

MOSAIC

A case study of volunteering in a mentoring project

June 2016



Valuing volunteers in prison

Summary

Mosaic recruits volunteer mentors to support young people before and after their release from prison. This case study will be especially interesting to readers who wish to:

- establish a mentoring service in multiple prisons
- build robust volunteer recruitment and training procedures
- adapt their service model to lessen the time demands placed on volunteers by security vetting.

Introduction to Mosaic

Founded by HRH The Prince of Wales in 2007, Mosaic's mentoring programmes create opportunities for young people growing up in our most deprived communities. Mosaic's vision is for all young people to be supported to realise their potential. With the help of volunteer mentors acting as role models, we aim to bridge the gap between aspirations and attainment. By linking young people with inspirational role models in this way, we boost their confidence, self-efficacy and long-term employability.



Figure 1: HRH The Prince of Wales hearing from Mosaic mentee Mohammed Ahmed and mentor Sadia Ahmed at a visit to HMP Leeds in September 2015.

Mosaic delivers mentoring programmes to four groups of beneficiaries: primary school students; secondary school students; young ex-offenders; and young people on the International Leadership Programme. This case study will focus on young ex-offenders and the mentors that work with them.

Overview of Mosaic's ex-offender programme

Mosaic has an accredited 'through the gate' one-to-one ex-offender mentoring programme, developed in response to the increasing numbers of young Muslim males in custody in England and Wales. Whilst this programme has a strong focus on Muslims, it is not exclusively for Muslim prisoners and has a diverse group of beneficiaries. The aim, in common with all Mosaic's programmes, is to improve the confidence, self-efficacy and employability of participants; however the ex-offender programme includes an emphasis on reducing re-offending.

The need for Mosaic's work is as relevant as ever. Baroness Young's recent review, aimed at improving the outcomes for young black and/or Muslim men in the Criminal Justice System, highlighted the disproportionate number of Muslims in prison, accounting for 13.4% of the prison population compared with 4.8% of the population (based on the 2011 Census). In London, these figures have been known to top 35% in some prisons.

Mosaic currently operates nationally in six regions of the UK: London, the South East, the West Midlands, the North West, Yorkshire and Glasgow. With our work in Glasgow launched only in September 2015, we currently have a mentoring presence in 12 prisons across our other regions. They are as follows:

- **London and South East:** HMP Belmarsh, HMP Brixton, HMP/YOI Isis, HMP Pentonville, HMYOI Feltham, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Rochester, HMP Woodhill
- **West Midlands:** HMP/YOI Brinsford
- **North West:** HMP Manchester, HMP Styal (pilot scheme with women)
- **Yorkshire:** HMP Wealstun, HMP Leeds

We are also currently looking at piloting the programme in a women's prison (HMP Styal) in our North West region.

In the academic year 2015/16, Mosaic is working to a target of 100 one-to-one mentoring matches. This is to provide the equivalent of tier 1 and 2 resettlement support through a person-centred approach, although Mosaic is not part of any Community Rehabilitation Company supply chains. Mosaic, through its voluntary mentors – the majority of whom are professionals and in employment – offers advice and guidance.

In November 2014, with the help of the then Justice Secretary Chris Grayling MP, Mosaic launched an [employability initiative](#) to offer practical routes to employment opportunities for our beneficiaries, with our partners at Mitie, Roast Restaurant and Millwall Football Club. This helps extend Mosaic's resettlement support to tiers 2 and 3. Whilst an important development for our beneficiaries, this also provides more incentive for our prison partners to work around the obstacles that could prevent them from working with us. These obstacles will be discussed in more detail throughout this case study.

Beneficiaries

Mosaic's service users are:

- aged 18-35 at the beginning of the mentoring relationship
- predominantly male young offenders in adult prisons and usually but not exclusively self-declared Muslims¹
- not convicted of a sexual assault and not convicted of or under investigation for any terrorism-related activity
- eligible for release back in to the local community
- not liable to deportation.

Using these criteria, each prison liaises with Mosaic's Prisons Coordinator, to ensure appropriate prisoners are referred to the Mosaic programme.

The role of volunteer mentors

Mosaic's professionally-trained volunteer mentors meet prisoners between three and six months before their release, to establish a relationship which continues into the individual's release and resettlement in the community. The mentors offer wide-ranging practical assistance such as helping prisoners to secure housing and employment, and are trained to offer signposting to help mentees address needs beyond the scope of the service offered by Mosaic, as well as to support their mentees to engage with services they are signposted to.

The programme involves a one-to-one mentoring relationship for 12 months, with an approximate commitment of one to two hours per month. The mentors are therefore expected to visit their mentees twice a month for six months inside the prison and six months in the community.

¹ 80% of Mosaic referrals have been young men who are Muslim, and 20% have been non-Muslim. Mosaic broadened the client group in line with the introduction of resettlement prisons after the introduction of Community Rehabilitation Companies and the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda.

Volunteer recruitment and training

Mosaic's mentoring opportunities are publicised through a myriad of ways including via social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook); high profile visits to promote the programme (most recently a visit by Mosaic's Founder HRH The Prince of Wales to HMP Leeds); online and print press coverage; and through business contacts and partners. These are all intended to direct prospective mentors – Mosaic targets mentors with strong professional backgrounds - to the Mosaic website, where all of the information about the ex-offender programme is laid out, including impact case studies. Prospective mentors can then sign-up on the website, with the Prisons Coordinator taking each individual query forward.

Speaking to the volunteer and giving them clear information after the initial interest is an important first step to assess suitability for the role. They are asked why they want to volunteer with this client group, and we explain the levels of commitment required and that there might be delays given the nature of prison-based work.

Mosaic's training for ex-offender mentors is a whole weekend commitment and it is therefore important to offer volunteers flexibility by giving a range of dates. Following a phone conversation, prospective mentors are sent further information about the role, along with a detailed expression of interest form to provide more context about the user group they will be working with. As well as providing information, these steps are also part of the selection process, allowing us to ensure that the quality of our volunteer mentors is as high as possible. The final selection takes place at the weekend training itself, where Mosaic and professional training company Interchange People Development deliver the training, which is accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation's Approved Provider Scheme.

We have recently made a change in the way we place volunteers in prisons, in order to address lengthy security vetting processes and cater more specifically to prisons' needs. While volunteers were previously allocated to prisons after their training, we have now built stronger relationships with individual prisons, allowing us to train a cohort of volunteers at each prison with confidence that we will be able to place them in the prison once trained. These individual relationships with each prison allow us to demonstrate more clearly how our mentors can address the needs of their prisoners.

Volunteer mentors sign a written agreement covering expectations for how they will approach the role and what information they will pass to Mosaic and the prison. This is co-signed with the mentee to ensure both are aware of each other's commitments to the mentoring relationship.

At this stage, successful mentors will complete a mentor registration form, and will be matched to a prisoner from the prison that they have trained at. Mosaic and our link contact in the prison (often from the Chaplaincy, Offender Management Unit, or the Head of Reducing Reoffending) are notified when the first mentoring meeting happens.

Overcoming delays with security vetting

Security vetting was a significant problem for pre-release meetings between mentors and mentees, as obtaining security clearance for mentors tended to take between three and six months across all our regions. This would not only lead to mentors dropping out of the programme, but would also prevent some potential beneficiaries from accessing the programme due to a lack of security-cleared mentors.

To address these problems, we began arranging mentoring meetings through legal visits, meaning that mentors would no longer need security clearance (although they are still required to have an enhanced DBS certificate). To avoid delays in receiving DBS certificates, we ask volunteers to complete their forms during the training weekend, with support from Mosaic's Prisons Coordinator.

Legal visits unfortunately still have their downsides. The timeslots are inflexible, meaning that mentors are less able to arrange their volunteering around their other commitments. This affects our ability to attract a wider pool of mentors. In addition to this, prisoners often have negative perceptions of legal visits, meaning that mentors can be initially viewed with mistrust. We work with our link contacts inside the prison to communicate to beneficiaries that their legal visit will be with a Mosaic mentor rather than a solicitor and is not negative in nature. However, there have been instances where this hasn't been communicated effectively, giving the mentor a bigger task in building trust with their mentee.

Volunteer support arrangements

Both the mentor and beneficiary attend a debrief meeting within 24 hours of their first mentoring meeting; the mentor with the Mosaic Prisons Coordinator and the beneficiary with Mosaic's link contact inside the prison. The mentor will then complete a log to capture what has happened in the meeting, what will happen next, and arrange for the next meeting to take place, with copies of the email going to both the link prison contact and the Prisons Coordinator. This allows us to monitor progress and provide any assistance when required.

During the weekend training, we look very closely at boundaries and safeguarding issues around vulnerable adults; all mentors are strictly advised to conduct their post-release mentoring sessions

in public places, for example. We stress that Mosaic is a mentoring initiative and not a befriending one and that mentors might be let down given the nature of our user group, who are often transitioning into a very difficult set of circumstances. Mentors inform the Prisons Coordinator of where and when the meeting will take place, and each meeting is followed up with a debrief phone call. The Prisons Coordinator also reviews the logs that mentors have to fill in to identify risks and work with mentors to address these.

Ensuring a good relationship with prisons

Part of the unique appeal of Mosaic is that we are not inside the Offender Management Unit and that we bring in pools of volunteers who otherwise would not be interacting with prisoners. While being based outside the prison can create difficulties in raising awareness of the organisation within prison, Mosaic attempts to remedy this through regular contact.

Mosaic manages its relationships with prisons through non-legally binding Memorandums of Understanding, outlining the expectations and intentions of both parties to secure the best possible mentoring experience for beneficiaries, and also the number of beneficiaries that will be matched to a Mosaic mentor. They also name link contacts within the prison for Mosaic. They are signed by Mosaic's Head of Operations and a senior member of the prison's staff team, and reviewed every six months.

Responsibility for strategic relationships with prisons lies with Mosaic Regional Managers, who also manage relationships with other partners such as schools and businesses. This allows prisons to feel a wider sense of engagement with Mosaic and to network with other Mosaic partners.

Having a named link contact within the prison enables us to have an open relationship with our prison partners and to feed back any problems we face, which have in most cases been resolved quickly and efficiently. Some difficulties have arisen in relation to staffing changes, and the redeployment of link contacts into new roles without Mosaic being informed. This can lead to fewer or inappropriate referrals. Resolving these issues through meetings with the Governor or Head of Reducing Re-offending can take months in some cases.

Lessons learned from the Mosaic programme

We have learned a number of lessons in running the Mosaic mentoring programme in prisons:

- **The importance of volunteer involvement:** Prisoners can often feel let down by the system, or feel as though society has given up on them. We have found that beneficiaries appreciate volunteers giving up their time because they want to help; this perception of altruism is particularly important for our user group, many of whom have experienced ostracisation from communities in which going to prison is taboo.
- **Flexibility supports volunteering:** Mentors have commitments other than their volunteering, which they often have to prioritise. A better understanding of volunteers' time commitments and increased flexibility within the prison system would increase the ability of volunteers to positively impact the lives of prisoners and help to reduce re-offending.
- **An efficient support structure is vital:** Having a pool of volunteers alone does not work; an organisation must have excellent systems and structures in place to deal with the complexity of the prison system, to work with the unpredictability of a vulnerable user group, and to provide the necessary support to volunteers. Mosaic has developed this structure to provide best practice standards across Mosaic programmes and support current and future team members in ensuring consistency in delivery.
- **Expertise improves services:** Mosaic uses the expertise of its Ex-Offender Guidance Panel, including experts in the field such as former Attorney General Dominic Grieve MP, and local leadership groups. This has allowed us to seek broader support in addressing specific barriers in prisons.
- **Volunteers should be celebrated:** Mosaic regularly acknowledges and celebrates volunteering efforts through a monthly Mosaic Mentor Hero of the Month celebration, as well as regular thank you events. This recognition of volunteers could be adopted more broadly and publicly by government, especially given the value added by their volunteering in the prisons sector.

"We cannot go on with a situation where thousands of prisoners are released onto the streets every year with no guidance or support, and are simply left to reoffend. Many prisoners have had fractured childhoods, addictions, exposure to violence and a lack of positive role models. Mentors can't unpick all of that. But through organisations like Mosaic they can give offenders a fair chance of staying on the straight and narrow by being a wise friend, supporting them with finding a job or somewhere to live."

(Chris Grayling MP, former Secretary of State for Justice)



Figure 2: Mosaic mentors in the West Midlands connecting during one of our end of year celebration events, where they share mentoring experiences and inspire a new year of mentoring sign-ups.

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