

With imagination and energy



With The Restore Trust team which enables ex-offenders to access training and employment

The Revd Richard Pendlebury MBE DL High Sheriff of the County and City of Bristol 2024-2025

The role of High Sheriff is so multifaceted that a particular focus is very helpful during your year. Having spent the last 30 years establishing charities which have tackled poverty, homelessness and those who have offended, I chose to concentrate on initiatives which are involved in rehabilitation and prevention, including those that work with young people.

A key component in rehabilitation of those who have been in prison is employment. I visited The Restore Trust, a not for profit social enterprise which works to enable those who have come out of prison to get into employment by providing industry-relevant courses. For example, their ten day construction course gives students the knowledge and qualifications to apply for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme Labourer card. This health and safety qualification, which is paid for by The Restore Trust, makes them eligible to apply for work on a construction site. In addition, there are courses in hospitality and catering and a short course in warehousing which leads to a guaranteed interview. This impressive organisation extends its reach to anyone in the community who is experiencing barriers in accessing training and employment.

Another highlight has been participating in the celebration evenings of MentorMe, a project of local prison charity Sixty-One. MentorMe provides mentors for those leaving prison, working to enable them to achieve their goals following release. All the mentors are trained volunteers who engage in one-to-one sessions with the beneficiaries. At each celebration evening there is a meal, activities and an

opportunity for those on the programme and their mentors to share progress. During one of the evenings, I spoke to someone who had not returned to prison in six years, had a good job and a stable family life. He was full of praise for the support given by his mentor which had enabled him to stay away from the criminal justice system.

Bristol has a wide network of charities and initiatives working with children and young people particularly from challenging backgrounds. It has been an absolute pleasure to visit some of these over the last few months. I visited Bristol City Football Club and had the privilege of spending time with Bristol City Robins Foundation CEO, Daniel White, Chief Development Officer, James Edwards, Sam Downes and Jade Bailey. Sam and Jade lead the foundation's ADD-Mentor project, an extraordinary programme mentoring vulnerable young people in Bristol identified by the police as being at risk of going to prison. What is so special about the project is that Jade and Sam were both mentored by James and now bring their lived experience to support young people.

Bristol High Sheriffs have a fund managed by the Quartet Community Foundation and one of the projects supported this year is Community of



A forest school experience as part of Community of Purpose activities

Purpose CIC which provides a range of activities for children and young people. It was great pleasure to attend the celebration of their Break Free holiday activity programme. This addresses holiday hunger by providing high-quality activities and free food for young people aged 8-13 across areas with the most need in South Bristol. The celebration was held at Lawrence Weston Community Farm in Bristol and I had the opportunity to participate in a forest school with some of the children who have benefited from the programme. This early investment, I am certain, will lead to better outcomes for these young lives.

These are just a few of the highlights in my first six months which have been a privilege and a joy. I am particularly heartened that charities and initiatives involved in prevention and rehabilitation are now being driven by younger people with imagination and energy which bodes well for the future.



Celebrating with mentors and beneficiaries of the Sixty-One MentorMe programme