

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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## ANNUAL REPORT

**1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017**

### Mission statement

Community Support was set up:

1. To assist a number of newly released prisoners to avoid re-offending
  2. To help mentees to improve their self-image and self-confidence through support and encouragement
  3. To encourage mentees to develop their talents and hopes to the full
  4. To help mentees to link with existing statutory and voluntary agencies
  5. To work with others engaged in prison work to develop post-release services
- Crucial to our mission is linking newly-released prisoners to existing support services.

### Impact

The following figures give an overview of our quantitative impact this year:

| <b>Total of visits made</b> | <b>Number of visits inside</b> | <b>Number of visits outside</b> | <b>Number of <i>individuals</i> visited</b> | <b>Number of <i>individuals</i> seen inside</b> | <b>Number of <i>individuals</i> seen outside</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 482                         | 227                            | 255                             | 140   | 118   | 22   |

Some individuals were seen many times as the following table shows:

| <b>Individuals seen over 5 times inside and outside</b> | <b>Individuals seen 5 times</b> | <b>Individuals seen 4 times</b> | <b>Individuals seen 3 times</b> | <b>Individuals seen twice</b> | <b>Individuals seen once</b> |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 19  | 3                               | 7                               | 7                               | 28                            | 78                           |

The above table shows that we made 482 visits in total. This is a considerable work load for 5 and often only 4 volunteers, working on a part-time basis. We saw 19 very regularly, and were therefore giving them on-going support. Those who received 5 visits may have been seen a number of times inside and have decided not to follow up post-release. Some of the support was by phone or text. The vast majority of those we saw regularly were released. Almost none, at the time of writing, have re-offended.

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These figures are encouraging, as of the 25 we saw 3 or more times outside, only 1 is back inside, and he was recommitted at the very beginning of the year under review. Of course the reason for this is first and foremost because of the very considerable efforts the mentees themselves made, but the support of CS and other agencies is likely to have been a help to some.

The figures give little idea of the stories behind the mentees. Some of this can be seen from the following:

### Mentees

Sadly, one of our mentees died after a long illness. It was a privilege to be able to support him during this time. Some have found work: in computers, selling phone plans and magazines, dish washing, and building. Many struggle with addition issues, and with underlying problems of depression and anxiety. One has been off drink for over a year, which is the longest time in his life, but still needs a lot of encouragement to stay in touch with AA. Another suffers from ADHD and has frequent bouts of heavy drinking. Sometimes our support has involved simply listening to mentees as they and their families readjust to release: no one should underestimate the trickiness of re-engaging with a family after having been inside for a number of years, especially if there are teenagers involved. Family members may also have died while a mentee was inside, and some times he was refused permission to attend the funeral. This makes grieving harder and family members can blame him for not having been around. In this regard it is really important for prison authorities to factor in the long-term psychological cost of refusing compassionate leave when deciding whether to grant it or not.

We have helped a number of prisoners with housing issues by putting them in touch with the Methodist Church who run a loan scheme. We have also gone with prisoners on home leave to see if flats on offer are suitable. It helps that we have now good contacts with some landlords.

We have had a fair amount of contact with solicitors and have spoken quite often for prisoners in court.

Above all, our task is to support and encourage prisoners. Nothing is more important than this. All of them face an uphill battle post-release, with many road blocks. That is why encouragement is so important. Further, those who re-offend also need to be encouraged: the road to being free of crime for many is not a single uphill journey, but rather one of many twists and turns in the cycle of change.

### Cooperation with other agencies

We continue to have excellent relations with prison staff in both Maghaberry and Magilligan, and they have been very helpful to us in making contact with prisoners. Unfortunately we have recently had to cut back on our visits to Magilligan. We also work closely with Probation: one of our mentees described his Probation officer as the best he has ever had – and he has had many! He had good reason to think this. She went way beyond the call of duty in working on his behalf to ensure he got many entitlements which he might not otherwise have received. This was critically important when he faced terminal illness. Probation and the Prison Service both continue to serve on our Advisory Group. We are also very grateful to the Quaker Service, Prison Fellowship, and NIACRO who continue to support us. We have also begun to make contact with RESET. This is a PBNI initiative, managed by NIACRO. They mentor newly-released prisoners for 15 weeks and we are looking at options to support those who have finished this process and still need support.

### Funding

The Stephen's Green Trust and Halifax have remained our main funders for the past year: we could not have survived without them, and for this we are very grateful. As with all groups, our financial position remains somewhat precarious, and we hope that we will be able to find other funders in the year ahead.

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### Comings and Goings

In the past year we have welcomed one new mentor: Andy Steed. Chris Marley and Rebecca McClements moved on and we thank them for their efforts and wish them well on their new journeys. We welcomed Sinead Bailie from Quaker Services on to our Management Committee. Ideally we would like to have another three mentors, so please encourage anyone you know who might think of volunteering.

### Structure

Community Support is a project of Dialogue For Diversity.

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Finance Report (The full finance report for Dialogue For Diversity can be found [here](#))

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Income</b>                |                  |
| Donations                    | Nr 2 Acc         |
| Loan received                | Community        |
| Grants                       | 65598418         |
|                              | £                |
|                              | 200.00           |
|                              | 1,000.00         |
|                              | 10,702.99        |
| <b>Total income</b>          | <b>11,902.99</b> |
| <b>Expenditure</b>           |                  |
| Loan refund                  | 1,000.00         |
| Bank charges                 | 23.70            |
|                              |                  |
| Rent                         | 794.22           |
|                              |                  |
| Travel                       | 4,197.23         |
|                              |                  |
| Subsistence                  | 465.14           |
|                              |                  |
| Refund                       | 13.00            |
| Training                     | 60.00            |
| Parking                      | 28.68            |
| Telephone                    | 127.99           |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>     | <b>6,709.96</b>  |
| <b>Net surplus (Deficit)</b> | <b>5,193.03</b>  |
| <b>Open Book (1/4/16)</b>    | <b>3,424.25</b>  |
| <b>Net in/out</b>            | <b>5,193.03</b>  |
| <b>Closing bank bal</b>      | <b>8,617.28</b>  |
| <b>Bank Reconciliation</b>   |                  |
| Bank bal 31 Mar 17           | 8,617.28         |
| Book balance                 | -                |
|                              | <b>8,617.28</b>  |