

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2021-10-YO31	Paws for Progress CIC
Visit Date	Visited By
2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2022	Victoria Southwell (Zoom call)
Overall aim of the funding	
To provide ground breaking opportunities for young people in custody and returning to the community, engaging them in meaningful activities and moving towards a positive future and employment through a pioneering dog-training programme.	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Paws for Progress (PFP) is a Scottish registered Community Interested Company that was set up in 2014. PFP employs 5 members of staff (2 are part time) and has 8 active volunteers. A board of 12 Directors support the staff team. The Directors meet quarterly and bring a strong mix of expertise in policy work, marketing, comms and fundraising. The Directors have been refreshed over the past 24 months after a skills audit identified gaps in skills.</p> <p>There are four sub-committees; a pennies committee, policy committee, profile committee and proving committee which each meet every two months.</p> <p>A detailed Strategic Plan is in place for 2021-24 setting out strategic goals for development in four key areas – developing current work in HMP YOI Polmont; strengthening community programmes; organisational development and income generation. All of these are linked to the goal of increasing outreach and beneficiary numbers year on year and progress is reported back on quarterly.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>On the call I spoke with Rebecca Leonardi (Development Manager and Director), Suzanne Ruby (Operations Manager) and Ashley Ryan (Director and Chair).</p> <p>Rebecca is the founder of PFP, and the organisation grew out of her PhD research into the effectiveness of dog training programmes in prison settings which was carried out at Polmont. She is probably the leading expert in this area in the UK and all of her work has been underpinned by academic research. She is well networked and extremely passionate about the work PFP does. As primarily an academic she looks to others to support her in areas where she does not have the appropriate skill set and appears to be a collaborative founder who is keen for PFP to develop and grow as per the needs of the young people they support rather than just promoting her original vision.</p> <p>Suzanne has worked with PFP for five years and forms a joint leadership team with Rebecca. Suzanne looks after all of the operational side of the organisation. She has successfully grown the CIC and holds a range of important relationships with funders and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Ashley is Director of ENABLE Works, one of the largest and most successful employment support projects in Scotland. She has been Chair since the beginning of 2020 and overseen a significant board refresh and adoption of a more strategic approach to developing PFP and refining their employment focus.</p>	

### **Aims and Activities**

PFP's vision is a world where people and dogs enrich and improve each other's lives. It aims to achieve this through improving mental health and wellbeing, supporting the development of positive social relationships, generating a sense of self-efficacy, achievement and aspiration, increasing engagement in learning or training and contributing to positive outcomes that lead to a wider social and economic impacts.

PFP provides services both within Polmont Prison and Young Offenders Institution and in the community. Main activities undertaken in the prison settings are 1) running 'Wellbeing and Inclusion' and 'Activity' sessions for young people with the highest needs and most isolated; 2) running an 8-week rescue dog training programme; and 3) running an 8-week educational programme where participants can achieve accredited education awards via SQA and ASDAN. Work in the community involves supporting young people who have left custody and comprises running 8-week Personal Development programmes that support people to progress along an employability pipeline. Once at the end of this the young people are supported to find and secure paid employment in the animal care and welfare sector.

Over the course of a year PFP works with around 100 young people, 55 in a prison setting and 45 in the community post release.

### **Safeguarding**

Paws for Progress has a comprehensive approach to safeguarding. There is a named Safeguarding Lead in the detailed policy who is the Operations Manager. She receives in-depth training which is refreshed every two years. All staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and this is repeated every two years. Staff who work in Polmont undergo additional on-site prison safeguarding training which is renewed annually.

PFP have not progressed any safeguarding concerns in the past 12 months but several have been raised by partner agencies they work with linked to joint beneficiaries. PFP contributes to these concerns being addressed as a key partner.

### **Finances**

Unaudited financial statements for the year ending 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020 show income of £184,921 against expenditure of £182,595 resulting in a small surplus of £2,326.

The balance sheet shows net current assets of £180 and a reserve figure of £1,051. The reserves position is for 6 months fixed operating expenses to be held which is still being worked towards. PFP was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show a small year on year increase in planned expenditure linked to PFP's growth strategy. Currently secured income for both 22/23 and 23/24 falls below expenditure but the fundraising targets are realistic and likely to be met. Scottish Prison Service funding for 22/23 is about to be confirmed and the expectation is that this will move to three-year funding. Other ongoing grants from foundations are also likely to be renewed ensuring that PFP will be financially secure for the duration of this grant.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Operations Manager who produces a financial report for the quarterly Director's meetings. The pennies committee looks in detail at cash flow and budgeting and the Chair takes a lead in this as she has substantial financial expertise. PFP is looking to recruit a new Director from a finance background to fulfil a Treasurer role on the board.

<b>Current Situation and need</b>
-----------------------------------

Young people serving prison sentences face huge barriers to employment post release and need high levels of support. Many have suffered significant adversity as children such as being in the care system, suffering significant bereavements and experiencing trauma. Psychological distress and suicide risk are particularly high among those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and the isolating prison environment can exacerbate this further. Lockdown in prison has further reinforced this isolation and impacted mental health, having a devastating impact on young people who were already experiencing multiple challenges. Isolation is known to have a profoundly damaging effect on a young person's ability to cope in prison as they are particularly vulnerable to these negative effects. Suicide is the leading cause of death of young people in prison in Scotland.

Without addressing some of these key issues it is impossible for a young person to move forward in their lives and achieve outcomes like paid employment, a key factor in enabling them to realise a better future.

PFP's pioneering approach enables the creation of a supportive and engaging environment where young people can learn new skills, gain qualifications, improve mental health and progress on their journey towards employability. Securing employment is critical in preventing reoffending and PFP has developed a user-led, asset-based and holistic approach that works closely with the Scottish Prison Service and other organisations.

At least 60 young people will directly benefit from the activities PFP plan to run at HMP YOI Polmont with this funding. The rescue dog training programme enables participants to help rescue dogs be rehomed whilst developing their own skills. PFP works with Fife College to incorporate educational qualifications into the programme. This helps to develop basic numeracy and literacy as well as well as develop wider employability skills. Prior to these sessions PFP works with young people, either 1-2-1 or in small groups, to build trust and confidence. PFP targets the most vulnerable and hardest to reach young people who have the most limited opportunities within Polmont. Using dogs to develop these relationships is a key way of achieving this as dogs offer an invaluable bridge of communication to building trusting relationships which become the catalyst for providing effective support.

Once released from Polmont PFP will continue to work with the young people through their community based Personal Development Programme which is run in partnership with other relevant agencies such as Action for Children. Through interactive activities with dogs and project-based learning participants develop skills that support progression towards employment. A growing number are moving on to employment in animal care focused organisations and PFP wants to further develop this element of the project. Based on current evaluation of the programme PFP have found at least 76% of programme participants to be engaged in productive activities, such as employment or education, 2 years post release from prison.

<b>Expected Key Achievements in Year 1</b>
--

EKA 1
-------

The essential needs of 30 young people will be met enabling them to start preparing for employment.
---

EKA 2
-------

30 young people will develop new skills that equip them for employment.
---

EKA 3
-------

10 young people will be employment ready and supported to secure paid employment.
---

### **Request and Budget**

TTP is requesting **£50,000** over 2 years to cover the costs of working with 60 young people.

**£25,000 in year 1** - £10,000 (contribution to Education and Wellbeing Specialist salary), £10,000 (contribution to Training and Behaviour Specialist salary), £3,750 (contribution to Development Manager salary) and £1,250 (contribution to project costs).

**£25,000 in year 2** - £10,000 (contribution to Education and Wellbeing Specialist salary), £10,000 (contribution to Training and Behaviour Specialist salary), £3,750 (contribution to Development Manager salary) and £1,250 (contribution to project costs).

### **Conclusion**

This application represents an interesting and innovative approach to working with young offenders, especially those who are most isolated and hardest to reach. The power of using animals to engage with people and positively impact their lives is well known and Rebecca's interest and passion in this area has led to PFP turning into a credible and leading organisation.

The work currently undertaken in Polmont shows clear impact on the lives of the young people they work with. Young people who have previously not engaged with employment, education or other activities whilst in Polmont have engaged with the programme and then gone on to take steps into joining other prison-based programmes. This is seen as a significant outcome for these young people as their lack of engagement in activities whilst in prison has often led to immediate reoffending on release.

For much of the time that PFP has been working in Polmont the programmes have had an employability focus which has resulted in the young people building up their employment skills and being employment ready (or readier) on release. There have been a growing number of instances where continued support from PFP has led to the young person securing paid employment in the animal care sector but building employability skills has always been the primary aim.

This funding will enable PFP to build on the success that they have had to date in helping young people take that next step into paid employment. By targeting a small cohort of young people who they have worked with in Polmont who they then continue to work with in the community will allow them to formalise this step of the intervention.

The initial work that is undertaken in Polmont is essential in building trusting relationships with the young people and helping them to develop a set of skills (both hard and soft) that will be crucial for their ability to both succeed in employment post prison but also to overcome the challenges that life throws at them. The contribution to the salaries of the Education and Wellbeing Specialist and the Training and Behaviour Specialist are appropriate and link to this vital in prison support. The contribution to the Development Manager's post is an important one as this is where the increased focus on securing paid employment outcomes will take place. This role leads on the work that takes place in the community already so the Development Manager is well placed to take this forward. Due to the high profile she also has locally she will be able to build relationships and pursue opportunities that might not ordinarily be available.

The employment element of PFP's work has shown from the successes to date that it is ripe for being developed further so the proposed project will have two benefits. It will

help young offenders to secure paid employment that it is anticipated will directly impact on the likelihood of them reoffending. It will also help PFP to develop their employment offer and expertise in this area, enabling them to provide a more structured end point to their programme.

Of the 30 young people who will participate in the programme in year 1, it is anticipated that 10 will move on to paid employment opportunities. In year 2 this will increase to 20 as some of those worked with in year 1 will be ready for employment after a 2-year period of support. This would represent a 50% success rate of participants entering employment but doesn't include those who will move into employment after the end of the grant nor those who will go into education rather than employment. Considering the starting point of the young people that will be targeted with this project this feels like a good ratio.

This is undoubtedly a unique and innovative organisation. No other applicants are proposing to use this specific intervention and very few are working so intensively with young offenders whilst still in custody. PFP would be able to share lots of insight about supporting vulnerable young people using therapeutic interventions with the rest of the cohort. They would also hugely benefit from learning more about the employment element of programmes run by others in the cohort who are at a more advanced stage than them. Rebecca's research and evidence-based approach will add real value to the portfolio so I would strongly recommend supporting with a grant as requested.

<b>Recommended Priority Rating</b>		
Risk = Low	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High