

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2021-10-YO36	Switch Up CIC
Visit Date	Visited By
28 <sup>th</sup> February 2022	Victoria Southwell
Overall aim of the funding	
<p>To provide support over a two-year period for 22 vulnerable young people who have served a custodial sentence and are amongst the hardest to reach. Support will involve an employability programme that will last for a minimum of 12 weeks and be centred around 1-2-1 mentoring. Switch Up will offer employability workshops alongside counselling and boxing classes and match young people with employers for work experience and employment opportunities.</p>	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Switch Up (SU) is a Community Interest Company that was established in 2013. SU currently employs 19 staff, 5 casual coaching staff, 2 paid placement roles and 5 volunteers. SU is governed by 4 Directors who meet quarterly. They have a wide range of skills and experience including education, governance and charity management, HR and lived experience. A further Director will be joining SU in the next couple of months who was the Deputy Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire Probation Service and is also brings expertise around mental health.</p> <p>SU has a five-year strategic plan running from 2018-2023. With the advent of the pandemic this was significantly thrown off track due to the need to focus on other areas. A new Operations Manager has produced a revised 9-month work plan which is currently being followed and a new strategy is being developed with inputs from the Directors and a Youth Council that has been formed. This is due to be launched at the end of April.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>On the call I spoke with (Baz) Marcellus Baz (Founder and CEO) and George Overton (Income Generation and Performance Manager).</p> <p>Baz set up SU off the back of his own traumatic experiences as a child and young adult. He grew up experiencing multiple deprivation – no father in his life, a mother with severe mental health issues but no support, violence, missed education and no-one recognising his needs or offering support. He was excluded from school and was quickly groomed into criminality. He couldn't read or write, had no life skills and after having a friend die in his arms after being stabbed came across boxing and slowly found his place in the world away from crime. However, his journey remained difficult as he tried to move forward and break down multiple barriers to achieve success. This recognition of the continued struggles and the need to address past trauma led to the SU model being developed. Baz is charismatic and very open and his origin story is a key part of the success that SU has achieved. He is very knowledgeable but also reflective and recognises where others add more value than him.</p> <p>George has a background in the charity sector and is an experienced fundraiser. He also has expertise in impact measurement and has helped SU to professionalise its approach to collecting data and building an evidence base alongside articulating the SU model through developing a theory of change.</p>	

### **Aims and Activities**

Switch Up has a vision that every young person can reach their true potential. They aim to provide individual, life-changing support to young people in communities affected by crime and violence. Through sport, mentoring and personal development SU improves young people's mental and physical wellbeing to give them the skills, confidence and motivation to realise their full potential.

SU uses asset based, tried and tested mentoring techniques along with physical activities and training to engage Nottingham's young people in positive activity and steer them away from the circle of crime and gang-related criminality. They deliver an outreach service, one-to-one mentoring, peer mentoring, accredited non-formal education and 'through the gate' resettlement mentoring for young people serving custodial sentences. Through their programmes SU helps young people to reflect on their lives and express positive targets for the future.

Annually SU works with around 560 young people affected by the criminal justice system of whom approximately 80% have been in custody themselves. To date 60% of young people enrolled on employment programmes have gone on to achieve a sustained education, employment or training outcome.

### **Safeguarding**

SU has a comprehensive approach to safeguarding which is outlined in a detailed policy. There are two named Safeguarding Leads named in the policy and all staff undertake Nottingham City Council training at induction. This is regularly refreshed. All staff also undergo enhanced DBS checks.

Over the past 12 months no safeguarding concerns have been raised linked to internal SU practises. However, numerous concerns have been raised with external agencies about beneficiaries, some that have required escalation to the police and others to social services and other partners. SU holds a weekly Safeguarding meeting with key staff to identify issues that are causing concern.

### **Finances**

Draft Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 show income of £501,980 against expenditure of £580,457 resulting in an operating deficit of £78,477. Net current assets amount to £81,248 and a reserve figure of £93,550 all of which is restricted. Any profit that SU makes at the end of the year is donated to Nottingham School of Boxing, their sister charity.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show an increase in predicted income year on year. For the first year of the grant the income target is £766,955 and £635,955 has been secured. Year 2 has an income target of £821,960 and £213,560 has been raised so far. £303,900 of projected income is in contracts and training that is renewed annually and £57,000 in community fundraising and events which is based on previous income. I am confident that fundraising targets will be met, if not exceeded.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Finance and Administration Officer and ultimately overseen by the Operations Manager. Management Accounts are presented at quarterly Director Meetings.

### **Current Situation and need**

Over two thirds of young people on release from secure institutions reoffend within 12 months. Reoffending rates are substantially higher amongst young adults in the criminal justice system than older offenders, demonstrating the destructive cycle of

crime that young people can fall into and struggle to get out of. Most of these young people have had complicated and chaotic lives with many having had multiple adverse childhood experiences and traumas such as abuse, bereavement, growing up in local authority care, being excluded from school or developing mental health problems or personality disorders.

Ministry of Justice figures show that around two thirds of prisoners are unemployed both before and after custody, which highlights the huge issue in society around having a criminal recorded and being able to attain secure employment. A recent Clinks report showed that people with convictions are the least likely 'disadvantaged group' to be employed – with only 12% of employers having knowingly employed someone with a conviction in the last three years. If a young person is forever seen by their past criminal behaviour, it is impossible for them to turn their life around and successfully take another path. This is particularly hard in Nottingham which sees significant numbers of children entering the criminal justice system for the first time, over twice as high as other areas in the UK and Wales.

The pandemic has had a huge impact on the lives of young people already facing disadvantage and ongoing trauma. SU has spent time consulting with young people coming to them for support, as well as their staff team and volunteers, a high number of whom had lived experience of these issues. The distance between a young person and a secure job is huge and SU has developed a number of key support interventions to reduce this gap and build bridges for young people to move towards positive life outcomes. Demand for support though has never been higher and SU is currently having to operate a waiting list to manage the number of young people asking for support. Whilst they currently run an employment project for older offenders, probation service has a number of young offenders they also want to refer but who cannot currently be accommodated. This has highlighted to SU the need for the proposed project and demonstrates a strong pipeline for referrals for it.

SU plans to work with 22 young people with criminal convictions (aged 24 years and under) over the next 2 years and support them to secure meaningful employment. They will be enrolled on a holistic employability scheme which lasts for a minimum of 12 weeks. During this time, they will receive intensive 1-1 mentoring delivered by trained youth mentors who will build a strong relationship of trust and support with them on their journey to employment. This support will recognise the wide range of challenges and issues that will need to be addressed to help them succeed and will be tailored to their individual needs.

On top of this weekly employability workshops will take place alongside interview training, job search help, work experience placements through a partnership of 40 plus employers and literacy and numeracy support. Counselling with BACP accredited counsellors will be available for those with deep-seated trauma as well as twice weekly boxing sessions led by England Boxing accredited coaches. Onward referrals to other agencies are also made and support given to a young person to build those relationships. Once employment is secured ongoing support is offered to both the young person and the employer using SU's triangle model of communication which enables to young person and the employer to resolve any issues or areas of concern through the ongoing involvement of SU staff.

A grant will enable SU to extend their employment project to those under the age of 24 and contribute to the salary costs of key staff members. Each young person costs SU approximately £2,556 to support.

<b>Expected Key Achievements in Year 1</b>
EKA 1
Securing sustainable work opportunities with employers who are sympathetic to young people with criminal convictions.
EKA 2
Improved mental and physical health amongst young people.
EKA 3
Reduction in behaviours leading a young person to criminal and anti-social behaviour.
<b>Request and Budget</b>
SU is requesting <b>£57,069</b> over 2 years towards the costs of engaging 22 young people on a work employability and support programme.
<b>£28,115 in year 1</b> - £10,799 (contribution to Youth Mentor salary), £5,400 (contribution to Employability Lead salary), £3,474 (contribution to Boxing Coach salary), £1,444 (contribution to counselling costs), £3,669 (Management cost), £3,073 (participant travel and expenses), £203 (marketing) and £53 (recruitment).
<b>£28,954 in year 2</b> - £11,123 (contribution to Youth Mentor salary), £5,562 (contribution to Employability Lead salary), £3,578 (contribution to Boxing Coach salary), £1,444 (contribution to counselling costs), £3,779 (Management cost), £3,212 (participant travel and expenses) and £256 (marketing).
<b>Conclusion</b>
SU is an incredibly impressive organisation. Baz, the CEO, talks with passion, insight and an absolute determination to help young people turn their lives around. His own story and the journey that he has been on has defined him and the organisation that SU has become. The ability to remain totally grass roots and authentic alongside developing considerable knowledge and deep skill and expertise makes this a special organisation. Without a doubt SU began very organically but Baz quickly understood that his experiences were not unique and that it was possible to formalise a holistic approach to providing transformational trauma informed ongoing support.
I liked the fact that Baz and George spoke about the fact that they don't chase low hanging fruit and that the young people they work with are the hardest to reach. The ones who have been written off multiple times by multiple people but who if they can see a way through their trauma have the ability to significantly change their lives. This does mean that beneficiary levels might appear quite low, but this reflects the deep level of support that their beneficiaries need. This has been further exacerbated by the pandemic where deprivation has increased for many and the impact of having spent time in custody throughout lockdowns has been seen in increased mental ill health and challenging behaviour. However, if SU can make a breakthrough with some of these young people, then they have a very real chance of ending a cycle of offending that might lead to long term adult custody.
Like the application from 3Pillars Project, SU uses a Sport for Development approach to working with young offenders. Whilst boxing might on the surface seem like an unusual activity to promote with this particular group of young people, combat sports and boxing specifically has been shown to be particularly effective at helping to secure positive outcomes. The boxing and fitness activities are key to helping a young person build their confidence, learn social skills, develop routines and be part of a community. The club approach provides an environment where the young people are welcomed in a non-judgmental way and are able to build relationships where they can seek advice and support if they need it from people who care about them. Alongside this the Employability project provides ongoing personalised mentoring, employment support, life skill and learning acquisition, counselling to ensure that coping

mechanisms are developed and links to employers. This broad set of services provide the wide range of support that the young person needs.

I found this project to be very comprehensive and believe that the impact of the work could be far reaching and touch the lives of young people who will continue to fall through the cracks without this support. At the assessment we discussed SU working with girls and if boxing is a deterrent. Baz felt that this is no longer the case as there are so many positive female role models who are boxing. So boxing is appealing to young women, not off putting, and this is seen in the numbers of young women that they engage with. They have the ability to have young women working with female boxing coaches and because each support plan is so personalised, issues linked to gender can be incorporated within it. We didn't discuss targets for numbers of young women but SU was confident that this project would not solely work with young men.

The Sport for Development angle to this proposal alongside the high quality of the support that is offered makes it an extremely interesting one. The employment outcomes are perhaps less developed than some of the other projects that are being considered for funding but it feels like the momentum to expand this part of the project is there. SU would have plenty to learn from other grantees about this aspect of their work whilst at the same time contributing significantly to the learning of others through their approach and fearless ability to engage the hardest to reach. Therefore, I would recommend supporting this application with a grant as the funding would help them to grow their employment outcomes and track record in this area significantly.

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