

# New study to explore impact of football-based Twinning Project on offenders

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The Twinning Project has announced the launch of ground-breaking new partnership with the University of Oxford, who will analyze the results of the Twinning Project's approach of using sport to tackle reoffending rates of prisoners in the UK.

Launched in autumn 2018 and supported by the Ministry of Justice and the UK's leading football bodies, the Twinning Project enables football clubs, supported by PE officers from the Prison Service, to deliver coaching, refereeing and other employability-based qualifications to prisoners to better prepare them for release and vitally to provide a route to paid employment.

The new study will help to provide evidence-based research to support both the Twinning Project and similar initiatives in future. The final results are expected between 2023-2025.

The University of Oxford's study is led by Dr. Martha Newson from the Centre for the Study of Social Cohesion at the School of Anthropology. The study will track reoffending rates of Twinning Project participants 12 months and 2 years after release and compare this with non-participants who are otherwise equivalent in terms of age, ethnic background, sentencing and other key variables. It will also involve conducting qualitative interviews, as well as quantitative, longitudinal surveys, with a subset of Twinning Project participants, to address how the project worked and the socio-cognitive mechanisms of why it was a success. Preliminary analyses are expected in 2021 and final reports in 2025.

Dr. Martha Newson said: "The Twinning Project is an amazing opportunity to use the hugely influential, tribal identities of British football for social good. Our research at Oxford investigates the psychology underlying social identities and extreme behaviors.

"Key to the Twinning Project's success, we believe, is offering offenders a lasting relationship with these football clubs. This will forge new, or strengthen existing, positive social identities that will be powerful enough to over-ride those criminal groups ex-offenders are likely to have been involved in prior to the project. We hope that the project will

connect people who otherwise often find themselves at the fringes of society, many without families, when leaving prison.

"What we're seeing with the Twinning Project is a nationwide step toward tackling the prison crisis. When we understand precisely how the project works, what the experience offers people at a cognitive level, we can start to re-use these tools in other cultures too."

Loughborough University will also be conducting a parallel study, led by Dr. Christopher Kay (Criminology and Social Policy) and Dr. Carolynne Mason (Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences).

David Dein MBE, former Vice Chairman of Arsenal Football Club and the Football Association, and founder of the Twinning Project, commented: "Establishing these partnerships with the University of Oxford and Loughborough University is an essential step in expanding and strengthening the Twinning Project to help people and communities across the UK.

"These studies will examine exactly what impact sport can have on changing the lives of offenders and offering them the second chance that prevents them from reoffending. We are delighted that these two prestigious universities will measure the material impact of the Twinning Project, enabling us, together with the Prison Service and the [football clubs](#), to tackle reoffending rates and bring about lasting change in the UK."

Provided by University of Oxford

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