

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2023-05-YO31	Spark Inside
Visit Date	Visited By
11 th September 2023	Victoria Southwell (Zoom)
Overall aim of the funding	
To provide coaching and training to HMPPS prison staff so that they can better engage with young people in their care in order to unlock the potential that those young people have.	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Spark Inside (SI) was established in 2012 and is a registered charity. The founder was the original CEO who stepped aside in 2019 and the current CEO has been in place since then. A team of 11 staff work alongside the CEO alongside two Coach Supervisors and 19 Coaches who are employed as consultants.</p> <p>A board of eight Trustees (and two Board Fellows) support the CEO. The Board Fellows are young people with lived experience of the criminal justice system and who spend two years gaining skills and experience of being in a Trustee environment. Most go on to become board members of other charities. Trustees have a wide range of knowledge and expertise including operational prison backgrounds, executive coaching, policy and knowledge of the Ministry of Justice, finance, law and running charities. A regular skills audit is used to identify gaps in knowledge on the board. The board meet four times a year and also attend an away day that has a strategic focus and also incorporates self-reflection. Alongside regular Trustee meetings there are three sub-committees; financial, remuneration and Diversity and Inclusion.</p> <p>SI has a three-year strategic plan that was launched in 2021. It names five strategic aims that are; 1. Increase the number of young people who access coaching at more points on their journey, 2. Change prison culture through coaching people who work and live there, 3. Build policy and influencing to champion coaching as a transformational tool in the criminal justice system, 4. Build a robust evidence base for coaching in the criminal justice system, and 5. Fortify Spark Inside's foundations. Updates are given at Trustees meetings and monthly SMT meetings review progress against the five strategic aims. The annual Trustee away day also is used as an opportunity to engage with progress against the strategy in a deeper way.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>At the assessment I met with Vicki Cardwell (CEO), Luke Carey (Head of Service Delivery, Eli Williams (Service Delivery Manager) and Simon Drysdale (Trustee).</p> <p>Vicki spent 15 years working in the criminal justice sector prior to joining SI. Her background is in policy and campaigning and her work for organisations such as Catch-22 and Revolving Doors exposed her to high levels of lived experience perspectives and research which she has brought to this role. She has a Masters in Policy in Criminal Justice and describes her approach to running SI as entirely a strengths based one. Luke's background is in prisoner and families work and Eli was a Prison Officer prior to joining SI so brings lots of relevant expertise with him.</p>	

Simon has been a Trustee for 18 months and has previously worked as a Governor at a number of Youth Offender Institutions and is currently Deputy Director of Operations for Youth Custody.

Aims and Activities

Spark Inside runs coaching programmes in prisons and the community, primarily across London and the South East, to unlock the potential of those living and working in prison, encourage rehabilitation and change prison culture, and to contribute towards a reduction in reoffending. They were one of the first organisations to take life coaching to young people in prison and to use systems coaching to bring together staff and prisoners in UK prisons.

Their award-winning structured life coaching programme, Hero's Journey, is targeted at young people in prison and 'through the gates' in the community and encourages them to change their lives. A version of the programme from a Black Perspective has been developed and co-designed with young Black men with lived experience and this programme addresses the specific experiences of young Black men in the prison system, who are an over represented group.

Coaching prison staff is another core element of the work SI does, which supports frontline staff of all grades. Alongside this SI ensures that the voices of young people in contact with the criminal justice system are listened to, as the experts, and help to shape strategy, coaching programmes, and campaigns.

Safeguarding

SI have two Safeguarding policies that apply to the young people they work with – one for children and one for adults. Their policies are clear, and the Head of Service Delivery is the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The policy covers two approaches to Safeguarding – the custodial setting process and the community setting process. A flow chart maps out the process for raising concerns in both of these environments and this makes the policy extremely accessible and user friendly. The policy is backed up by good staff training and a belief that by definition anyone in prison is deemed vulnerable so all of their beneficiaries can be considered to be a vulnerable adult.

All staff, Trustees and coaches receive safeguarding training, and this is refreshed every two years. The Chair has responsibility for Safeguarding on the Trustee board. A robust internal system is in place to manage any concerns that don't meet the threshold of escalating to another agency but where there is a worry that staff want to keep an eye on. This is tracked on the internal system that SI use to monitor progress of beneficiaries and is regularly reviewed.

Finances

Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2022 show income of £834,524 against expenditure of £738,590 resulting in a surplus of £95,934. Net current assets amount to £813,637 and this is the reserve figure of which £474,867 is unrestricted. SI's reserve policy states that it is the aim of Trustees to hold reserves on the unrestricted general fund equivalent to between three to six months operating expenditure. This is currently being met.

Budgets and funding predictions for the one-year period of the grant show a planned increase in income for 24/25 to £1.2m of which just over half has been secured to date. Main funding comes via Government grants, donations and Trusts and Foundations including Esmee Fairbairn, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Henry Smith Charity.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is overseen by the Head of Finance and Operations and undertaken by the Operations manager. A Finance Committee meet every three months and review quarterly management accounts and cash flow and send a summary of this to each Trustee meeting. The Finance Committee also sign off the budget and conduct a mid-year review in October.

Current Situation and need

Many young people in custody have experienced challenging and chaotic early lives. The Prison's Inspectorate describes them as 'the most vulnerable and troubled, with complex needs'. It is estimated that 24%-50% of those in youth custody have been in the case system with some 40% of under 18's in custody having experienced neglect/abuse with many having mental health issues.

Prior to the pandemic prisons were already facing unprecedented challenges. The situation has worsened considerably since and months after restrictions lifted for the general population the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection highlighted the justice system was 'a long way from recovery and in some parts operating at unacceptable levels'.

SI has coached over 1,000 young people in prisons, Youth Offending Institutions and Secure Training Centres and through high expose to young people and the formation of In Prison Advisory Boards use the views of young people to advise on programmes, current needs and help shape the design, delivery, and evaluation of their work.

SI have also coached over 80 prison staff directly and this had helped to build up a vital understanding of the needs and challenges on prison staff. Already the benefits of this are being seen through better management of the stresses of work and the support they provide to prisoners. Outcomes such as improved decision making and problem-solving skills, increased empathy and emotional intelligence and a more positive outlook are all being self-recorded by staff. Whilst prison staff undoubtedly face enormous pressures on their own wellbeing, they are uniquely placed to unlock the potential of young people in prison. Specifically, physical instructors (gym staff) are a key group that can impact positively on the needs experienced by young people in prison. Gyms are a unique space within the prison estate and provide an environment that is valued and a hugely important privilege. Prof Rosie Meeks said in her Independent Review of Sport in Prisons that "there is no denying that physical activity, the gym, and members of gym staff remain central, even critical, to every prison, and more influential than might be assumed when first considering the organisation and formation of a prison environment".

SI's life coaching and training programme aims to give gym-based prison staff the reflective space and tools to improve their own wellbeing and that of prisoners in their care. This will support better interactions with prisoners using a coaching approach that will help young people with their mindset and wellbeing and ultimately contribute to the young person's rehabilitation. They will offer individual life coaching, and training in life coaching skills, for six HMPSS prison gym staff across two prisons, HMPYOI ISIS and HMP Brixton. Coaching will be delivered by professional coaches and comprise of eight one-to-one life coaching sessions. After six of the life coaching sessions have been delivered, two workshop training sessions on coaching skills will take place. These will cover areas such as; reviewing current conversation styles and how to move to a coaching style; creating quality connections quickly (including building psychological safety) and listening to empower. Two final coaching sessions will then be delivered to allow gym staff to bring their learning back into their practice.

This is a pilot project and as such a key element of this will be an evaluation on the impact this has had on both the prison gym staff but most crucially the young people

who will benefit from the enhanced support that they will receive through their interactions with them. This obviously presents some challenges as some of the impact will need to be tracked through indirect beneficiaries rather than the prison gym staff. But SI has experience of designing evaluations and working with external consultants to support the impact measurement of their interventions and are confident that a framework can be designed to enable this for this project. They have previously evaluated work that has taken place in HMPYOI ISIS and trained someone with lived experience to work on evaluations. The Service Delivery Managers who work in the two prisons will also be key in supporting this element of the project.

It is hoped that this pilot will highlight the value of investing in prison gym staff in this way and that this will provide evidence for SI to develop a match funded model that will embed the learning from the evaluation and enable them to roll this out to additional prisons.

Expected Changes in Year 1

Social Impact Area 1	
Individual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved self-efficacy • Improved self-esteem • Improved motivation
Social Impact Area 2	
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased physical activity • Improved mental well being • Improved ability to avoid negative relationships

Request and Budget

SI is requesting **£26,450** over 1 year for the costs of coaching and training prison gym staff.

£26,450 in year 1 - £11,250 (management and support), £7,800 (coaching and training provision), £5,000 (evaluation), £1,000 (contribution to running costs).

Conclusion

This is a really exciting proposal from a dynamic organisation. Spark Inside has previously received two Development Grants to help them develop an evidence base for life coaching as a successful rehabilitation programme for young offenders. The main aim of this had been to become a commissioned service but this did not happen in a consistent way, although contracts do make up around 20% of their current income. In late 2019 the founder of Spark Inside left the organisation and since then they have been run by the current CEO who has brought a new energy to the organisation that has built on the original vision that the founder had. Over the past few year's income has increased by around £100,000 annually and their flag ship programmes have developed to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic. This is a solid organisation with a strong track record that hopefully benefited from the previous support they received via Triangle Trust funding.

The pandemic led SI to start upskilling prison staff due to their position of being some of the only people who had regular access to young people whilst the prisons were locked down. This provided a vital lifeline to many young people who were reliant on the skills and expertise of a small number of people due to lack of access to prisons for most outside agencies. Added to this young people were often confined to their cells for up to 22.5 hours per day, contributing to worsening mental health and other challenges. By enabling prison staff to develop coaching skills the lack of access to

young people in custody was by passed and proved an effective way of embedding core expertise in the prison workforce.

Whilst this is a pilot it feels like an extremely important piece of work to support. SI is a learning organisation who have developed a well-planned piece of work. They know the prisons that they work in well and have a strong set of relationships that will benefit this project. They already have a good understanding of the importance of the gym in a prison setting and this is a logical place to embed this kind of expertise. The changes in the way that gym staff could interact with young people has the potential to be transformational for the young people.

SI will work with a current evaluation partner to work out a clear evaluation process for the pilot that demonstrates both the impact that this pilot has on the skills of gym staff as well as tracking changes to the young people they come in contact with. It is acknowledged that this will be tricky, but SI already uses an Outcome Star to measure impact for beneficiaries and it is likely that this will be added to and that qualitative interviews will also take place through the external evaluator.

We have heard a lot lately about the challenges of keeping prison staff, with high turnover rates and high absence rates for staff. This is a definite risk to the project, but I felt reassured when speaking with some of the team who have themselves been Prison Officers that initiatives like this build moral, support staff and have a positive impact in terms of job satisfaction. Whilst this will not guarantee a member of staff leaving and taking this expertise with them I am convinced that it is worth the risk as improved staff engagement will be an interesting outcome in itself.

SI is clearly not a Sport 4 Development charity so does fall outside of the criteria in this sense, but it is hard to see who else would be able to deliver this project to the gym staff and the ultimate impact will be felt in a sport and learning environment, so I feel comfortable that this is a close enough alignment to the criteria and our overall aims to award a grant. I also think that being part of a wider cohort will not only benefit SI in terms of them developing their work in this area but other grantees too who will be able to enhance their offers when working on the prison estate. Therefore, I would recommend a grant of £26,450 as requested.

Recommended Priority Rating

Risk = Medium	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High
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