

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2022-11-YO56	St Columb's Park House
Visit Date	Visited By
14 th February 2023	Victoria Southwell
Overall aim of the funding	
<p>To restart the Fight for MySELF programme which uses sport as a development tool for young offenders to change their negative mindsets, build a sense of hope and a sense of purpose. Alongside formal learning sessions to make a young offender work ready, mixed martial arts sessions support personal development and post release support helps to identify and secure employment opportunities.</p>	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>St Columb's Park House (SCPH) is a Northern Irish registered charity that was set up by local community leaders as a Reconciliation Trust just before the Good Friday Agreement was signed. It is led by a Managing Director who is supported by 9 direct members of staff and a number of freelancers who work on specific projects. Alongside this runs a Social Enterprise, the 'house' providing community spaces and residential accommodation for other Peace and Reconciliation organisations across the globe.</p> <p>Eight unpaid Director's work with the Managing Director and they bring a wide variety of skills and experience to the organisation that includes; community development, education, finance and business, youth work, the criminal justice system and procurement/business development. SCPH are looking to recruit a further two Directors and are keen to fill gaps in knowledge linked to legal or HR skills and representation from BAME communities. Directors meet every two months, and a Finance Sub-Committee meets in the month in-between. An HR Sub-Committee is also about to be established.</p> <p>SCPH developed a strategic plan in 2020 (after celebrating their 25-year anniversary) that looked forward to the next 25 years. Four key aims were identified; to design and implement innovative educational models and practices that promote environmental, personal and community well-being; build a resilient organisation with strong governance, permaculture values and a dynamic team, develop welcoming, creative physical structures and spaces for communal activities, self-organised groups, and volunteering; and build strong alliances locally and globally for changemaking and non-violent activism. Each aim has key outcomes that sit underneath them, and the strategy has been developed with the input of Directors, community members and community groups and stakeholders who use the building and grounds. This is an aspirational and exciting document that communicates a strong vision but lacks some of the detail to show how they will get there, which SCPH acknowledge.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>At the assessment I met with Sharon Doherty (Managing Director), Emma Johnston (Director/Trustee) and Gary Blair (Magilligan Prison Development Officer) and Pinta (MMA Instructor).</p> <p>Sharon joined SCPH in 2016 and has a commercial background. She grew up in Derry so knows the city and it's struggles well. Her work in retail led her to instigating youth training programmes across several businesses so she has a strong understanding of</p>	

the support needs of young people and a deep commitment to them acquiring qualifications. She strongly believes in adopting asset-based approaches and spoke passionately about being a leader who gets the best out of people but also who stands up to challenging issues, connects people and gives something back to the city.

Emma is Gender Head with Youth Action and has a significant amount of expertise around young people gained through her many years employed as a Youth Worker.

Gary is SCPH's key contact at HMP Magilligan and has been a driving force in Fight for MySELF running in the prison. He is passionate in his support for the programme and promoting positive engagement and change in the young men he works with.

Aims and Activities

St Columb's Park House's mission is the advancement of education and other charitable purposes beneficial to the community in Northern Ireland. They aim to do this through providing sanctuary and support to local citizens to become changemakers, peace builders and community leaders.

Projects currently taking place include;

- Compassionate Communities which 1) enables the voices of local people from marginalised communities to be heard in decision making processes which impact them and their communities and, 2) enhances the skills, knowledge, and capacity of local people to develop and drive forward a campaign on an issue they feel passionate about.
- National Citizen Service which gives 15–17-year-olds the opportunity to build skills for employment such as resilience, confidence and leadership, build trust between people of different backgrounds and create stronger communities where giving back is a way of life.
- Peace in the Park – a wide range of activities taking place in the parkland designed to bring together all people.
- IgnYte which is a youth development programme for 16–25-year-olds that promotes personal development and building skills and good relationships through outdoor activities, and
- Unity Project which empowers people to challenge sectarianism, bullying and harassment and lead the way in creating a culture of compassion and active citizenship in schools and communities.

Safeguarding

SCPH has a detailed Safeguarding policy and a clear approach to implementing it. There is a named Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy, and both receive annual training. All staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction, that is refreshed annually and through ongoing training that is run for all staff over the year.

A traffic light system is implemented for all concerns to ensure that when a concern is raised it is reported, recorded, and acted upon. Concerns that require external escalation are reported via the local Gateway system.

The work that takes place on the prison estate requires that SCPH also undertake safeguarding training as required by the prison and that staff follow the prison's safeguarding processes. They would also take any concerns back to the SCPH team to ensure that anything they felt uncomfortable about could be followed up separately.

Finances

Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2022 show income of £580,558 against expenditure of £525,511 resulting in a surplus of £55,047. Net

current assets amount to £387,975 and a reserve figure of £1,241,872 of which £260,697 is unrestricted. The reserves policy states that an amount should be held that ensures there is no disruption to services at short notice due to lack of funds, an unforeseen reduction in income or an increase in expenditure, while at the same time ensuring that reserves are no higher than necessary and not retained for longer than required. Directors regularly monitor and review reserve levels and are satisfied that current levels are more than adequate.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show a reduction in planned income and expenditure due to the end of some projects that had received EU funding. Current planned expenditure for 23/24 is £383,000 and most of this has been confirmed. For 24/25 current planned expenditure is £446,000 and 50% of this has been secured with the rest waiting to be confirmed. The current NI power sharing situation means that funding decisions are being made annually but SCPH is confident that these grants will be awarded, and that other funding will be secured.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Finance Manager who is supported by two Directors with significant financial expertise and a Finance Sub-Committee.

Current Situation and need

Ministry of Justice research into the needs and challenges facing prisoners identified that 30% of newly sentenced prisoners report symptoms of anxiety, depression, and self-harm. Offenders often enter the prison system with a cocktail of health and social problems including poor mental health, substance abuse and low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Mental health issues affecting mood, thinking, behaviour, lack of self-esteem and self-worth have a serious impact on the life of a prisoner in terms of how they serve their sentence, engage in prison life and their ability to rehabilitate. SCPH's previous work on the prison estate highlighted the biggest challenges to prisoners are their feeling of hopelessness, boredom, tensions towards other inmates and Prison Officers and a sense of feeling worthless. HMP Magilligan, where SCPH has previously run the Fight for MySELF programme, has identified some key specific challenges and needs amongst their inmates. These include increasing mental health issues, addiction and substance abuse within the prison, violence between prisoners, leading to some prisoners being scared to leave their cells or landings, and feelings of isolation.

The MoJ 'Unlocking Potential' report states that even after release many prisoners feel that they have limited opportunities for training or employment because of their criminal record and their lack of skills or qualifications. This situation can lead to reoffending which is a significant issue as it is estimated that three out of five prisoners leave prison without an identified employment, education, or training plan.

In 2019 SCPH began working in HMP Magilligan delivering a mixed martial arts programme that provided two sessions a week using non-contact boxing and martial arts training to support attitudinal change and control anxiety and anger. Within these sessions are self-development components that help participants to develop coping skills and mechanisms to manage attitude and behaviour. Each participant receives psychosocial support and one-to-one mentoring. After these training sessions the participants then attend employability workshops to help them develop the skills necessary to secure employment on release. SCPH is a recognised provider of OCN qualifications, so this is also built into the programme. Before release the young person is provided with a comprehensive training pathway plan that includes education, employment, or training options.

<p>The project originally ran for two years with Laureus Sport for Good funding and then a further year through prison funding, but it is currently on hold until more funding is secured. The demand for the project is high though and SCPH and HMP Magilligan staff have been working closely together to ensure that the programme doesn't lose momentum. They have also used the gap in delivery to utilise previous participants who have taken on mentoring roles for younger inmates and to add a through the gate support component. This will provide the young person with up to three months of support to help with things like setting up a bank account, linking to sports clubs and being a bridge between the young person and their pathway plan, including supporting local employers who take on a young person. SCPH is requesting a grant to resume delivery of Fight for MySELF in HMP Magilligan.</p>
<p>Expected Key Achievements in Year 1</p>
<p>EKA 1</p>
<p>To recruit and retain a group of 10 young men (at any one time) within Magilligan prison who have between 12-18 months left on their sentence.</p>
<p>EKA 2</p>
<p>Increased levels of self-awareness amongst participants to better recognise triggers linked to anger and anxiety.</p>
<p>EKA 3</p>
<p>Increased aspirations around employment and seeing it as a viable opportunity post release.</p>
<p>Request and Budget</p>
<p>SCPH is requesting £56,700 over 2 years for the running costs of the project.</p> <p>£28,350 in year 1 - £8,640 (sport facilitation), £4,320 (employability facilitation), £4,320 (finance, management, and ongoing support), £2,600 (travel), £2,250 (kit), £1,560 (overheads) and £4,660 (other project running costs).</p> <p>£28,350 in year 2 - £8,640 (sport facilitation), £4,320 (employability facilitation), £4,320 (finance, management, and ongoing support), £2,600 (travel), £2,250 (kit), £1,560 (overheads) and £4,660 (other project running costs).</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>
<p>St Columb's Park House is an important organisation in Derry that has been working at the interface between Derry's catholic and protestant communities for over 25 years. It is set in beautiful parkland that provides a neutral space for people to come together and it has been vital in ensuring that significant peace building work has taken place since the early 1990's.</p> <p>The project that SCPH is applying for is impressive. Having run for two years via funding from Laureus Sport for Good and then a further year with money allocated by the Governor, Fight for MySELF had a significant impact on the young men who participated. The positive feedback from multiple prison staff when I visited HMP Magilligan was impossible to ignore, and they all felt incredibly strongly that the project had helped the participants to change. It had not only changed their ability to deal with difficult situations, but it had also increased their self-awareness and provided them with a focus that they had previously struggled to find. It had also provided them with a sense of being part of a community and committing to something that they wanted to protect and succeed for. The young men I met who had been on the course spoke about the difference being part of Fight for MySELF had made to them and the changes this had enabled them to make. As part of the programme, which was impacted by lockdowns, several of the young men stepped up into mentoring roles</p>

and this unexpected outcome provided a level of responsibility and pride that contributed further to their development.

The staff involved in this project are key to its success. Pinta, the mixed martial arts instructor is both a calm and steady presence for the young men, as well as being an example of how you can turn your life around and deal with challenges differently. His own experience of sport saving him from a life of offending resonates with the participants and his physical size and control of his emotions show participants that there are other ways of dealing with things rather than through anger and violence. His sessions are crucial in these young men developing the skills that everything else they go on to do as part of the programme, and the wider prison employment, training, and education offer, is built on. The emotional skills they develop enable them to engage in the sessions that follow about employability and enable them to leave prison with some additional tools to help them resist the links to reoffending that they will face. Alongside this the support they will continue to receive from SCPH will enable them to have employment as a viable way of moving on with their lives.

The prison staff are also key to the success of this programme, and it was clear that there are high levels of support for this programme across the whole prison team – ranging from Officers, Section Leads and the No1. And No2. Governors.

The previous programme didn't have the post release element of support and SCPH recognises this to be a crucial part of the jigsaw. Unlike many proposals, the majority of the support offered takes place in the prison estate. For many of the participants they will engage with Fight for MySELF when they have between 18-12 months left of their sentence, so over this time the project will make deep connections with them to ensure that they are ready for release. The new addition of the post release support will ensure that there is continuity for the young person, which is especially important as they may be returning to an area without a huge amount of other support on offer, and potentially back to negative influences. So, this part of the project feels like an important add on to the original design and moves the project on from being one that enables these young men to being work ready on release to one that takes them a step forward and helps them a find a job that they keep and do well in.

Northern Ireland is a challenging place to operate. The current issues at Stormont mean that the environment for a charity is complicated and everything being agreed is short term. The loss of significant amounts of EU funding at the end of the year will also impact the sector greatly. This project has found an effective way of being able to navigate much of this upheaval and build strong and equitable relationships with the right partners. It was impossible to walk away from this assessment not feeling hugely impressed by the project, the impact it has achieved to date and the wider work that SCPH does in Derry.

Last year we funded Turnaround Project in Belfast under this programme and there will be real value in supporting a second project in Northern Ireland to help build the momentum of what these two very different, but linked projects are trying to achieve. Additionally, across the wider cohort they will bring a huge amount of expertise around pre-release work on the prison estate. Therefore, I would strongly recommend support with a grant of £56,700 as requested.

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