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ICELAND'S 'SECOND CHANCE' SCHEME HELPS PRISON LEAVERS FIND EMPLOYMENT

- Iceland Foods has offered employment to more than 680 ex-offenders since appointing Paul Cowley MBE as Director of Rehabilitation in 2022
- The 'Second Chance' scheme has successfully placed 330 ex-offenders into home delivery driver and in-store roles, with more set to join this year
- The retailer is sharing a blueprint of its rehabilitation model to encourage other businesses to replicate its scheme

Iceland Foods has been helping ex-offenders across the UK get back into the workforce as part of its 'Second Chance' rehabilitation scheme.

More than 330 ex-offenders have been hired as front-line retail workers and delivery drivers at Iceland and The Food Warehouse over the past 18 months, thanks to the appointment of Paul Cowley MBE as Director of Rehabilitation in 2022.

An ex-offender himself, Paul has a deep understanding of the challenges faced when seeking employment after prison and takes a hands-on approach – hosting more than 800 face-to-face interviews in 98 prisons since his appointment.*

The 'Second Chance' scheme has been a success for Iceland, supported by HR Director Helen Tindle, with over 680 ex-offenders being offered employment so far. This success has been facilitated by constantly improving processes to make the transition simple for the candidates. The flexibility, trust and warm welcome by our various store managers has also gone a long way in ensuring these new colleagues can thrive at Iceland.

The programme, headed up by Paul, has seen over 300 people start with the business already, with many more ready to join following their release. Paul has a wealth of experience in this field, also being the founder of Caring for Ex-Offenders, a charity that helps integrate men and women back into society following their release from prison.

Paul Cowley MBE, Director of Rehabilitation at Iceland said: "Our newly rehabilitated colleagues have been a brilliant addition to the team, with some already being promoted into new roles and receiving awards for their hard work.

"Not having the security of a paid job following release from prison can have a devastating impact on ex-offenders, as well as their family, friends and society as a whole - with the cost of reoffending currently sitting at £18 billion per year.¹ These individuals deserve the second chance that we are giving them, and more needs to be done to ensure they are given the opportunity to succeed."

¹ 'Economic and Social Costs of Reoffending: Analytical Report' (Ministry of Justice, 2019), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d1de7a4e5274a08d13a684e/economicsocial-costs-reoffending.pdf>.

Following the recent appointment of Lord Timpson as Minister of State for Prisons, Parole and Prohibition, Iceland has also issued a letter to the Government with a 'blueprint' of its rehabilitation model. The supermarket aims to encourage other businesses to help ex-offenders looking for a second chance rejoin the workforce.

Richard Walker, Executive Chairman at Iceland said: "Helping ex-offenders get back into the workforce is proven to reduce reoffending, and we're proud to be helping them with their rehabilitation and to offer security following release. Finding meaningful paid employment following release from prison is a significant factor in reducing the chances of individuals reoffending, so it's not only beneficial to us to have them in the workforce but also to society as a whole.

"We're incredibly lucky to have Paul with his years of experience working to help rehabilitate ex-offenders running our Second Chance scheme, and the results speak for themselves. The next step for us is to help more people is to share our blueprint for rehabilitation to get ex-offenders into the workforce and help them stay on the right path."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editor:

* Those eligible for consideration by Iceland Foods include prisoners who are set for release within six months, are not on the sex-offenders register, haven't committed a terrorist offence, arson or taken a life.

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PAUL COWLEY MBE

Paul as a young man spent time in HMP Risley; he then went on to have a 17-year career in the British Army. On leaving, he became a personal trainer, managing prestigious health clubs in London. He then changed career to become a priest in the Church of England and in 2005 founded the charity Caring for Ex offenders which has helped over 2,000 men and women re-integrate into society and for which he was awarded an MBE in 2016.

ABOUT ICELAND

Iceland Foods is recognised as the UK's leader in frozen food and operates over 750 stores across the country, together with a multi-award-winning online shopping service. It prides itself on being a convenient and friendly place to do the family's weekly shop, as well as meet everyone's daily top-up shopping needs for fresh, chilled, frozen food and groceries. For more than 20 years Iceland has also offered a unique, free home delivery service for in-store purchases.

In addition to its market-leading Iceland own label, the company has built exclusive partnerships with many leading brands including Slimming World, Greggs, Myprotein, Cathedral City, TGI Fridays, Harry Ramsdens and Sides.

Iceland was voted the UK's favourite online grocery service at the Good Housekeeping Awards in 2021 and 2022. The retailer was also named the UK's Best Online Supermarket in a survey by consumer champion Which? In 2022.

Iceland has always been a responsible retailer, operating under its 'Doing it Right' ethos. The supermarket is committed to doing the right thing in its supply chain and in the way it treats its people and customers. Iceland is also committed to minimising its impact on the environment, and contributing to the communities where it operates by regenerating high streets, creating jobs, providing outstanding customer service and giving generous support to a range of good causes.

ABOUT THE FOOD WAREHOUSE

Founded in 2014, The Food Warehouse now has over 180 stores across Britain. They are all large format stores, with a car park, providing the value and convenience of a wholesale store without the hassle of membership.

The Food Warehouse is opening new stores up and down the country in retail parks and larger shopping districts. Each store is given a high-quality warehouse style fit out and covers between 10,000 and 25,000 sq. ft. of retail space.

The Food Warehouse offers great value, family-favourite products across frozen, chilled, fresh, branded grocery and homeware lines. With big deals, big choice and big packs across many big brands, customers can make great savings with bulk deals where savings are passed directly onto shoppers.

The Food Warehouse is part of the Iceland Foods Group.