluable to me’.

For us at Civil Service Local, feedback like this gives us the confidence to continue Going Forward.



## Civil Service Local – a growing network

All of our citizen-facing projects bring people together from across government. [Jayne Krol](#) also looks after seven different professional networks with topics ranging from [Continuous Improvement](#) to Search Dogs!

These groups are a brilliant way to share ideas between departments, learn new skills and collaborate to try delivering something new. [Look on our blog](#) or in future editions of this newsletter for more information.



### Professional

Attendance management

Human Resources

### Expert

Continuous Improvement

Redeployment

### Networks

Engagement

Learning and Development

One of our more unusual networks involves our canine colleagues from the National Offender Management Service and the Police Force. Like any other network, they work together to share good practice and make resource savings. The NOMS dogs were a big hit at last year's Civil Service Live in Liverpool, and you can even follow them on Twitter [@NOMSK9](#)



## Exchange to Change

Our Exchange to Change project team are pleased to say that the application process for their 5 day cross-government development exchange scheme is still open. Anyone wishing to apply for an exchange opportunity this summer should [get in touch with the team](#) for more information.

## Coming up . . .

Find out about our next [Discovery Sessions](#) . . . We'll bring you news from our [Big Bike Ride](#) (feel free to sponsor Jayne and the team!) In the next edition we'll have more details about this year's Civil Service Live event and how to apply for our 2015 Civil Service Local North West Academy to be held in Chester in September.