
Report to: Sefton Safer Communities Partnership

Date of Meeting: 13 December 2018

Subject: Merseyside Offender Mentoring Project

1. Background

1.1.1 The purpose of this background report is to showcase the success of Merseyside Offender Mentoring Project and to launch its recently developed video.

1.1.2 The Merseyside Offender Mentoring Project was originally launched as Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (Sefton CVS) Informal Mentoring Project in May 2011, as one of two pilots² awarded by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in England, Merseyside. The project has since that time gone from strength to strength and is currently funded by a range of agencies and charitable sources including the Big Lottery Fund, the Steve Morgan Foundation and the John Armitage Charitable Trust. With a base within HMP Liverpool, the project works closely with Merseyside Police and Merseyside Probation Service and has recently extended its services into HMP Risley. The current Lottery Funding will cease at the end of June 2019.

1.1.3 Merseyside Offender Mentoring project operates in the local authority areas of Liverpool, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens, the principal aim being to engage with offenders and ex-offenders to prevent re-offending by:

- providing them with volunteer mentoring support to help them successfully resettle in the community;
- diverting them away from crime and pursue new futures by developing positive relationships and by assisting them to identify and achieve individual goals and targets;
- assisting them with finding stable accommodation, accessing training, employment, substance and mental health services and improving family and personal relationships

1.1.4 Sefton CVS received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2015 for the Offender Mentoring Project and the current Co-ordinator has been personally shortlisted for the prestigious 'Butler Trust Award' for his work on reducing re-offending in the last 8 years.

2. How we Deliver the Service

2.2.1 A Merseyside Offender Mentoring Prison Peer Mentor, (this being a serving prisoner within the prison), meets with the men on induction to the prison to advise

them of the service and the personal support that the project can offer them when they are released back into the community. The project worker interviews them whilst in custody to identify areas in which they need support. They will then be visited and mentored by the project worker whilst still in custody. It is during these sessions that a positive relationship is formed prior to release and enables the project worker to liaise with probation and other services in the prison such as housing, training and drug and alcohol services to avoid any duplication within the prison setting. This early work whilst in custody is crucial in ensuring the right kind of services are made available to the young person at the earliest opportunity on release to achieve positive reintegration into the community, continuity and ultimately a reduction in re-offending.

2.2.2 On the day they are released from custody the project worker meets the mentee at the prison with the assigned volunteer mentor. Where this is not possible a meeting is arranged to take place within three working days. Some people on release can find themselves homeless or information about them is not adequately recorded. The project workers overcome these early problems by contacting probation officers, holding three way meetings at the earliest opportunity to agree a holistic package of support, ensuring all relevant agencies are made aware of our involvement with the mentee and their support needs to minimise duplication. After release the volunteer mentor meets on a regular basis with the mentee and work commences on supporting them to overcome any barriers they are facing, work on achieving their goals and successfully reintegrate back into the community and change their offending behaviour.

3. **Outcomes**

3.3.1 In terms of success the project has demonstrated consistent success in reducing re-offending. In 2014/15 only 17.9% of offenders who engaged with the project re-offended compared to the national average of 60%, in 2015/16 only 10% of offenders supported re-offended compared to the national average of 44%, in 2016/17 only 15% have re-offended and in the last year only 18% re-offended compared to a 44% national average as reported by the MoJ in April 2017.

3.3.2 In the last twelve months the project engaged with 593 offenders in custody and on release 213 of which received support from a volunteer mentor. 141 offenders out of 228 have reported improved health and wellbeing, (62%), 114 have accessed substance misuse services, (54%), 126 accessed health and wellbeing services, (59%), 146 accessed education, training employment or volunteer placements, (69%) and 152 reported improved life skills and an increase in their confidence, (71%).

4. **Social Value and Investment**

4.4.1 We have recruited and trained 260 volunteer community mentors in the last four years who give freely of their time to support ex-offenders to successfully resettle back into the community and reduce their offending behaviour. In terms of value for money our volunteer mentors have in the last four years freely given at total number of 27,782 hours in supporting their mentee's to turn away from crime, which using the Sefton average earnings over the same period has a social value investment of £364,617*. (*Based on Sefton Council Economic Performance Report, 2017).

4.4.2 Based on the methodology used in Home Office Research Study 217 “The Economic and Social Costs of Crime” and using the revised estimates of cost published earlier this year, we estimate that the cost per crime committed by offenders for whom we provide a mentoring service is £3,097 (based on the profile of previous offences committed). This figure can then be used as a measure of the relative financial benefit of our project in preventing further offending compared to the standard approach. During the reporting period July 2016 to June 2017 228 offenders engaged with the project; that is they were matched with a volunteer mentor who worked with them to address issues and needs. Of that 228 only 34 (15%) re-offended. Based on national averages for reoffending for that period it may have been expected that 137 (60%) would have committed a further offence. Based on those figures the MOMS Project prevented the commission of at least 103 crimes, assuming each re-offender committed just 1 further crime, at a saving of just less than £320,000 in one 12 month period.

5. Recommendations

5.1.1 Members of the Community Safety Partnership are recommended to :

- Note the background report, the success of the project and the content of the video
- Promote the video through their established communications teams and social media
- Support Sefton CVS in seeking to secure additional funding beyond June 2019.