

Community Chaplaincy focus groups

17th October 2017

Engaging with clients

- Start the relationship a long **time** before release
 - Feltham suggest 6 months before release.
 - Others no sure there is a correlation.
 - All acknowledge this would be an ideal scenario.
 - Giving time for planning.
 - Gives mentors time too.
- Make sure the client **understands** what mentoring is ie
 - That the client needs to take responsibility
 - That community chaplaincy offers scaffolding.
 - That the mentor 'walks alongside'.
- Make good **connections** with wider social networks
 - Family and friends
 - Offender manager
 - Other agencies
 - Question of resources – both community chaplaincy and offender manager.
 - Depends on individual circumstances.
 - Trust / collaboration.
- **Matching** – strength of relationship
 - Time
 - Distance
 - 'Chemistry' between people
 - Right person at right time.
- Are the clients serious/**sincere**? – how can we tell?
 - Need to know who they are
 - How client-led are we?
 - What is their motivation?
 - What is their attitude?
 - Need to listen the client and really hear – over time.
 - Build a picture of the person.
 - Are they open? Honest? Do they share?
 - Be prepared to be surprised! – sometimes people you think aren't sincere are.

- **Demonstrate that you care**
 - Make sure the client knows you are there for them.
 - Show commitment
 - Persistence.
 - Perseverance.
 - Don't give up on people.

- **Find a reason for the individual to change**
 - Takes time.
 - Think about their skills (even those associate with criminal activity).
 - Turn their skills around.
 - Find a 'hook'.
 - Focus on the future.
 - Focus on 'who do you want to be'.

- **Don't despair – people do 'reappear'**
 - There's lots going on in people's lives
 - People may reappear after a crisis.
 - Some people need more time to work out they need support.
 - Be patient.
 - Don't take it to heart – don't take 'disappearance' personally.

- **Don't worry about short term targets (eg from funders)**
 - We are in it for the **long haul**.
 - Need to explain to funders that our work is long-term – and not about quick-wins. – Change the targets.
 - 'Planted a seed' – may never see the impact we have.

Recruiting and retaining volunteers

a) Recruiting

- Deliver talks to faith and community groups
- Work with volunteer bureau
- Advertise on www.doit.org
- Have a couple of recruitment drives per year rather than constant recruitment
- Seek ways of recruiting men aged 20-40yrs who are often under-represented
- Seek volunteers with first-hand experience
- New volunteers shadow experienced volunteers/workers

b) Retaining

- Good handovers - paid worker and volunteer meet together with the client, and plan support so that there is continuity
- Make suitable matches between volunteer and client – consider gender, experience, age, capacity.
- Seek resources from the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and possibly get accreditation.
- Don't waste volunteers' time!
- Identify volunteer availability and rota accordingly
- Invite volunteers to get involved in office work when not matched to a client – retain their interest
- Workers check in with volunteers before and after meetings
- Admin worker supports volunteers with paperwork to make this less arduous
- WhatsApp Group for volunteers to improve communication
- Regular training sessions for volunteers – including bringing in external speakers
- Volunteers to act as ambassadors – speaking to faith and community groups.

Fundraising target / action point: recruit for a volunteer coordinator – this person will oversee volunteer recruitment and training and provide ongoing support to volunteers.

Meeting urgent resettlement needs

Key issue is **HOUSING**. Many clients face street homelessness on release or move to unsuitable temporary accommodation. Housing stock is a real issue in many areas and getting our clients prioritised with council housing departments can be challenging.

Other pressing needs include: benefits, employment, mental and physical health, and connection with faith and community groups.

As Community Chaplaincy we play a key role in carrying on positive work of Prison Chaplains in the community. Where clients have engaged with faith in prison, this can be a priority area on release to ensure that positive aspirations are maintained. Spiritual support can provide a huge source of strength, as can the sense of community that can be created by connecting with a faith group.

There is potential to work with faith groups to address the housing crisis for our clients.

There are numerous small-scale examples of charities and faith groups buying/renting accommodation and then making it available to clients, along with a level of support. This model not only increases the available local housing options, but it also creates an environment where as well as housing, people are also connected to the local community, increasing their social capital.

Possible partner agencies for housing provision include:

- Date Palm Project – for Muslim clients
- Hope into Action
- Emerging Futures
- Green Pastures
- Stepping Stones
- Out for Good

Emmaus provides communal living and opportunity to work on social enterprises such as furniture restoration.

Community Chaplaincy member Restart (part of Saltbox) provides supported housing for approx. 90 clients through subletting agreements with local landlords in the Stoke-on-Trent area.

Other Community Chaplaincies providing housing include:

- Community Chaplaincy Norfolk – through the Genesis Housing Project
- Yellow Ribbon Community Chaplaincy – in partnership with Hope into Action and Green Pastures
- C2C Social Action – financed through Stepping Stones

Could Community Chaplaincy housing provision be expanded? Perhaps through partnerships with local faith groups who would work alongside to invest in housing provision?

Raising Local Awareness

WHY

- Gain Volunteers
- Gain Local Donations – for funds and to impress grant makers
- Give a voice to those who have been imprisoned
- Community Healing and Education
- Deal with prejudice (attempts to sweep under the carpet) enabling re-engagement of ex-prisoners and the community
- Identify / Enable Communities for people to belong to (→ Social Capital)

- Relationship and respect from local prison
- Gain referrals from families and friends

- Job Opportunities (thus target employers)
- Respected and listened to by a range of professionals (including for example Mental Health)

WITH WHOM / THROUGH WHAT

- Volunteer Centres
- Churches, Mosques, other groups e.g. Woman's Institutes
 - Check that you are aware of those already likeminded: e.g. RUAC, Alpha inspired, some black led
 - Note your involvement in Foodbanks will lead you to likeminded supporters & some users where you have lost contact
- University Volunteer Fairs
 - Advantage brings youth to volunteer pool
 - Needs management to ensure volunteers with consistency and commitment to be worthwhile – e.g. WYCCP
- Welcome Directory – **Use and Encourage Membership**

- Past Users – to affirm them and engage their support

- Social Media e.g. Twitter, Facebook – recommendation look at WYCCP Facebook
- Personal Contact is great – particularly if you have someone with you with lived prison experience
- Local Press, Local Radio
- GIGS – Sponsored Walks

- Employers (for job opportunities)
- Engage with other agencies and professionals

TIPS

- Have Quality Success Stories
- Invest in leaflets / flyers
- Get simple training for media relations and interviews

FINAL TIP

To share the work and make it more effective

- Involve and make use of the voices of
 - Users / ex-users with lived experience
 - Volunteers