

| Ref Code   | Organisation Name                    |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2023-10-YO03   | Action Youth Boxing Intervention CIC |
| Visit Date   | Visited By                           |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2024   | Victoria Southwell                   |
| Overall aim of the funding   |                                      |
| To support a current programme for at risk young people who are on the edge of the criminal justice system, using a combination of fitness, mentoring, counselling and employability workshops to steer them towards positive life choices and better prospects. This grant will enable up to 60 young people to receive support each year.  |                                      |
| Background to Organisation and governance  |                                      |
| <p>Action Youth Boxing Intervention (AYBI) was established in 2017 and is a Community Interest Company that is registered with Companies House. AYBI currently employs 7 staff, one is PAYE and the other six are freelance, and has five volunteers. AYBI has two non-executive Directors and an Advisory Trustee Board made up of four people. The Directors meet every four months and the Advisory Board come to two of those meetings each year. The Directors and Trustees between them bring the following skills to the organisation; education, running a charity, governance, the criminal justice system, marketing, communication, IT and employability.</p> <p>AYBI has a strategy for 2024 that identifies three key priorities for the year; 1) Programme expansion; 2) Evaluation and Impact Measurement; and 3) Financial Sustainability. Each of these areas have clearly identified actions and goals to achieving them. Developing this strategy further is an area that has been identified as a project that could be supported via the expertise of a Cranfield Trust consultant through the Spark Programme. AYBI are in the process of applying for CIO status.</p> |                                      |
| Leadership and expertise   |                                      |
| <p>At the assessment I met with Albert McEyeson (Founder and Operations Manager) and Cheryl King (Youth Manager and Alternative Provision Provider).</p> <p>Albert set up AYBI as a result of serving a prison sentence and wanting to turn his life around on release. He started volunteering with a drug and alcohol service and trained to become a counsellor. He recognised that boxing could have a therapeutic impact on young people and set up a club where he could merge the two. This soon turned into a company limited by guarantee when he realised that cost was a barrier to many young people attending. He then converted the company into a CIC. Albert is passionate and totally committed to AYBI and his personal experience of the issues that are addressed makes him an inspirational and relatable role model to the young people he supports.</p> <p>Cheryl has a background in working with young offenders and young people who have experienced mental health issues. She also has a daughter who attended AYBI sessions for several years and has seen first-hand the positive impact it can have on behaviour and life style choices.</p>                  |                                      |
| Aims and Activities  |                                      |
| AYBI is a community-based organisation based in the London Borough of Camden. Their mission is to empower local young people who may be at risk of social exclusion  |                                      |

by providing non-contact boxing training and youth development programmes. Through their programmes they aim to promote self-awareness, change negative belief systems, and enhance self-worth and physical well-being.

Qualified coaches and peer mentors bring a range of expertise, including fitness training, youth development mentoring and counselling. Staff and volunteers have lived experience of the challenges faced by participants. This unique connection allows them to empathise and understand their circumstances, making programmes more effective. AYBI works with around 1,000 participants per year.

The main projects that AYBI provide include

- Supplementary education provision - working in collaboration with Job Centre Plus and local authorities to support 16–25-year-olds who have left mainstream education without qualifications or who are involved in the criminal justice system. Constructive engagement, training and essential qualifications are provided to try to ensure participants don't become NEET.
- School programmes – a range of programmes take place within schools to support children and young people in improving their wellbeing. 'Real Talk' is a 12-week programme that combines CBT and boxing training to enhance physical and mental wellbeing. 'Real Talk' is currently being delivered in 15 primary and secondary schools and alternative provision settings across Camden and Islington.
- Fit & Fed – aims to combat holiday hunger and empower young people through multi-sport activities, nutritious meals, and employment opportunities.

### **Safeguarding**

For its size, AYBI has a robust and thoughtful approach to safeguarding informed by deep knowledge of the young people they work with and high levels of staff expertise. The founder described their approach as contextual safeguarding, and he is trained to Level 3. The policy has been developed in line with England Boxing's approach and all staff are DBS checked and undertake Camden Safeguarding courses as well as inhouse training. Safer Recruitment practises are in place.

They are also supported in developing their approach by a volunteer who has a Masters in Health and Social Policy who provides advice and a safeguarding trainer for Camden who has also helped with advising on the development of the policy. Most concerns that need raising are done directly with the schools who refer young people to AYBI. There is a basic but adequate spreadsheet that is used to capture any internal concerns and record actions and outcomes.

### **Finances**

Unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31 January 2022 show income of £156,898 against expenditure of £169,093, resulting in a small deficit of £12,195. Net current assets stood at £92,072 and this is also the reserve figure of which all is unrestricted. AYBI is exempt from the requirement to obtain an audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. There is not a formal reserves policy, but this will be developed once AYBI becomes a CIO.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show a very small increase in forecast income, and proposed expenditure that also remains relatively static. AYBI is currently funded through a variety of different income streams, but many are small grants that fund short term projects. They receive unrestricted funding from Hadley Trust and also have a 3-year Lottery grant that runs out in 2026. This is an area that AYBI have identified as being a potential project for Spark programme support.

The financial systems that are in place are good but any significant growth in income would require some additional support and operational capacity. That said the Advisory Trustees and the two Directors have good finance skills and knowledge and so I am confident that the current systems are robust and adequate for the current situation. There is good financial oversight and good planning of resources.

**Current Situation and need**

AYBI was originally established by the local community in Somers Town in Camden calling for a transformative initiative to tackle some of the issues that were arising out of high levels of youth crime and antisocial behaviour. Weekly youth boxing sessions were put on that established a platform for self-learning and growth, empowering young people at risk. The focus of these sessions was on cultivating self-awareness, countering irrational beliefs, and fostering positive thought patterns. Using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Rational Emotional Behavioural Therapy (REBT), the intervention also championed social and physical wellbeing.

This model has now been successfully engaging local young people and a noticeable reduction in their exposure to crime and negative learned behaviours has been seen. A growing number of young people are being referred to the project, many of whom have been excluded from mainstream schools and sent to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Too many are finishing their education without formal qualifications and with no one to support them. This leads them to having limited job prospects and increases their chances of falling into crime. AYBI have been able to support these young people who have been 'left behind' and assist them in gaining Functional Skills qualifications as well as vocational training and employment.

The success of the project to date is evident in the fact that there are up to 30 potential participants waiting for support who have been referred from agencies such as Family in Focus, Camden and Islington Youth Offenders Services and various local schools and PRUs.

Within the local community that AYBI operates in, gang affiliation emerges as a pressing concern, propelling young people towards criminal activities. AYBI have extensively researched gang culture and have conducted youth outreach work to better understand the issue. The combined life experiences that AYBI staff have helps to consolidate this research and connect with young people who are teetering on the edge of the criminal justice system, offering them a lifeline to circumvent a life of criminality.

AYBI will offer young people a programme of boxing and fitness sessions alongside topic led sessions providing practical strategies for young people to break away from criminal behaviour. These would include understanding the consequences of their behaviour, building resilience, and coping strategies, exploring education and career paths and positive role models and mentoring. Participants would receive individual ongoing coaching/mentoring to ensure they remain supported and don't fall back into negative influences. Sessions would be delivered by qualified coaches and staff who are trained in youth mentoring and are CBT/REBT facilitators.

**Expected changes in Year 1**

Social Impact Area 1

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access to education</li> <li>• Increased motivation and engagement in school</li> <li>• Improved educational attainment and achieving qualifications</li> </ul> |
|-----------|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Social Impact Area 2</b>  |  |
| Social and Community Cohesion  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Reduced gang participation</li> <li>• Increased volunteering</li> </ul>                        |
| <b>Social Impact Area 3</b>  |  |
| Employability  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced employability skills</li> <li>• Young people gain work experience</li> <li>• Increased aspirations and career goals</li> </ul> |
| <b>Request and Budget</b>  |  |
| <p>AYBI is requesting <b>£80,000</b> over 2 years towards the salary costs of specialist coaches/mentors and project running costs.</p> <p><b>£40,000 in year 1</b> - £24,090 (coach/mentor salaries), £1,920 (volunteer expenses), £7,020 (equipment and resources) and £6,970 (contribution to running costs).</p> <p><b>£40,000 in year 2</b> - £24,090 (coach/mentor salaries), £1,920 (volunteer expenses), £7,020 (equipment and resources) and £6,970 (contribution to running costs).</p>  |  |
| <b>Conclusion and Recommendation</b>   |  |
| <p>AYBI is a grass roots community project that has been created out of the personal experience, passion, and drive of the founder. Albert is an inspirational man who has used the negative experiences of his life to define his mission – helping young people to resist a path of offending. His approach has been developed over many years as his own skills and expertise has grown. AYBI has evolved over this time from an organisation running drop-in sessions, to working in schools and now delivering therapeutically based support.</p> <p>Albert engages with hard-to-reach young people who are pretty much at the end of the road. Many have been in pupil referral units and not flourished there and without an intervention are on a clear route to either full gang membership or other criminal activity that will lead to imprisonment at best and death at worst.</p> <p>The organisation has grown organically, and there is still much to do to ensure long term sustainability and maximising the wide range of opportunities and assets that are available to them. But they have a really strong core and some impressively qualified support and expertise on their Advisory Trustee Board. AYBI know where they need and want to go and their sense of purpose and deep knowledge of the issues they support make them an exciting organisation to support at this key stage of their development.</p> <p>The project that is being proposed enables them to continue and build on current work. This is very much about being able to continue offering support rather than adding an additional project to their offer. Having this funding will allow them to use other pots of money that they regularly access, to enhance their academic provision by bringing in additional English and Maths tutors, an additional boxing coach and when funds allow an Academic Programme Developer. All of these roles will add to the impact that AYBI achieves and help to build the evidence base they need to open up new and bigger funding opportunities. The plan to move to CIO status will also help that development.</p> <p>The therapeutic support that Albert and the team offer has been developed to meet the specific needs of the young people they engage with, and I was impressed by the curriculum that has been produced. The ethos of the organisation is around co-production and design, so every iteration has the voices of young people running through and it is clear that the whole approach AYBI take has been informed by those</p> |  |

who use the services. The support is holistic, and person centred so meets the needs of each individual. The boxing is also delivered in an accessible way, ensuring that this activity isn't seen as a barrier.

This is the kind of proposal where our funding can make a huge difference not only to the lives of the young people that will be supported but to the wider organisation too. Albert has an appetite to develop AYBI, but in a measured and sustainable way, and the support of the Cranfield Trust will provide an invaluable opportunity to achieve this. The Peer2Peer Exchanges will no doubt be of benefit too, and other grantees in the cohort will equally have much to learn from Albert and AYBI. Support with monitoring and evaluating impact will also be invaluable to their future development and evidencing the needs they address, especially in terms of securing new funders.

Some of this does come with a risk though as AYBI are in some ways at a bang or bust point. Whilst I don't doubt that Albert will always find a way to keep delivering support to young people, they do now need to move to the next stage of their development to be sustainable in the long term. And none of this is guaranteed. However, the additional support we provide alongside the funding will maximise the chance of this being successful. So, despite having given this a medium risk rating, I am not overly concerned and feel that this is the kind of organisation where we can add significant additional value.

Therefore, I recommend support with a grant of £80,000 as requested.

| <b>Recommended Priority Rating</b> |                                   |                    |                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Risk = Medium                      | Difference to organisation = High |                    | Priority = High |
| <b>Funding Recommendation</b>      |                                   |                    |                 |
| Requested amount                   | £80,000                           | Recommended amount | £80,000         |