

Ref Code	Organisation Name	
2020-05-R014	RECOOP	
Visit Date	Visited By	
17 th August 2020	Victoria Southwell (Zoom call)	
Background to Organisation and governance		
<p>RECOOP is a registered charity that was formed in 2008 originally as an Age Concern project in Devon. Previously named ACOOP it was an informal buddying project for older men in three prisons. When Age Concern merged with Help the Aged in 2012 and formed Age UK, ACOOP became a charity in its own right and rebranded to RECOOP. RECOOP operates as part of the Bournemouth Churches Housing Association Group, who provide HR, IT and financial support services. There are currently seven Trustees and a recruitment drive is taking place to recruit a further five people. Trustees have expertise in commercial sectors, social care and mental health. One Trustee is also the Vice Chair of BCHA.</p> <p>A Strategic Plan running from 2016-2020 is in place. A new long term plan was due to be developed this year but due to Covid-19 this has been delayed and the current plan extended to 2021. This is a detailed document that clearly sets out key objectives and aspirations for the charity.</p> <p>On the call I spoke with Paul Grainge (CEO) and Dr Dylan Phillips (Trustee). Paul has been with RECOOP since 2012 and is extremely well networked and knowledgeable. He is also the social care rep on the Ministry of Justice Covid-19 Task Force. Dylan is also the Vice Chair of BCHA as well as having been a Consultant working in the field of addiction and mental health which led to his interest in outcomes for older prisoners. He showed a high level of knowledge about the organisation and application.</p>		
Aims and Activities		
<p>RECOOP's mission is to help and promote the care, resettlement and rehabilitation of older prisoners and ex-offenders. Its vision is to be the leader in the delivery of knowledge and expertise to older people who come into contact with the criminal justice system, supporters and the staff who work with them. The views of the people worked with are used to influence and direct the services that should be delivered.</p> <p>RECOOP works with those over the age of 50 and provides support services, advocacy, financial advice, mentoring on issues such as employment and training, and advice on housing and health. These services are provided to enable older prisoners to take control of their lives and remain free from offending and prevent them from being socially excluded.</p> <p>RECOOP currently works in eight prisons and nearly 700 men and women attend groups and access support services annually. Additionally 49 prisoners across the South West have been trained up to National Care Certificate standard to allow them to work as Prison Buddies and help support vulnerable prisoners with health and social care challenges.</p> <p>Transition resettlement training courses were delivered to 55 people in the community.</p> <p>RECOOP also provides training and advice around good practice to prisons across the country and provides guides and other resources.</p>		

Finances

Financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2019 show income of £325,938 against expenditure of £322,187 resulting in a surplus of £3,751 for the year. Income was slightly reduced from the previous year by £40,000 due to the end of a grant.

The balance sheet shows net current assets of £310,591 and a reserve figure of £245,563 of which £194,388 is unrestricted. This exceeds the minimum reserves outlined in the reserves policy and £75,000 has been designated for the purpose of developing and independently evaluating new services.

Budgets and funding predictions for 2020/21 have been reduced slightly in terms of planned commercial income as a number of contracts with prisons have been unable to be signed due to the onset of Covid-19. All HMPSS contracts have been honoured for this current financial year.

RECOOP's main funding comes from HMPSS contracts for work in prisons and to a much smaller extent Trusts and Foundations.

RECOOP has a SLA with Bournemouth Churches Housing Association to manage their financial processes and these are therefore very robust.

Current Situation and need

The number of older people entering the UK's Criminal Justice System has trebled in the last 25 years with people aged 60 and over making up the fastest growing age group in prison. Older offenders currently make up 17% of the prison population and this is forecast to continue rising. Up to 90% of this group have at least one moderate or severe health condition, with more than 50% having three or more.

RECOOP has been pioneering new, effective ways to support older prisoners and was commissioned in 2018 by HMPPS to deliver two research projects looking at capacity building and support options to meet the growing number of older offenders. This group face some unique challenges when it comes to being released from prison. They are more likely to face social isolation, to have lost contact with friends and family and often do not have a home to return to. The Probation Service and charities offering support to ex-offenders often lack the knowledge and specialist resources to meet their health and social care requirements. Prisoners beyond retirement age often have no educational or leisure opportunities and remain locked in their cells for long periods of time making the transition to life outside of prison even more difficult. Additionally disabilities associated with chronic disease and lifestyle are more common in older people in prison compared to their counterparts in the community which further complicates successful integration. The inequalities faced by older prisoners are set within a backdrop of there currently being no specific national policies addressing the particular needs of older prisoners, however the Justice Committee relaunched an inquiry in April 2020 into the aging prison population. This is seen as being a strong opportunity to develop a national strategy for older prisoners.

As a means of extending their support in prisons RECOOP want to develop their older prisoner resettlement programme into a distance learning package for prisons and Approved Premises. This will provide a clear 'transition from prison to release' support pathway for prisoners that they can work through with support from RECOOP, prison staff and in prisons where RECOOP's Buddying scheme operates, Peer Buddies. The package will be both paper based and also available digitally which will dovetail perfectly with new technology that is being added to all cells to allow engagement with the HMPPS virtual education campus. RECOOP believes that this course has the

potential to generate a valuable income stream for the organisation as it will help to improve reoffending outcomes for older people as many reoffend due to being completely ill equipped for coping with life outside of the prison gate and seek a return to custody.

Overall aim of the funding

Funding will enable RECOOP to employ a Distance Learning Coordinator who will redesign and then implement a distance learning course for older prisoners to support their release and rehabilitation from prison. This will lead to less reliance on grant funding through increased income coming through being commissioned by prisons.

Expected Key Achievements in Year 1

EKA 1

Complete the development of both the paper based and digital packs so they are ready for marketing and promotion.

EKA 2

Marketing and promotional plan developed and implemented.

EKA 3

Increased income of £10k achieved.

Purpose of grant and Budget

RECOOP is requesting £75,000 over 3 years towards the salary of a Distance Learning Coordinator and project costs.

£30,000 in year 1 - £21,979 (salary 0.8 FTE), £3,177 (management), £3,000 (printing), £1,500 (travel), £200 (staff development) and £144 (mobile phone).

£30,000 in year 2 - £21,979 (salary 0.8 FTE), £3,177 (management), £3,000 (printing), £1,500 (travel), £200 (staff development) and £144 (mobile phone).

£15,000 in year 3 - £15,000 (contribution to salary).

Conclusion

RECOOP is an impressive organisation working in a niche area where there is huge need. They are clearly the leading sector experts around this issue and have built a strong reputation based on knowledge, quality of work and outcomes for the prisoners that they work with.

Older prisoners are extremely vulnerable and often invisible within the prison system. The amount of support they need to successfully leave prison and settle into non prison life is hugely underestimated leading to them being overlooked and misunderstood. For prisoners who have served extremely lengthy sentences the world they left bears no resemblance to the world they will be joining and this causes undoubted stress and anxiety for prisoners and can often lead to reoffending just to return to a routine they know and understand.

This makes the work RECOOP does vitally important and creates strong synergy between the needs of the sector and viable opportunities to generate income.

Due to the reputation RECOOP has and the deep relationships that are held with prisons, NPS and other relevant stakeholders I feel that the development of this project is very achievable. Its timing links well into a wider initiative across the Prison Service with regards to an IT Transformation Programme that has just received £14m in funding and will lead to the installation of in-cell technology. The key focus of this investment is on improving learning opportunities and outcomes for prisoners. If the

RECOOP programme can be added to the virtual campus that exists across the prison service then this will be a key way in to providing the programme. Getting the programme accredited will be an important part of building the design and implementation and make it more attractive for participants and commissioners.

Outside of the prison walls there are also several current opportunities for the Probation Service and other partners to buy the programme whether that be via spot purchasing or through other funding streams such as dovetailing with the new CO4 contracts that will be start in January 2021. RECOOP is also part of the dynamic purchasing framework so will look to maximise opportunities there too.

This is an exciting proposal that focuses on a group that doesn't feature significantly in our current portfolio. It is well planned and the timing feels right. I have complete confidence in the skills of the team at RECOOP to make this a success and feel that it would be a really good piece of work for Triangle Trust to support both in terms of the impact for RECOOP financially, outcomes for older prisoners and our own profile. The link between the development of this piece of work and the contribution to the long term sustainability and resilience of the organisation is strong and I would therefore strongly recommend support as requested.

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