

PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OFFENDERS

GROWING SUSTAINABLE WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

A CASE STUDIES SERIES

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The views expressed in these case studies are those of the respective organisations and the publication of the case studies should not be viewed as an endorsement of these organisations and their work by the Home Office and Ministry of Justice. The data and statistics presented within the case studies have been locally collected and cannot be verified by the Home Office, Clinks and Social Firms UK.

Background

Low qualifications and lack of employment are recognised within the Government's strategy for *Transforming Rehabilitation* as key social issues related to re-offending.*

Some local areas have already developed social enterprises as one way to overcome barriers around the employability of ex-offenders. However at the time of writing there is currently very little that brings together learning or examples of effective practice to assist others in doing this.

Recognising this gap, the Home Office commissioned a short term programme of work undertaken in February and March 2013 by Clinks and Social Firms UK.

The programme set out to explore and assess the role of social enterprises in enabling both adult and young offenders to access training and employment opportunities. The results provide a body of work that will significantly contribute to cross-Government thinking about how to embed and support social enterprises working with offenders. The programme included two elements:

- The development and publication of this series of twenty Case Studies. The social enterprises featured in the case study series were invited, following a competitive application process, to write about their own experiences and insights into the opportunities and barriers confronting their development and sustainability.
- A Summary Report which brings together the key learning about developing and sustaining social enterprises offering employment and employability training to offenders.

Together they provide a valuable resource for newly established social enterprises, for those planning to establish social enterprises, for police, prisons and probation providers, for Police and Crime Commissioners, for local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) partnerships, and for policy makers.

These resources also complement previous work undertaken in partnership between Clinks and the Home Office aimed at increasing the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector's involvement in local IOM arrangements.

* Ministry of Justice. May 2013. *Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform*: www.justice.gov.uk/transforming-rehabilitation

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CASE STUDY

The South Wales Experience

Organisation: Inside Job Recruitment Limited

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Introduction

This case study describes the development and early stages of operation of Inside Job Recruitment Limited (IJR), a new social enterprise based near Bridgend that was formed to help offenders from Wales to find employment on their release from prison. This study describes the progress of the social enterprise in developing and implementing an effective programme to motivate, train and support prisoners and to help find them employment on release.

So far we have delivered personal development training to thirty-one serving prisoners in Cardiff prison. We have provided business and self-employment training for prisoners who have been moved from Parc prison to Prescoed prison, prior to their release. We have found volunteering and work placements for two prisoners on temporary release. We have formed an agreement with one major employer potentially to take on ex-offenders and we are assisting in the creation of one social enterprise to be run by ex-offenders, for the benefit of ex-offenders.

We are still developing IJR but our recent experience of trying to establish a social enterprise in this context enables us to review the problems that have slowed our progress and illustrate ways in which we have responded.

Background

Inside Job Recruitment Limited is an organisation dedicated to helping prisoners and ex-offenders to find employment. We were set up in July 2012 by a small group of people with long experience of delivering training within disadvantaged groups in South Wales, including working with serving prisoners prior to their release. We have five Directors with experience of working in social enterprises in South Wales; providing skills and personal development training in deprived areas; working with prisoners and ex-offenders; working with, advising and mentoring private and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations; and providing excellent connections with the construction and mining industries. We anticipate that we will also be able to provide links to potential employers outside South Wales for those of our clients who require help in securing employment but cannot return to their home areas due to the nature of their crimes. We also have knowledge of the five male prisons in South Wales and one female prison in Gloucestershire that accommodates Welsh women. As a result, we were well aware of the challenges the project presented.

IJR intends to build on our experience of working in the deprived areas of South Wales, particularly the Heads of the Valleys and surrounding area, and to work in partnership with our large number of contacts in VCSE sector organisations that we have established over many years.

Although work started in late 2012, we had an official launch in February 2013 at The Clink restaurant at HMP Cardiff, to which we invited prison governors, potential employers, representatives from VCSE sector organisations, and ex-offenders that IJR directors have supported in the past. The event was well attended and attracted some publicity. It gave us the opportunity to explain what we had to offer in detail and to cement some partnership working with other organisations.

Our experience: Inside Job Recruitment

The key aim for IJR is to find meaningful jobs for offenders and to raise their aspirations, helping them to access quality jobs. We will also work across the public, private and VCSE sectors, establishing links with employers. The process will feature several elements in the journey to employment:

- Addressing aspirations and attitudes to employment of serving prisoners prior to their release, by delivering personal development workshops within the prisons. The workshops are based on personal development courses previously delivered to deprived groups in South Wales, with significant success.
- Addressing prisoners' basic skills needs where necessary, by delivering workshops including pre-employment and personal financial management.
- Developing vocational skills by offering prisoners some training prior to release followed by work placements or volunteering opportunities with training for prisoners released on temporary licence (ROTL).

We expected that there would be difficulties devising and delivering vocational training with the limited resources available in prisons. We also knew it would be difficult to match potential employers' requirements with the skills the prisoners have to offer and to find existing employers willing to take on ex-offenders.

We have designed an approach that provides a range of routes to employment:

- Setting up new social enterprises where we can create new jobs that require skills that ex-offenders are likely to have. This will create work experience and provide references for subsequent jobs.
- Operating an employment agency where we employ ex-offenders as agency workers so that we can provide reassurance to companies by taking on the employer's liability. We recognise that IJR is not yet able to operate as an employment agency and we are in the process of establishing partnerships with existing local mainstream employment agencies to develop this facility.
- Encouraging ex-offenders to consider self-employment or the creation of their own business, delivering business start up training prior to release, assembling funding packages, and providing continuing support and mentoring. Research for a business idea is difficult for serving prisoners and we are aware of the need for a high level of support to develop the business proposals.
- Offering mentoring to ex-offenders starting new jobs, and liaising with the employers to identify potential problems and to work to solve them as part of the package offered to potential employers.

Key learning

We have set out below a number of points describing the good, the bad, and the unexpected, which we think others could usefully learn from.

1. The launch for the project in The Clink restaurant, Cardiff was a great success because it was done after we had established a number of key partnerships and gained some experience. We achieved some private sector sponsorship for the launch, which helped reinforce our confidence in the project.

2. Clearance from the Ministry of Justice for working in prisons takes an unpredictable length of time. In our experience of just a few applications, clearance has been as short as three weeks and as long as five and a half months. This unpredictability means that the roll-out of the project has been delayed.
3. In one prison, the staff are well acquainted with what we do and offer prisoners the option to attend our workshops as part of the education assessment. This means that we are reaching the more difficult prisoners and that we are not cherry-picking the easiest groups or only working with those who are most likely to find gainful employment anyway.
4. We are also aware that the Ministry of Justice will not normally allow ex-offenders to work in prisons. However, this prevents us from introducing appropriate role models and mentors for serving prisoners prior to their release.
5. The facilities provided for our training within the prisons is very variable. In one prison where there is a supportive Governor and staff, we have been provided with a dedicated training room, office and computer. More typically, we are given any room that happens to be available, giving the impression that our project is both transient and not particularly welcome.
6. Different prisons have different ways of managing the opportunities offered by the VCSE sector and are at different stages of developing strategies to build these relationships. One prison seems to have a number of options for using VCSE organisations but does not appear to have decided on any particular route and has no clear direction.
7. Within South Wales, longer serving prisoners are moved to HMP Prescoed, a Category D (open) prison, if there is room, prior to their release, and they can then apply for release on temporary licence. We need to follow prisoners if they move and it would help to have full disclosure of the plans for these longer serving prisoners so that we can be aware of the realistic prospects and timescales for individuals' temporary release. Otherwise we could inadvertently reinforce a prisoner's over-optimistic expectations of a release date. We also need information to make sure that we are aware of any inappropriate jobs or locations for a particular prisoner. As we are currently working with prisoners who are serving sentences of less than three months, timing is a key issue.
8. For prisoners serving shorter sentences, we find that there is no effective assistance with finding accommodation on release, which makes it difficult for them to attend courses and apply for jobs. As a result we have brought forward a planned project to work with housing associations and others to find accommodation for our clients. We are currently assisting eleven prisoners with finding somewhere to live on their release, which will enhance their prospects of employment. We also hope to be able to source recycled furniture and household goods to help clients to get established in their new homes.
9. Prisoners are automatically put on the Work Programme at the time of their release. We are not convinced that this is always appropriate or effective, and the requirements of being on the Work Programme can conflict with our on-going work with individuals.

