

Flexible Learning



YMCA Community College Cardiff

The YMCA Community College in Cardiff is helping offenders get back on the learning ladder with a programme of courses in anything from painting and decorating to groundwork and gardening.

It's a joint programme with the Probation Service – and it's seeing some positive results. "The flexibility of the courses and the support we get from OCN means that we can help people who may never have achieved any qualifications in their lives," said Head of College, Margaret Jones.

The learners, who are all serving a Community Punishment Order, firstly work towards an OCN credit in Health and Safety, then go on to complete a set of units in vocational subjects, which could help them get back on their feet.

It could be a new skill – carpentry, gardening, basic construction – or creating a beautiful piece of art. Either way it gives the offenders

real pride in their abilities, and a better understanding of the value of hard work.

Some offenders will leave the course with a new interest in learning a skill, or returning to college. When their OCN certificates are sent out each is given information about relevant courses near to them – giving them the option of continuing their learning.

Around 6000 offenders from across Wales have been through the programme since it started in 1998. It's being recognised as a real help in redirecting offenders: the College has been given an excellent report from Estyn – and in the community-based sector that's not easy to achieve.

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The **Diversity** of Learning

