

Background

In 2007/08 The Aldridge Foundation funded the pilot for The Prince's Trust 'Working One to One with Young Offenders' project. This report documents The Foundation's experience of the project.

Rod Aldridge has been associated with The Prince's Trust since 1993 and was a Trustee from 2001 to 2007. He is also a Patron being an initial funder and Chair of the advisory board for the development of The Trust's xl programme. As a result of this association The Aldridge Foundation was invited to attend a series of workshops facilitated by the innovation company What If, to develop a mentoring project which was the result of the 'Breaking the Cycle of Offending' seminar hosted by HRH The Prince of Wales.

During this early development phase The Aldridge Foundation met with Mark Johnson – author of Wasted and policy adviser of homelessness, drugs and criminal justice – the inspiration behind the innovative elements of the project.

What differentiated this mentoring scheme apart from a wide variety of others already on offer to young offenders was that it was to be delivered by ex-offenders, who had navigated the path back to successful living and could use this experience as a way of engaging with young people, offering support and guidance through personal experience.

The Aldridge Foundation was taken by this innovative approach and agreed to fund the pilot phase of the project on the understanding that match funding was secured. Rod Aldridge became Chair of the advisory board and further members of the Foundation were represented on the board, which also included representatives from HM Prison Service, Quinton House Project, Nacro, YMCA, West Mercia Probation Service and Clinks.

Lessons learned

The 'Working One to One with Young Offenders' was one of the first major projects funded by The Aldridge Foundation and therefore a number of key lessons were learned.

During this pilot phase The Aldridge Foundation provided **£155,000** of funding.

What worked well:-

- As part of the project a wide ranging training programme was developed for supporters and went beyond much of the training offered to mentors on other projects. Barry Greenberry, former Governor of HMP Guys Marsh, was so impressed by the training, developed by Mark Johnson and Lorraine Parry who runs The Quinton House Project, that he wanted it delivered to all of his members of staff to give them an insight into the catalysts for offending and anti-social behaviour.
- The supporters recruited as part of the first round of selection illustrated that huge latent potential of this group and desire to help those in similar circumstances to them using their own experiences. This was very much a part of their own rehabilitation process and by being educated on the catalysts for offending and anti-social behaviour during the training, many

were able to put a name to much of their past behaviour, aiding the process of rehabilitation.

- There were a number of lessons learned that will enable roll out of the project, in terms of the scope of the project, that can only help future recipients. This included identifying that not every young person could be followed from custody to community, as a result of geographical restrictions and custodial sentence timescales, and that the project needed to be more realistic in order to not raise the hopes of recipients.
- The 'Working One to One with Young Offenders' project was The Aldridge Foundation's first engagement in criminal justice and has provided an excellent platform. As a result of the project The Foundation has an excellent relationship with Mark Johnson. This partnership has resulted in a number of exciting developments, including an innovative seminar and report, *The User Voice of the Criminal Justice System*, (available on www.aldridgefoundation.com) an invitation to meet with Sir Gus O'Donnell, Cabinet Secretary, regarding PSA 16 and the foundation of a charity led by Mark Johnson to represent the voice of service users of criminal justice. However it has to be seen whether the user will be represented at future high level PSA 16 discussions.

Improvements needed

- Despite being a prerequisite for funding from The Aldridge Foundation, The Prince's Trust never obtained the full restricted match funding for the 'Working One to One with Young Offenders' pilot. In future we would be more insistent on funding being in place before starting the project.
- The pilot highlighted a number of concerns over the staffing structure and the budgetary implications for the project. While it is recognised that the supporters are unlike any volunteers the Trust currently employs and therefore are more staff intensive, the proportion of the budget assigned to staffing seemed to be disproportionate to the number of clients that the project reached. There appeared to be a disparity between how the centre and the region believed the project should be run and funded.
- The project management role was initially given to Mark Johnson without ensuring that Mark was trained to deliver it. In January 2008 another project manager was appointed, with Mark Johnson adopted an advisory role, by which point the pilot was into the delivery stage.
- From the outset, The Aldridge Foundation asked for a business model to be developed which would demonstrate how the programme would be delivered, branding, controlled,, endorsed, evaluated and rolled out. This was never obtained and resulted in decisions being taken on an ad hoc basis. The lack of a business case resulted in there being no set timescales for the proposed deliverables and there was no reporting structure to explain changes in direction of the project. The Foundation would in future insist that a business model this was put in place before sanctioning funding.
- During the first period of development the selection and training of supporters and delivery of the project – including arranging motivational speeches, matching young people and supporters and tracking correspondence – was managed by the Quinton House Project and Mark Johnson. As a result of

Mark's relationship with Governors of a number of prisons in the South West, no CRB checks were required for supporters, a significant step in ensuring that the project could move swiftly and effectively. However, once the management of the project was taken under the auspices of Prince's Trust HQ, CRB checks were enforced, which proved to be a lengthy process. As a result the supporters, who were fully trained and keen to use their new skills to help young people, were in limbo for a number of months, unable to fulfil the role for which they were selected.

- The original emphasis of the project was to help young people using the experience of those who had been through similar experiences. Once problems emerged regarding the delivery of the project, the emphasis seemed to change and training the supporters was seen as a satisfactory goal in itself. After a year, however, supporters had only met 4 young people at the gate, a key element of the original concept. Whilst the project may have helped a number of other young people, signposting them to other services, the fundamental tenet was for supporters and young offenders to meet face to face and provide support from their own personal experience. The emphasis seemed to change and the project lost its innovative element.
- To accompany the supporters a range of resources were to be developed as part of the development phase, which included an introductory DVD and a resettlement tool. Unfortunately, this aspect of the project, along with the DVD, was never completed which was disappointing as it could have been a very useful resource to have come from the project, reaching a much wider audience than just the project's clients, while still maintaining that unique feature of the project, the inspirational stories which serve to foster change within the reader. It is disappointing that time and money was effectively channelled into work which had no outcome.

Progress in the South West

The South West pilot project, funded by The Aldridge Foundation, has:

- Delivered 30 inspirational talks in prison
- Reached an overall audience of 300 young offenders
- Offered information, advice and guidance to 50 young offenders
- Matched 15 young offenders with a one-to-one supporter
- Exchanged almost 100 letters between supporters and clients
- Met 4 clients at the gate on their release
- Supported 7 clients in the community following their release
- Made links with other organisations for referral, further support and help for our clients

Although a number of these figures are impressive and have reached a significant number of young people, hopefully inspiring change, the key indicator is the number of clients met at the gate. The original concept was one of custody to community, a through the gate approach.

At the 'Breaking the Cycle of Offending' seminar, young people highlighted that despite the positive changes made in prison, it was often at the gate where this

went wrong, with the drug dealer waiting or the off licence round the corner. As key aspect was for supporters to meet clients at the gate and ensure that the difficult first few days after release were made easier by support offered by The Trust's volunteers.

However, during a year of the pilot only 4 clients have been met at the gate on their release and despite all the benefits received by the supporters, this is the critical success factor on which the project should be assessed.

Furthermore, if around 30 supporters were trained and only 15 young people were matched with a supporter, then a number of supporters were selected and trained for a role that did not materialise and can only serve to increase disillusion within an already fragile group.

Independent Evaluation

The Aldridge Foundation welcomes the fact that The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation has agreed to fund an independent evaluation of the project, which will be carried out over the next 18 months. The Aldridge Foundation was part of the selection process, in which a suitable institution was identified in October 2008, although the evaluation has yet to begin as negotiations are still ongoing.

The evaluation of the project is of great importance to its successful roll out and needs to be begun as soon as possible.

Making the Case: One to One support

As a result of the 'Working One to One with Young Offenders' project The Prince's Trust, working in partnership with other third sector organisations, and supported by The Aldridge Foundation, began work on a campaign 'Making the Case: One to One Support for Young Offenders'.

Members of The Foundation attended a seminar hosted by The Prince's Trust bringing together mentoring providers in the criminal justice sector. The aim of the event was to explore how the voluntary and community sector could work more effectively together to provide a more consistent service to young people in custody and a report was subsequently published in June 2008.

The Aldridge Foundation supports this campaign, but is particularly interested in promoting mentoring support provided by those with experience of criminal justice, the key theme that emerged from the 'Breaking the Cycle of Offending' seminar which kick-started the Trust's work specifically with young offenders. Rather than the current isolated and segmented approach to peer mentoring, The Foundation would like to see interested parties collaborating to produce an overall picture of where activity is occurring and to assess where and how it is most effective. It is important to establish this baseline so that future progress can be made.