

Breaking the cycle of re-offending
Year 1 Progress report

Citizens Advice
& Law Centre

ACCESS²ADVICE

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CHARITABLE TRUST

The breaking the cycle of re-offending programme has 'blossomed' in this first year of your three year funding award. The enclosed Chart of Accounts clearly shows we have used your funding exclusively to establish the service, recruit and train prisoners to deliver our planned work to help them improve their prospects; to stay out of prison and build a future.

To-date we have over achieved on the outputs laid out in our request to you for funding. On our initial intake we trained fourteen prisoners to prepare for their parole and on the second intake we have helped 26 prisoners to prepare for either their release or their eligibility for paid work. Our surveying tells us:

75% left to start full time paid employment after less than 3 interviews everybody was actively seeking work

75% believe the programme helped a lot in getting prepared for work

Our largest items of expenditure during this year have been the costs of recruiting and supporting a sessional trainer and for a Project Manager to directly supervise the prisoners during their time on site. This has worked well. Our remaining expenditure has been spent on either the direct training costs or direct office and support costs for the project based on a full cost recovery model not dissimilar to that advocated by the Big Lottery.

Our trainer has worked with stakeholders to identify three training schemes with the broader aim of preparing leavers to gain work in both the Advice Giving sector and in the broader social sector namely:

Office and Client Administration Data
Input
Gateway Assessment for clients

Research using regional and national statistical evidence provided by Citizens Advice, jobcentre plus and the National Offender Management Scheme shows that these three key areas were identified as being the most likely to lead to paid work.

Our trainer has completed the building of five learning modules that relate directly to building skills and by the commencement of the second cohort of trainees we had strengthened the aims of the project by introducing tests both written and aural that lead to each successful candidate being awarded a certificate. Pictured here is Ben who, as a long term prisoner on the cusp of leaving for work gained employment in the Advice giving sector. Ben commented "My qualification as an Advisor has given me the opportunity to work with clients on welfare benefit entitlement completing my Record of Learning document also helped me at my interview".

Our first significant lessons learnt from this funded period was that we intended to use the prove it tool from the New Economics Foundation to help trainees record their progress. However, we found through consultation with trainees that the majority could not easily perceive the value in the story board and in conjunction with the trainees we have adopted a new progress record system that relies on trainees completing a series of the guided questionnaires designed to:

Confirm their level of competence on entry to the courses
mid way assessment of their personal development
end of cycle assessment of their distance travelled

From this we have built an impressive amount of qualitative data to support the quantitative success for the project such as:

87% believe they will have work within 6 months of leaving the programme

87% enjoyed taking part in the programme

over 60% believe most people will give them a chance and judge them on their present not their past behaviour

During this first year of our project a significant Impact your funding has made on our charity's work has been that prisoners were given the opportunity to build their skills by contributing to a contract to deliver the Debt Advice in a Pilot project operated by the National Offender Management Scheme. This work innovatively helped prisoners on our rehabilitation project to intervene in debt issues on behalf of other serving prisoners across a cluster of three prisons. These volunteers have been trained and supported and have acted on £1.9 million pounds of debt – crucially saving family breakdown through eviction and trauma.



Those trainees who directly contributed to this innovative debt project confirmed that:

93% believe the programme has provided them with new skills most leave the programme with better computer skills 61% leave the programme able to give generalist advice everybody leaves feeling very comfortable talking with colleagues at CA&LC 96% leave the programme feeling comfortable dealing with advice giving on the telephone, by letter, and in person and dealing with official communications

Our work in acting as a trusted placement agency to support ex-offenders after their release is gaining pace. Across the two cohorts of trainees we have confirmed that 'best practice' policies does not exclude ex-offenders from becoming generalist advisors across the wider Voluntary Sector. We have begun using the communications networks that links the sector to place our trainees as Generalist Advisors in Advice Giving after their release in their home localities. Thus far, we have been successful in placing four of our trained Generalist Advisors into similar roles around the country. Additionally, four are currently undertaking voluntary work in their local sector with a view to making job applications as they become available.

Our project has begun to make a broader impact both regionally and nationally. Regionally, we have hosted visits from the Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Scheme and been the subject regional reports and research principally from the Citizens Advice. On the National scene we have built close links with three Bureau who have expressed an interest in adopting our model.

Our work to support this National and regional interest will be underpinned by the upgrading of our Social return on Investment evaluation which will be completed during the first quarter of our second year of the project. This report will clearly show the social and financial gains made from our work. we will produce this evaluation report which could be used by other organisations who wish to enter this area.

Overview

During this first year we can demonstrate levels of success in all of the areas we identified in our bid. We have however, on three occasions, needed to remove individuals from the programme. The majority of these occasion have been because the trainee has taken paid work as part of the Released on Temporary Licence conditions imposed by the prison prior

to achieving their qualification. Only on one occasion have we been required to remove a prisoner from the scheme due to behavioural matters.

During a recent meeting with Stakeholders the group discussion led directly to providing help for more challenging prisoners. From this discussion we have set a date in October for a review of our recruitment procedures. We wish to ensure that our high success rates are not achieved by simply recruiting 'good prisoners'. The rehabilitation staff at HMP Sudbury have already agreed to identify some prisoners that due to their age, language barriers or length of their sentence would normally represent the most difficult cohort to train for employment. It is with this group and with your help that we will integrate additional challenges during the second year of your funding support.

Snapshot from our Leavers Report & Survey (11 Prisoners) dated July 2011:

87% felt they were given every possible opportunity and used it to the full
25% would have liked to have had the opportunity to continue working at CA&LC 25% particularly appreciated the opportunity to give back to the community and help people in need a further 25% especially highlighted the pleasure of working with positive people

what people attending the programme most valued from their training :

- Preventing Repossession of a Clients Home
- Self development
- Training as a Generalist Advisor
- Improving communication skills
- Changing the way I think and act
- Getting praised
- Getting a certification
- Getting to meet good people who give you the chance to change
- 62% did not want to leave the programme
- 50% left the programme as fully qualified GA
- 87% gained at least 1 qualification whilst working on the programme
- everybody made more than 5 new friends whilst working on the programme
- everybody enjoyed helping people with their problems
- everybody helped coach and mentor other people joining the programme
- everybody's primary goal is to get and keep paid work

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