

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2021-10-YO35	Switchback
Visit Date	Visited By
1 st March 2022	Victoria Southwell
Overall aim of the funding	
To support the expansion of Switchback's training and employment partnerships, providing more opportunities for Switchback Trainees to gain vital skills, experience and access to long term employment.	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Switchback (SB) is a registered charity that was established in 2008. SB currently employs 19 members of staff. Eight Trustees support the staff team, three of whom have joined the board in the past 18 months to increase board diversity. The Trustees meet quarterly and have a strong mix of skills including running charities, finance, leadership, strategic development, mentoring and the criminal justice sector. A board Adviser also attends Trustee meetings who represents an Experts by Experience group who meet every 6 weeks to advise the staff team. A Finance subcommittee also meets a month before every Trustee meeting to review the financial position of SB and report this back at the Trustee meeting.</p> <p>SB is about to launch a new strategic plan that will run from 2022-24. The focus of the strategy is to build on the impact they saw in 2019-21 and expand SB's operations to increase the number of young men they support with their tested through the gate approach. SB also wants to build on the post-release programme that was developed as a rapid response to the pandemic and the fact that young men were being released without having been able to access pre-release support. Alongside this continued focus on shifting government policy and public perceptions around young offenders will be prioritised. The strategy was developed with inputs from the Trustees and the Experts by Experience Panel at a series of away days and meetings.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>On the call I spoke with Alice Dawnay (Founder and CEO), Taran Kaler (Fundraising Officer) and Olivia Gillan-Bower (Trustee and Vice-Chair).</p> <p>Alice set up SB in 2008 having worked with young offenders at Fairbridge, a charity for young people, after becoming frustrated at the rigid support model they had to adopt due to funding requirements. She began to research alternative models to custody used in other countries, primarily the US, and the SB model was developed as a result. Alice describes herself as primarily a practitioner so she has a very close link still with the Mentors and the trainees, which she sees as crucial to keeping SB relevant to needs. She aims to be a collaborative leader who is able to be reflective and embrace change. She described SB as having a high tolerance to risk which has enabled SB to take chances and invest in young people that are often ignored.</p> <p>Olivia has been a Trustee since 2017 and has a strong background in consultancy and strategy development. She is also a magistrate so has a lot of knowledge about the issues SB work with and the challenges they help to address. Olivia is an active Trustee who understands the role and responsibilities of a Trustee well.</p>	

Aims and Activities

Switchback's ambition is that everyone has the opportunity to live a stable and rewarding life as an active member of society. They seek to do this through enabling young men to find a way out of the justice system and build a stable, rewarding life they can be proud of. SB's values cut through everything that they do, from their work with trainees or fundraising and partnerships. These values are being human, authentic, committed, ambitious and pioneering.

SB runs two main programmes. The Real Lasting Change Programme is a structured six-month programme that works with young men for three months prior to their release from prison and for a further three months upon release. The post release support includes a 12-week work placement at either the Crisis Café or Dusty Knuckles Bakery, alongside continued support from the Mentor, advocacy and advice and identification of either an education, paid employment or training outcome. The Foundation for Stability Programme aims to support trainees in the community for an intensive six-week period. This targets young men who were released from prison during the pandemic and SB were unable to work with pre-release. This six-week programme aims to identify key support issues for the trainees, help them with practical issues that are barriers to employment, expose them to learning that will help with life skills acquisition and identify move on employment, education and training opportunities.

SB also aims to inspire change across the system by challenging policy, building relationships with government and key decision makers and changing public perceptions about young offenders. An Expert by Experience Board plays a key role in defining and driving this activity.

Annually SB works with around 225 young men in prison and community settings, around 70 of who are new trainees. 89% of trainees come from BAME communities and around 50% of trainees achieve employment outcomes.

Safeguarding

SB has a comprehensive safeguarding policy covering all elements of their work. The Chair of the Trustees is the named Safeguarding Lead alongside the CEO and a senior Mentor. All staff undertake safeguarding training as part of their induction, receive regular refresher training and are DBS checked. Staff working within prison settings also adhere to the safeguarding processes of the prisons.

Safeguarding is an agenda item at the quarterly Trustee meetings and it is also formally discussed at team meetings and 1-2-1's. Additionally, all Mentors receive external clinical supervision and a monthly 'reflection' session run by the Tavistock Institute and safeguarding is discussed as part of this. The senior Mentor is currently going through the Safeguarding Policy and identifying areas that need to be reviewed. Over the past 12 months staff have raised safeguarding concerns with several external agencies and been part of processes put in place to support these concerns.

Finances

Independently examined Financial Statements for the year ending 31st December 2020 show income of £756,305 against expenditure of £612,981 resulting in a surplus of £143,324. Net current assets amount to £921,853 of and a reserve figure of £929,282 of which £532,450 is unrestricted. The reserves policy states that 50% of annual turnover should be held. Alongside this a Designated Fund also holds £90,000, which has been set aside for a possible office move.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show an ambitious increase in predicted income year on year. For the first year of the grant 53% of income has been confirmed and a strong pipeline is in place to raise the unsecured amount. £150,000 of funding has already been applied for and a further £437,000 in applications has been identified. Due to the high-profile SB has, achieving the income targets feels achievable. These targets also link to growth which can be adjusted if fundraising does not go to plan making SB financially secure as comfortable levels of unrestricted reserves are held.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Finance Officer supported by the Director of Finance and Operations. The Treasurer also reviews financial information and presents management accounts at Trustee Meetings and the Finance Sub Committee.

Current Situation and need

Prisoners exist within a chaotic system and are often released back into even more chaotic lives. 83% of prison leavers aren't in work a year after their release, yet employment is seen as being a key factor in reducing reoffending rates. Switchback's own data shows the impact of a lack of work experience with 42% of trainees having never worked before, 31% having no qualifications (with most having a very low standard of qualification), and a lack of basic essentials for employment with 27% released without having any form of ID and 41% without a bank account.

Many of the young offenders that Switchback work with are young care leavers and young parents with insecure housing. A third of the young men they support are from the London boroughs of Islington, Newham and Haringey, which are all within the 20% most deprived boroughs in the country and the 10% most deprived when based on risk of personal and material victimisation of crime. These boroughs are also among the highest in London and the UK for overall crime rates. Haringey and Newham rank second and third for the most knife crimes in the country and 75% of Switchback trainees have been convicted of a violent and/or drug related offence.

It is common for the young men SB work with to grow up in crowded homes, suffer multiple adverse childhood traumas and are from housing estates where crime is a way of life and violence a regular occurrence. For most of these young men, drug dealing and carrying weapons is a natural step to making money and supporting their families. Although profitable it comes at the price of constantly living in fear, fear of going to prison or being stabbed or killed. Their options and choices become limited as they are trapped in a world where a destructive lifestyle of crime is the default and a return to prison after release likely.

For the 80,000 people in prison in England and Wales the pandemic was especially stark, enduring months of 22 plus hours confinement in cramped cells. For young men released from these dire conditions, a very different world awaited. Record numbers were released into the pandemic homeless and with just a £46 discharge grant to survive. The need for support soared but during lockdowns organisations like SB found themselves shut out of prisons and many support organisations and training partners closed their doors. This led SB to develop a new post release programme, Foundation to Stability, providing six weeks of intensive support to help young men get themselves sorted and begin building a stable life away from crime.

Switchback now has two main programmes that aim to break the cycle of reoffending, Real Lasting Change and Foundation to Stability. By supporting trainees to gain important work and life skills, SB is able to help them secure paid employment opportunities that help start a journey down a different path. Support from paid Mentors

help them to stay on track and a key part of this involves identifying suitable external employment opportunities for the trainees. The process of onboarding new employers and working with them to create and sustain a work environment that enables positive outcomes for trainees is extremely time consuming. The recent addition of a Partnerships Manager has meant that a more strategic approach to developing these relationships can be undertaken. Mentors no longer need to spend time identifying and developing these relationships which means they have more time to support trainees. It also means that post placement support for the employer can be undertaken by the Partnerships Manager rather than the Mentors which enables them to provide more support to the trainee post starting a job. The partnerships Manager is currently on a short-term contract funded through reserves.

A grant will enable Switchback to continue to employ a Development Manager on a permanent basis. This will enable SB to increase the number of trainees that can be worked with annually due to additional capacity with Mentors and more employment opportunities available for trainees to move on to in new sectors outside of hospitality, such as construction and retail.

Expected Key Achievements in Year 1

EKA 1

Increased network of delivery partners to provide quality training and employment opportunities for trainees.

EKA 2

50 trainees will receive intensive support from Mentors.

EKA 3

25 trainees will move into long term sustainable employment or training.

Request and Budget

SB is requesting **£60,000** over 2 years for the salary costs of a part time Partnerships Manager and partnership development costs.

£30,000 in year 1 - £22,200 (salary), £2,011 (NI), £1,110 (pension) and £4,679 (employer training).

£30,000 in year 2 - £22,200 (salary), £2,011 (NI), £1,110 (pension) and £4,679 (employer training).

Conclusion

Switchback is a leading organisation working with young people who have been in custody and supporting them to secure employment outcomes. Despite being relatively small in terms of income and numbers of trainees worked with annually they have built a solid reputation as a knowledgeable and effective organisation. In fact, a number of the other applicants mentioned Switchback and their model, both in terms of having worked with them but also having used elements of their approach to inform their own programme design. So, in many ways they are the gold standard of working with young offenders and helping them to secure employment and avoid reoffending and a return to custody.

The model that SB uses is very prescriptive and the main focus of support time limited. This doesn't mean that support can't be extended as per individual needs, but the formal element of the programme takes place over a specific time scale. For the Real Lasting Change programme this is 24 weeks of consistent support with the same mentor for 12 weeks prior to leaving prison and then a further 12 weeks on release whilst gaining work experience at either the Crisis Café or the Dusty Knuckles Bakery. The Foundation for Stability programme is for a shorter period of time but totally community based and was developed due to the difficulties of accessing young people

in custody during lockdowns. This programme addresses the huge needs of young people living back in their communities but struggling due to the impact of Covid.

Other projects have used more holistic approaches and the work has not been time limited in the same way but for SB this approach has proved to be successful. The partnerships with employers they currently have are well established and provide a crucial building block in the foundations of the programmes. However, as SB looks to increase the number of young men that it supports annually this creates a need to provide more employment opportunities for them. The Partnerships Manager is therefore a crucial role in bringing more employers on line to provide these opportunities and support this growth. It will also enable SB to bring on partners from sectors outside of hospitality such as retail and construction, two areas where trainees have previously expressed interest.

Because the current employer partners are long standing ones, bringing in new partners is essentially a brand-new piece of work. This is probably the element of the work that SB does that they are least knowledgeable about and expert in. They have a strong track record and engaging evidence to show employers about the expected impact of their engagement and the benefits of their involvement. However, they will also be operating in a busy marketplace with lots of other organisations working with a wide range of people also promoting these kind of partnerships. So having a focused person dedicated to this work is an important element to this being successful. Currently the Mentors are trying to facilitate these on an individual basis for a trainee when relevant, so by taking this away from them it will not only allow a more joined up approach but also free up some of the Mentor's time to work with additional trainees.

I discussed with Alice at the assessment why SB only works with young men and she explained that this was both in part due to the smaller number of young women who spend time in prison but also due to the very different needs young women have. She doesn't feel that young women would be best served by the SB model and that there are other organisations who are already doing really good work in this area. She did though say that SB works closely with organisations such as Women in Prison to further issues linked to young women in criminal justice system.

Switchback will add a huge amount of value to the portfolio in terms of their expertise in working with young offenders and their approach to making them viably employable. Other grantees will be able to learn a huge amount from their work and the journey they have been on to develop their model. Equally though they will learn a huge amount from others who are further along the 'bringing employers on board' journey. Therefore, I would recommend support with a grant as requested.

Recommended Priority Rating		
Risk = Low	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High