

Unlocking Learning Potential

Members of the community living in Princetown are being invited to use the new learning centre at HMP Dartmoor.

Speaking at the launch of the £43,000 facility outside the walls of the 19th Century gaol, centre manager Andy Harding said: “This is an isolated community up here on the moor and if people want to go to college they have to travel either 15 miles to Plymouth or 10 miles to Tavistock.

“By opening our centre for local people we’re giving them a place on their doorstep with no travelling required. We’ve already had one person coming along and we hope many more will follow.”



Colin Moses, National Chairman of the Prison Officers Association (POA), added: “We’re delighted to share this facility with the local community because prisons are part of the community – not just places with walls round, people on one side, prisoners on the other.”

Primarily, though, the centre will be used by prison staff and their families.



Sally Wood, POA branch secretary, said: “More than 20% of staff have already signed up for courses varying from typing and health & safety to IT. These courses are helpful for our job because all we get taught is how to be a prison officer.

“Computers have now arrived but there are a lot of staff who are computer illiterate because when they started they didn’t need to use them, so this will help them with their work.”

Other popular courses are foreign languages, which come in handy because the prison houses a foreign national wing, as Governor Tony Corcoran explained:



“If I have staff able to communicate directly with those prisoners, it benefits the organisation. It’s incumbent on me to do my best for my staff and I’m grateful to the POA for investing in the learning centre. If my staff are upskilled, it’s not just work-related matters, it makes them better employees if it improves their English, their maths and their languages.”

Helen Cole, Regional Manager for unionlearn, attended the launch and said: “It’s great to see another learning centre starting up and providing the opportunity for trade union members in the region to learn new skills and give themselves new opportunities.”

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