

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2022-11-YO31	Konnect Communities CIC
Visit Date	Visited By
30 th January 2023	Victoria Southwell (Zoom)
Overall aim of the funding	
To fund a Young Adult Mentor who will support 20 young people with criminal convictions in Cornwall to secure employment and reduce their reoffending through providing long term, bespoke, face to face mentoring.	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Konnect Communities (KC) is a Community Interest Company that was established in 2014 by two ex-Police Officers. They are currently in the process of applying to become a CIO. KC employs 27 members of staff and has five volunteers. The CEO is supported by a board of four unpaid Directors (and a member of staff who is a Director) who bring experience of the criminal justice system, strategic development, economic growth, marketing, housing, and the charity sector. KC aims to have a more diverse board once they become a CIO so are looking to recruit additional Directors and a skills audit has recently taken place to identify gaps in skills. Directors meet quarterly but hold extra meetings if needed. There is a Board Development Day every 12 months that the SMT also attend.</p> <p>KC currently has a strategy that runs until the end of 2023. Due to leaving the European Union several large EU funding contracts will run out at the end of the year and this, alongside the transition to becoming a CIO, has provided an opportunity for KC to really think about their future direction of travel. A detailed Theory of Change exercise has also been undertaken which has helped to identify a clear vision for the organisation and this will help to frame and form a new long-term strategy.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>At the assessment I met with Ian Kurnow (Founder and CEO), Gemma Pople (Operations Manager), Juliet Vinnal-Brown (Team Leader for Criminal Justice Team), Jasmin Appleby (freelance fundraiser), Anne Proctor (Chair) and Andrew Holt (Finance Manager and Director).</p> <p>Ian set up KC after having worked for many years as a Police Officer and becoming frustrated by the increasingly limited options available to move people away from crime. Ian describes himself as a leader who sees his role as empowering other people to do their jobs to the best of their ability. He has a strong vision and understands his role and his limitations. He and several other senior managers have recently done a Leadership Training course.</p> <p>Anne became a Director in 2020 and worked for 30 years in the probation service. She was seconded to the PCC office to head up a Transforming Justice project and was introduced to KC. She holds significant local knowledge.</p>	
Aims and Activities	
Konnect Communities works to enable, motivate and inspire people in local communities who are seeking to improve their skills, develop their opportunities and maximise their potential. They work with a wide range of individuals including victims	

and offenders of crime, and young people struggling to remain in education. The aim of KC is to work closely with clients, to create a tailored and supported pathway that supports the development and enhancement of life skills so that clients are enabled to participate in a positive and constructive future.

In order to achieve this, KC provides a needs-based service that includes access to mentoring; training, meaningful and relevant education and facilitates opportunities for employment. Projects include

- restorative justice work,
- a criminal justice hub that supports prolific offenders over the age of 19 at various stages of their criminal justice experience,
- an employability programme where mentors identify key barriers to gaining employment and work with clients to overcome these barriers,
- a project supporting victims of crime by offering both emotional advice and reassurance, and practical support to enhance security and reduce risk, and
- Life Choices – a CBT based employability course for people who consider themselves far from job ready. Life Choices focusses on helping individuals with their self-worth, self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

KC works with 400 people a year and in 2021 just over 50% had a criminal conviction. Of these 40 were between the age of 18-25 and known to have a conviction.

Safeguarding

KC has a detailed Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy that has recently been updated and adopted. The Operations Manager is the named Designated Safeguarding Lead. All staff are DBS checked and receive safeguarding training up to Level 3. This is refreshed annually. The policy clearly outlines steps to take should a member of staff have a concern and all staff are encouraged to “listen to that inner voice” if they have a concern but don’t feel that it meets the threshold of the policy.

The CRM system keeps a record of any concerns and these are discussed at regular team meetings. Staff make external safeguarding referrals via the MARU (Multi Agency Referral Unit) and around 8 a year are escalated through this route. Any other concerns are monitored internally. All staff additionally have an hour a month of external welfare support where they can discuss the impact of any safeguarding concerns they have had.

Safeguarding is also an agenda item for Director meetings and all Trustees also undertake safeguarding training.

Finances

Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended June 2021 show income of £870,371 against expenditure of £828,925 resulting in a surplus of £41,446. Net current assets amount to £582,669 of and a reserve figure of £87,140 of which all is unrestricted. The reserves policy aims to hold three months of staff salaries which has not been achieved in a sustainable way. Most funding is received in arrears which makes the cash in bank situation quite fluid.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show planned income of £576,885 for 23/24 and so far, £312,477 has been secured. For 24/25 income of £115,154 has been confirmed against planned expenditure of £324,817. Becoming a CIO will open up more funding opportunities from Trusts and Foundations which will be applied for alongside contracts and growing a social enterprise that will generate private income. It is anticipated that this will fill the gap left by EU funding.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Finance Director who produces monthly management accounts for the SMT that include cashflow figures. Payroll is outsourced. The Finance Director also sits on the Board as a Director but once KC becomes a CIO recruiting someone with financial expertise will be a priority for board development as this has been identified as a gap.

Current Situation and need

Cornwall does not have its own prison, so all prisoners are located out of county making visits difficult. There is also a poor provision of effective local rehabilitation services on release from prison which leads to high reoffending rates. In 2015 data showed that 90% of prisoners released to Cornwall have more than one conviction, a situation that needs to be addressed particularly amongst young offenders.

There is a steady flow of 18-25 with a criminal conviction that are being released from southwest prisons into Cornwall. Data from HMP Exeter shows that 10% of Cornish prisoners were 18-25, slightly higher than the 8% of the Cornish population who are 18-25. The closest Young Offender Institute, HMP Portland, does not share this kind of information but it is assumed that there will be around 50 young people from Cornwall serving sentences there and two other southwest prisons will also have under 25's due for release to Cornwall. On top of this there are also those who have already been released and are living back in the community, demonstrating that there are large numbers of young people who need support to curtail their offending behaviour.

Alongside managing everything that comes with having a criminal record, ex-offenders in Cornwall experience a range of other challenges. There is a significant housing crisis, with 20,000 households waiting for accommodation on the social housing register. This makes accessing secure housing difficult. Additionally due to the insecure nature of seasonal employment due to Cornwall's reliance on the tourism industry, finding employment is challenging, particularly if you have a conviction. Also, average wages are 25% lower than the national average. Added to this the rurality of Cornwall and a lack of sufficient public transport makes access to work difficult without a car. All added together this contributes to socio-economic deprivation for people in Cornwall, with half of all neighbourhoods being within the 10-40% most deprived in England.

Young offenders are also contending with additional challenges linked to family breakdown and lack of positive role models, resisting drug use and exploitation, and trying to break away from negative influences. Adverse childhood experiences leading to trauma and psychological issues and a lack of qualifications and work experience are also key factors that need addressing. Many young offenders have experienced the care system, and felt let down by it, or come from families that have seen generations of unemployment due to the decline in fishing, farming and mining – industries once so important to Cornwall.

To address some of these issues for young offenders, KC want to develop a mentoring project that will provide long term support leading to employment and a reduction in re-offending. Each young person will be offered up to 12 months of support, 9 months prior to securing employment and three months once they are in a job. The aim of the project will be to increase maturity, self-sufficiency and independence and increase the ability to focus on future plans and goals. A paid Mentor will provide 1-2-1 face to face support to help address the immediate needs that the young person has. The support will enable them to get to a place where they are ready to look for work and then help them to identify and secure a suitable job. The Mentor will also advocate for the young person with local employers and organisations. The support will be bespoke, so as to meet the specific needs of each young person, and will make use of the

natural local environment to encourage peaceful discussion and thoughtful reflection. KC already runs an employability programme so the Mentor's support will be merged with this proven approach to supporting older ex-offenders into employment. This includes gaining qualifications, CV preparation, undertaking work experience or volunteering, convictions disclosure preparation, job searching, interview skills support and in work support. KC now needs funding to employ a Mentor for this project.

Expected Key Achievements in Year 1

EKA 1

Establishment of referral pathways with 8 key partnership organisations.

EKA 2

50% of participants (10) create individual employment pathways.

EKA 3

20 young people are actively engaging in the project by the end of the year and a change in their offending behaviour can be demonstrated.

Request and Budget

KC is requesting **£60,000** over 2 years towards the salary costs of a part time Mentor (22.5 hours), Team Leader management support and a contribution towards overheads. The overall project budget is £78,761 and KCC is confident of securing additional funding of £18,761 and are making applications to Cornwall Community Foundation, National Lottery Awards for All etc.

£30,000 in year 1 - £20,832 (Mentor salary), £6,123 (Team Leader salary – 5 hours per week), £5,391 (overheads), £5,171 (project costs).

£30,000 in year 2 - £20,832 (Mentor salary), £6,123 (Team Leader salary – 5 hours per week), £5,391 (overheads), £5,171 (project costs).

Conclusion

KC is an exciting organisation with a deep commitment to addressing issues of offending in Cornwall. They are led by a team with deep local knowledge and a charismatic founder who is as passionate and determined as he was when we set up it up. KC has established itself as a vital source of support across Cornwall for people involved with, and affected by, crime. The origins of the organisation run strongly through the work still and a deep understanding of what is wrong with the criminal justice system and an equally deep empathy for the people caught up in it frames all of the work they do.

Cornwall is a unique part of the UK that faces many challenges. Prior to making an application, discussions I had with KC about a possible proposal really highlighted some of the issues that people need to deal with on a daily basis and the assessment call reinforced this. This is not an easy location to work in for multiple reasons. The lack of any prison means that people are returning to a community where ties can be quite weak due to periods of being imprisoned elsewhere in the country. This can severely damage relationships and leave ex-offenders with weak support networks. It also limits the amount of support that can be provided pre-release by organisations working locally, which can significantly impact the development of trust and relationship building. On top of this Cornwall also experiences issues with a lack of infrastructure that affects transport, employment opportunities and access to affordable housing. The needs of young offenders are often overlooked which exacerbates the issues they are dealing with.

All of this makes this application especially interesting. KC clearly has built up a strong reputation over the 9 years since it was established and is a key player in important networks and decision-making processes across Cornwall. Ian is well known and

clearly well respected. His knowledge is valued and he is invited to be part of multiple committees and groups, his experience of operating on both sides of the fence giving him invaluable insights and a fierce belief in a different way of doing things.

This project is borne out of a huge need to fill a gap of support for young people and is based on a model that has been proven to work for older offenders. This is a team with a lot of existing expertise in supporting young offenders (at other organisations) and this knowledge will be put to good use. The worker that will be employed will also be recruited from the youth offending sector to bring in additional knowledge. This project will also fill a gap left by an organisation that closed during the pandemic that specifically targeted young offenders. Whilst it was open KC avoided developing projects with this focus but there is now an urgent need to support this group.

The numbers of young people who will be worked with are conservative but the intensity and longevity of the support does limit the number of participants who can be supported. That said, the predicted number who will find employment and who will desist from reoffending are a good percentage, which ultimately is the most important figure. The aim of achieving employment is unlikely to be seen until the second year of the grant though due to the high support needs that the young people are anticipated to have. Unlike some projects that don't have a clear gender focus, KC feel confident that they will be able to attract young women onto the programme which will be another strength.

KC is going through something of a transition. After experiencing a significant growth due to the availability of European funding, the pandemic hit them hard. Due to payments in arrears based on strict targets they felt a huge amount of pressure and ultimately were slow to make changes to their staffing structure to match the decrease in expected income. This though did help them to rethink their organisational status and their overall vision for the organisation which led to an application to convert to a CIO. This will allow them more flexibility with different funding streams and also to develop their social enterprise which will be a key income stream once EU funding disappears in 2023. The prospect of support from the Cranfield Trust through the Spark Programme was particularly welcomed in helping them develop this further.

This application will be a good addition to the portfolio and the team will bring some unique knowledge and expertise to the rest of the cohort. The geographical location will also add an interesting element to the portfolio. The project is well planned, is rooted in a strong case for need and likely to achieve strong outcomes for the participants. Therefore, I would strongly recommend support with a grant of £60,000 as requested.

Recommended Priority Rating

Risk = Low	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High
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