

Organisation Name	Reference	
Paws For Progress		

Visit Date	Visited By
11 October 2023	Jim Marshall

Grant Summary
<p>Paws for Progress (PFP) grant was for £50,000 over 2 years to cover the costs of working with 60 young people and part funding the salaries of the Education and Wellbeing and Training and Behaviour Specialists.</p>

Visit Details (People met, premises visited etc.)
<p>Premises</p> <p>University of Stirling Polmont YOI</p> <p>People</p> <p>Suzanne Ruby (Operations Manager, PFP) Rebecca Leonardi (Development Manager and Director, PFP) Megan ? (Education and Wellbeing Specialist, PFP) June ? (Training and Behaviour Specialist, PFP)</p> <p>? (Prison Officer at Polmont)</p> <p>6 Young offenders</p> <p>Zeus – a German Shepherd</p> <p>Angus - ?</p>

Information about the Organisation
<p>PFP's purpose is to unleash potential and improve lives by providing services centred on people and dogs learning together. PFP work with young people and vulnerable adults in custody or at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.</p> <p>PFP use dog training to enable people to build confidence, positive relationships and new skills for education and future employment.</p>

The work mainly focuses on young people housed at Polmont YOI, but also provide the same opportunities for women in custody and young people in the community.

### Issues and Comments

This is a seriously impressive organisation. I really enjoyed my visit, meeting some of the young people in the PFP programme, the PFP team, the prison staff who supervise the young people (and the dogs).

There is clearly a strong relationship between the staff and the young people I met and all of the latter seemed relaxed in chatting to me about the programme and were obviously enjoying working with the dogs. Their patience in working with the animals would put me to shame.

At a coffee break, we had a great informal conversation about Scottish cultural innovations in England including Tunnocks Caramel Wafers, Irn Bru, the best football team (Hearts obviously) and how boring golf is. I mention this as, although it sounds trivial, I felt it demonstrates how comfortable and informal the young people were in chatting with the PFP team, me and amongst themselves.

I got the impression of a very positive correlation between the programme and improvements in behaviours, inter-personal skills, teamwork and interactions with and between the young people. From seeing some of the artwork on the walls to seeing some of the dog's "bios" prepared by the young people before the animals go to permanent homes.

PFP have taken the educational aspects of the programme further, working with Fife College and the Scottish Qualifications Authority to deliver nationally recognised qualifications, including IMTD.

While animal care is the obvious career opportunity for the young people once they finish their sentences (and PFP have built relationships with zoos and safari parks), PFP are focused on ensuring that the young people can show some of the skills referred to above (teamwork, problem solving) when applying for jobs. PFP have reconnected with a young person who completed the programme a few years ago who now works as a Youth Worker.

I also found it interesting to chat with the prison office responsible for supervising the young people. Having had some experience (not in TT trustee role) of discussing offenders with prison staff and the incredibly cynical view taken by many staff about offenders, this was totally different. Very supportive comments by the prison officer about the programme.

PFP have submitted their Year 1 report and they have met all their targets.

### Other Feedback

Very positive feedback from Rebecca and Suzanne about the help they are getting from Cranfield.

I asked what the constraints were on growing the programme? Perhaps not surprisingly, it was finance. There is no shortage of rescue dogs and, although the Scottish Government is trying to reduce the young offender population, the programme, could, and is (eg at Cornton Vale women's prison) capable of being rolled out to a wider community.