

scottish justice matters

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WOMEN AND JUSTICE ARE WE MAKING PROGRESS?

Breaking the cycle of re-offending through social business

Josee Scott

FREEDOM UNLIMITED

ENTERPRISES (FUE) was founded in 2014 as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) social enterprise and is now also a registered charity. It began as a solution to a problem that presented itself through a frustrated man expressing his anger at not being able to get a job because he had a criminal record: or so it seemed, but as I began to research and network with others who worked closely in the field, I quickly realised that the motivation for seeing lives transformed in this way was connected to my 17 year old son who had 'got in with the wrong crowd', and as a result was killed in August 2006.

The answer was obvious. Start businesses that would specifically employ people with convictions and help these people become part of the solution instead of part of the problem. Let's face it, there is a vast range of skill, talent and ability within the criminal population that would be an asset to any business. Transferring those into a framework of legitimacy is the aim of Freedom Unlimited, and provides an opportunity to break out of the revolving door cycle, and have a positive future filled with purpose, dignity and hope with employment being a firm foundation to build on.

FUE now has two streams of business that operate out of their spacious premises in Dalgety Bay, Fife. The sewing business is called Seamless Transitions and our recent six-month pilot at HMP Edinburgh, working with the women has been a tremendous success. It was delivered one day per week with two sessions per day being offered. The women learned how to operate and use a sewing machine and were taught how to make many small items to brighten up their rooms, and give as gifts. Some of the ladies reached high enough skill levels to enabled them to contribute to our production line. The confidence it's



given the women has been invaluable and some have expressed a desire to work with us on release. Seamless Transitions makes a range of high-end Scottish linen and wool cushions and other small products such as Ipad and notebook covers. Discussions with the Scottish Prison Service for continuing with the sewing training in future are ongoing.

Crafted With Conviction® is the name of our wood workshop where we currently run a project called 'Emotional Wood'. It's a 13-week training course that provides an opportunity for basic skills in woodwork to be learned in a live-working environment. Participants learn how to use both hand and power tools to make products or work on personal projects. We use a mixture of timber from construction sites, churches, old buildings and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh so that the products have a story to tell that is linked in with the wood source.

Crafted With Conviction® is also the registered trademark for all our products and lets our supporters know that we are committed to making our products with excellence and conviction to high standards and quality as well as supporting and providing employment

for people who have had involvement with criminal justice and have a desire to break free from the revolving door cycle. Just as every piece of wood has a story, more importantly, so does every life.

Freedom Unlimited Enterprises is more than just a business, a company or a charity. It's a place where men and women find the spark that ignites the hope that lies within the heart of every human being that the past can be left behind them and a new future is just one step away in the right direction, and we lead them there.

Josee Scott is the founder of Freedom Unlimited Enterprises. She started the company in 2015 as a solution to the lack of employment opportunities that exist for people with criminal convictions. Despite having almost no knowledge or experience in the sector at the time, and armed only with sheer determination and a deep conviction to make a difference, she has managed to see her dream become a reality.

Josee@freedomue.org

www.freedomue.org