



About HMP Ashwell

Situated near Oakham in Rutland, HMP Ashwell has been in service since 1955, now housing over 600 low Category C adult male prisoners with short – mid-term sentences. The prison is deeply committed to empowering inmates as evidenced by their achievement of Resettlement Stage One accreditation in 2003.



HMP Ashwell inmates help meet national demand with a little help from Lighthouse

Prisons are regularly audited to ensure compliance across a wide range of standards, including Health & Safety signage. But getting the required quantity and specification of signs and labels quickly has always been difficult. That is why HMP Ashwell decided to take matters into their own hands. Choosing sign and label making systems from Lighthouse gave them an invaluable resource, enabling them to provide signs for other prisons, and give their inmates the opportunity to learn a useful set of skills, and engage in purposeful activity.

A progressive approach

HMP Ashwell is a progressively run facility with twin responsibilities to operate cost effectively, and to provide a stable and nourishing environment for inmates.

As a Category C facility, Ashwell accommodates prisoners who, while they might not be trusted in open conditions, are judged low escape risks. The challenge for staff is to ensure that they are not just securely looked after, but that they're given the opportunity to engage in satisfying working activities – the sort of activities that can provide a conduit back into life and society on the outside.

That drive for gainful employment opportunities at HMP Ashwell made for a good fit with Lighthouse, who had already worked with a number of prisons (of various categories). At an initial meeting, Lighthouse proved they understood HMP Ashwell's objectives.

"Prisons do use a lot of signs. They are, by necessity, very well kept – they're set out like public buildings, so they have a big requirement for direction signs, no

smoking signs, Health & Safety signs etc. Equally there is a requirement to engage prisoners in purposeful activity – something our machines had certainly helped with at the other prisons we'd been involved in."

Simon Pratt, UK Business Development Manager, Lighthouse UK

Lighthouse has proven itself to be the best-fit provider at prisons with a wide range of requirements, and their desktop machines are small enough to be moved to secure wings, as and when required.

To cover all of HMP Ashwell's requirements, Instructional Officer, Jeff Bush and the team initially took one CPM-100 label making system and one CM-200 for larger signage requirements – increasing to two of each as their need increased. Jeff and a colleague were given training to get them up and running – and they were turning out signs and labels to excellent standards almost straightaway.

Multiple applications

Staff at HMP Ashwell quickly found that there was a wealth of possible applications for the Lighthouse systems – one of its most interesting uses in the prison service relates to the fight against contraband. A popular place for inmates to stash drugs supplies is in the back of television sets. But quick thinking and a clever utilisation of Lighthouse technology has led to prisons now placing specially developed tamper destructible labels over the backs of the sets. That means it is possible to tell, at a glance, if the machine has been tampered with or not. (The seal is easily branded with the relevant HMP logos for maximum authenticity.)

But surely the greatest story to come out of this relationship between Lighthouse and HMP Ashwell is the impact it has had on inmates. The work invests participants with new skills and leads to an NVQ. It also addresses one of the hardest day-to-day problems prisoners face: boredom. For many inmates, this will be the first time they have had an opportunity to undertake genuinely worthwhile work – and it's a vital step back toward re-integrating with the outside world.

"This is a working prison – and we firmly believe in the importance of purposeful activity. Our inmates are given a number of opportunities for paid work – all of which leads to an NVQ1 qualification."

Jeff Bush, Instructional Officer HMP Ashwell

A long running solution

There is no reason why this relationship shouldn't run and run. It meets all of HMP Ashwell's criteria: it is self financing; it affords excellent opportunities for gainful employment (as well as potential follow-on career skills); it forges strong links with the wider prison community, and it does not exclude any sectors of the prison populace.

"We're very happy with the service we've had from Lighthouse. We've got everything we wanted – we have the capacity to produce thousands of signs for around sixteen prisons, and we've got a good source of purposeful employment for our inmates."

Jeff Bush, Industrial Officer, HMP Ashwell

This is clearly a relationship with multiple beneficiaries. HMP Ashwell has all the assurances of working with a very responsive partner; Lighthouse staff are always on hand to help as required.



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Innovative ideas

Ashwell inmates have become so proficient at using the sign and label making machines from Lighthouse that they can produce them to meet most specifications. The quality of their workmanship is so good that the prison has decided to start selling the service to sixteen other prisons.

It's a clever way of achieving multiple aims. First and foremost, it gives the inmates who operate the machines, and who design and print the signs, a genuine sense of worth in their achievements. More than that, it serves as a very useful resource for the prison service.

Now HMP Ashwell is able to produce and supply a variety of signage to required specifications within pre-agreed lead times. Everybody wins.