

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

## ANNUAL REPORT

**1 APRIL 2013 TO 31 MARCH 2014**

### **Introduction**

This has been a good year for the development of Community Support. We have seen more prisoners, both inside and outside prison. Secondly, we have seen more individuals for a greater number of support sessions. This has been crucial in building the relationships that are at the core of our work.

We have continued to build on our very good relationships with prison staff in Magilligan and Maghaberry, and with Probation. As well, we have deepened our working relationships with other NGOs such as Quaker Support, the Methodist Prisoner Support Housing Project, De Paul Housing and Prison Fellowship.

Organisationally we have expanded with 3 new volunteers joining us (almost a 100% increase), and with the appointment of a new Management Committee.

Our Volunteer meetings, held approximately monthly, have been key to developing our planning and strategy. They have also been central to our learning which came through sharing about our encounters with our mentees. Regular supervision was vital for each of us. Also important were the meetings we held with statutory and voluntary groups represented on our Advisory Committee.

As well, we have continued our relationship with Community Chaplaincy in London: this represents similar groups in England, Scotland, Wales and ourselves in Northern Ireland.

### **Mission statement**

- |   |
|---|
| 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 a befriending service. |
| 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 review the pilot project as a means to develop a wider post-release Service.                |
| 6. To work with others engaged in prison work to develop post-release services.                   |

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<b>Total Visits</b>	<b>Individuals seen once</b>	<b>Individuals seen twice</b>	<b>Individuals seen three times</b>	<b>Individual seen four times</b>	<b>Individual seen five times and over</b>	<b>Individual Seen between 13 and 57 times</b>	<b>Total number of individuals seen</b>
1156	156	49	16	10	32	19	183
<b>Total visits to people on License</b>	Total visits to people on license inside	Total visits to people on license outside					
892	386	506					

**Mentees**

One the hopes we expressed in last year’s Annual Report was that we would increase the number of people that we saw outside prison, and we have in fact been able to do this.

A total of 506 visits were made to 34 individuals who were on license and who were met outside. In some cases contact was brief: a few visits or phone calls. In other cases it was protracted and is ongoing.

Most important, in the above figures, are the 19 individuals who were seen between 13 and 57 times each. The fact that they are willing to meet us so often shows the continuing relationship that has been built with them and the trust that they have in our volunteers. Many have multiple issues, and have been recurrent re-offenders for many years. Yet, only 6 are back inside. We continued to keep in touch with these. For many of the remainder their present period outside prison is the longest since they became teenagers.

The figures show that the project is – with many other individuals and groups – helping people to bring about the often very difficult change needed to avoid re-offending.

Geographically we met people in Belfast, Dungannon, Aghnacloy, Maghera, Antrim, Craigavon, Gilford, Armagh, Enniskillen, Banbridge, Coalisland, Lisburn, Portadown and Newry. There is an obvious need to extend the geographical remit of the project, especially in Derry/Londonderry.

The above figures give no indication of the real life in our encounters with each of these individuals. As well as meeting with mentees, we also attended court, spoke on behalf of a number, and wrote letters to judges on their behalf. On several occasions this led to a decision by the judge not to impose a custodial sentence.

One indicator of impact is the number who remained crime-free. Another is the increased length of time that they were out, and their willingness to continue the relationship with the project. This suggests that they are on the road to recovery, but this road is not a simple, clear journey with no diversions: it will involve the same ups and downs that the

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rest of us experience in our lives, and gradually – for many – lead to a new life without crime.

The following are some comments by our mentees:

*'with the help of my mentor, who gave me sound advice and support, I began to find my feet. For the first time I years, I felt that someone trusted me. As time went on my confidence began to increase. Community Support have also visited my father, which has helped my father and me keep in touch. I would recommend Community Support to anyone returning the community.'*

*'To be honest, at the moment you're the only one I can trust/have faith. You bring me good faith – as I said, you're just like my grandfather'*

*'I have no way to express the depth of my appreciation that I feel for your time, patience, empathy and love with me'.*

The following is a series of texts in response to a mentor which shows the importance of support:

*'me and \*\*\*\* had major bust up so dnt really care nie wat happens prison seems best place to be, cos out here ya never get a f\*\*\*in break swear, sorry for telling you tjis*

*I know its just to hard I'm doing my best I dnt want to be fighting but sometimes it can't be avoided and I'm the one to blame its not on*

*I'm at home now just calming myself, I won't be making any rash decisions just gona stay in watch some football, its ok u dnt need to come to belfast, I wont let u dwn'.*

### Referrals

Of those we saw outside we got referrals from PBNI, Chaplains, the Prison Service and Quaker Support. We got many other referrals which did not lead to follow-up contact outside. We made many referrals to housing, churches, especially to the Methodist Housing Support Scheme, De Paul housing, Cruse, Ad:Ept, Staurus (Milford), GPs, hostels, and above all to AA.

### Support and co-working

We continued our good relationships with statutory agencies such as the Prison Service of Northern Ireland and Probation. The Prisoner Development Unit in Magilligan has put a lot of resources at our disposal and was enthusiastic about the project from the beginning. In this regard we would like to pay special thanks to David Sampson in PDU. We name him simply because he has now retired, but many others have been outstanding in their support.

The Offender Management Unit in Maghaberry has also supported us continuously. During the period under review we changed our visits to Magilligan from weekly to fortnightly and added fortnightly visits to Maghaberry.

We have also deepened our relationships with a variety of Churches who have been willing to welcome ex-prisoners. Some of our volunteers already had contact with these churches. Others were new. The contacts not only helped give a community of support to the former prisoner, they also helped deepen interchurch relations.

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More recently we have worked with Community Restorative Justice to deal with issues of prisoners under threat on release.

We have very good relationships with chaplains in Magilligan and Maghagerry and we have found communication with solicitors very helpful while attending court cases.

Our Advisory Committee has representatives from the Prison Service, Probation, Quaker Prison Service, Prison Fellowship, and NIACRO. These meetings have been very helpful to unpack issues, to communicate to other agencies, and to learn about other options for prisoners. NIACRO has hosted all these meetings and we are very grateful for this.

Most of what we have learnt has come from the mentees we met, and also from those who decided, at least for the moment, that they do not need support. Many brought great difficulties with them into prison: addictions – especially to prescribed drugs, a history of having been abused, chaotic family backgrounds, poor education and employment prospects, depression, etc. Many brought the same problems with them outside on release. If there is one way in which Community Support can help, it is by giving encouragement: this is one thing that prisoners desperately need. All of us have a past, but this does not mean that we cannot have a future. Believing this can be difficult for anyone. Given the circumstances of many prisoners it can be especially difficult for them.

We are aware of the need to work closely with professional bodies so as to ensure that nothing we do undermines oversight. This has led to regular meetings with Designated Risk Managers. We believe that we are developing a useful balance in this area.

During the year we tightened up our procedures for taking on mentees. Normally this will only happen after a number of meetings between a volunteer and a prisoner inside the prison. At that point, if the prisoner continues to show an interest he will be interviewed formally. If he is on Probation, with his agreement, we will have a conversation with his supervising officer. Once he is released we try to meet him once a week in a place where he is comfortable, such as a café. There is also a formal process to disengage.

Good relations: as a group drawn from a diverse background we hope to contribute to mainstreaming good relations in Northern Ireland. Most of the men we see come from working class areas with a high degree of segregation, and this can be one of the factors that lead them to crime. In prison they are exposed to people from diverse backgrounds, often something they cannot experience outside. We believe it is important that they are offered the same opportunities for good relations work as are people outside prison.

### **New Volunteers**

During this period we took on three new volunteers. We are very grateful to the Quaker Service for allowing them to take part in their own training sessions. We were also helped by courses offered by the Southern Health Trust in psychological well being, the Asist course and child/vulnerable adult training. Our own team meetings were also a valuable training instrument.

### **Finance and fundraising**

As with all groups this was problematic, in part because of the time fundraising takes in a volunteer organisation. We received grants in this period from PBNI, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Stephen's Green Trust and the Big Lottery, and we are very grateful for these.

**Hopes**

There is an obvious need to extend our geographical remit. We are continually looking at ways to do this in Derry/Londonderry, Coleraine and other areas. Secondly, we hope to increase the number of our volunteers by a few.

**Appendix One: Financial Report**

**Dialogue for Diversity-Prisons/Migrants**  
**Period ended 31/03/14**  
**Income and Exp.**

	nr 1a/c		nr 2a/c		nr 3a/c	
	Totals	Holding Account	Community Support	DFD Dialogue	Migrants A/C	
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income</b>						
Donations	2,115.15		60.00			2,055.15
Grants	13,847.51					13,847.51
Jesuits	600.00	600.00				
Methodist Chaplaincy	500.00		500.00			
Bank Int. Received	18.31		10.67	1.39		6.25
Rental Income	1,125.00					1,125.00
Rates Refund	646.72					646.72
St. Stephens GreenTrust	4,133.87		4,133.87			
Probation Board N.I.	4,000.00		4,000.00			
Community Rel.Council	3,471.10			3,471.10		
Lottery Fund	7,000.00		7,000.00			
Loan	3,000.00			3,000.00		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>40,457.66</b>	<b>600.00</b>	<b>15,704.54</b>	<b>6,472.49</b>		<b>17,680.63</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Chaplaincy	100.00		100.00			
Bank Charges	96.19		48.00	6.00		42.19
Facilitation Costs	1,125.00			1,125.00		
Insurance	1,320.35	578.81				741.54
Rent	8,010.84		1,588.44			6422.4
Salaries	7,192.13					7192.13
Comp. Reg. Penalty	375.00		375.00			
Utilities	2,387.61					2387.61
Travel	11,021.28		10,904.73	116.55		
Hotel Costs-4 Seasons	1,602.71			1,602.71		
Subsistence	1,515.84		1,515.84			
Office Supplies	1,105.07		177.50			927.57
Loan Refund	4,000.00			4,000.00		
Training	42.00		42.00			
Telephone	371.53		371.53			
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>40,265.55</b>	<b>578.81</b>	<b>15,123.04</b>	<b>6,850.26</b>		<b>17,713.44</b>
<b>Net Income(Expenditure)</b>	<b>192.11</b>	<b>21.19</b>	<b>581.50</b>	<b>- 377.77</b>		<b>- 32.81</b>
<b>Open Bank Balance</b>	<b>5,553.65</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>630.16</b>	<b>609.25</b>		<b>4,314.24</b>
<b>Closing book balance</b>	<b>5,745.76</b>	<b>21.19</b>	<b>1,211.66</b>	<b>231.48</b>		<b>4,281.43</b>
<b>Balance Sheet @31st March 2014</b>						
<b>Bank Balances</b>	<b>5,745.76</b>					
<b>Loan Account</b>	<b>- 1,000.00</b>					
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>4,745.76</b>					
<b>Represented by</b>						
<b>Surplus(deficit) c/fd 01/04/2013</b>	<b>3,553.65</b>					
<b>Movement in Loan Account</b>	<b>1,000.00</b>					
<b>Net Income (Expenditure)</b>	<b>192.11</b>					
<b>Suplus(deficit) at 31st March, 2014</b>	<b>4,745.76</b>					

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