

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2022-11-YO34	Sussex Pathways
Visit Date	Visited By
23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2023	Victoria Southwell
Overall aim of the funding	
To employ an Employment Support Coordinator to enable vulnerable young women with offending backgrounds to gain and sustain employment, with built in employee and employer support, and volunteer mentoring running alongside this.	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Sussex Pathways (SP) is a registered charity that started as a Steering Group in Lewes Prison as part of a leaving prison project. Quickly afterwards, in 2008, it became a registered charity and received a £10,000 grant from Sussex Police for a mentoring programme. A Coordinator was then employed, and SP now employs 11 staff, 8 of whom are part time. They also have 20 active volunteers.</p> <p>The CEO is supported by a board of 10 active Trustees who include a judge, a former Police Chief, a former High Sheriff, an ex- prison governor, someone with a business background, a Chaplin, and an IT expert. Trustees meet five times a year plus an AGM and alongside these meetings are both buddied with a staff member who they connect with monthly and assigned to a particular project or piece of work that they provide support and advice on. This also helps them to grow their knowledge and awareness about the work that takes place on a daily basis. There is also a volunteer sub group currently in place that meets quarterly. Several Trustees are also volunteer mentors.</p> <p>SP has a strategic plan that runs from 2021-2026. It identifies five key strategic goals that are being worked towards that include; meeting the needs of prison residents, influencing, and improving national and local policy and practice, building a stronger charity, developing a diverse mix of income, and increasing and sustaining their volunteer team. Each of these five areas has a number of key targets attached to it that are reviewed regularly by both the SMT and at Trustee meetings. The Trustees were closely involved in the development of the strategy. This is considered to be a 'rolling document' that will be added to as required.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>At the assessment I met with Shirl Tanner (CEO), Lucy Handley-Edwards (COO) and Margaret Carey (Trustee and Chair).</p> <p>Shirl joined SP in 2012 as a social work student. She ended up not completing her course and stayed at SP working in a variety of roles until she became CEO. She describes herself as a decisive leader who is confident to make decisions about moving forward. She also said she is unafraid to ask others for their thoughts about her decisions and prioritises the importance of listening to staff. Having moved from a delivery role she enjoys the strategic side of managing the organisation and bringing her extensive knowledge of working on the front line to planning and development.</p> <p>Lucy has a criminology and sociology degree and originally joined SP also in 2012 before working for a different charity running a Welfare to Work programme and then returning to SP to lead their employment work and set up their women's project.</p>	

Margaret has been Chair for 12 years and has a huge amount of experience in the sector. She has set up five charities that support offenders and had also been a magistrate and worked in restorative justice. Her knowledge and networks are significant, and she provides strong support to the operational team at SP.

### **Aims and Activities**

Sussex Pathway's vision is a world where criminal justice residents are encouraged and supported in learning to make better life choices, leading to the ability to build and maintain positive futures in their local communities. They also aim to reduce re-offending, promote social and financial inclusion, and help create safer communities for everyone.

SP work primarily with residents of HMP Lewes and HMP Rochester to promote rehabilitation back into the community and reduce reoffending. Support is provided through paid staff and volunteer community mentors who support an individual prison resident and are a vital form of support on release, meeting the resident at the gate and being there for other vital points of their post release.

In prison, work includes delivering Pathway to Change course which last seven weeks and teach practical life skills and mindfulness which aim to provide the resident with the tools they need to overcome obstacles they will face after leaving prison. SP also runs an eight-week course, Seen & Heard, which is targeted at residents who face long or indeterminate sentences and this looks at trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder and build emotional resilience.

SP provides restorative justice support which enables residents to be referred to the Sussex Restorative Justice Partnership and supported by volunteers (trained as RJ Facilitators) through the RJ process. SP set up a Women's Project in 2022 which serves three women's prisons and supports women returning to Sussex upon release.

### **Safeguarding**

SP has a clear Safeguarding policy and a well-informed approach to implementing it. As volunteers are a key element of their approach, the training that they provide around Safeguarding is robust and designed to enable volunteers to understand and work appropriately with regards to safeguarding. There is a big focus on boundaries and recognition that due to the complex nature of the people being supported that safeguarding can be quite ambiguous.

Staff meet regularly to discuss caseloads and flag any safeguarding concerns or worries. Volunteers also meet every three months in person and every two weeks online and Safeguarding is a reoccurring agenda item at these meetings. All volunteers receive three-day accredited training before starting as a volunteer and this covers boundaries, personal wellbeing, conditioning, and manipulation as well as more standard safeguarding training. All training has a trauma informed focus and ongoing refresher training around safeguarding is provided to staff throughout the year, who go through Level Three Safeguarding training when they start as part of their induction.

It was flagged at the assessment that the policy does not have a named Designated Safeguarding Lead within it, and it was agreed that this would be addressed as a priority to reflect the fact that this is the CEO.

### **Finances**

Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 show income of £205,318 against expenditure of £173,677 resulting in a surplus of £31,641. Net

current assets amount to £60,634 and this is the reserve figure all of which is unrestricted. SP does not have a formal reserve policy, but reserve levels are discussed at all board meetings and strategies for managing a downturn in incoming funds are regularly updated. SP is entitled to exception from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Budgets and funding predictions for the two-year period of the grant show a small increase in income. 100% of expenditure has been secured for 23/24 and the majority of expenditure for 24/25 due to a couple of three-year funding contracts that were secured in the past 12 months. These include awards from Lloyds Foundation, Sussex PCC, Sussex Community Foundation and two private philanthropists.

Good financial systems are in place. Day to day management is undertaken by the Administrator, supported by the CEO and the Treasurer. Fortnightly SMT meetings consider the cashflow of SP. The Treasurer works closely with an external accountant to produce management accounts which are reviewed at Trustee Meetings.

### **Current Situation and need**

Work currently undertaken by SP with young offenders has allowed them to understand the disadvantages that young people leaving custody face around gaining employment. People in the criminal justice system often have multiple complex needs and these prevent them from being able to secure employment. Specialist support is often required so these needs can be suitably addressed, needs that often cross over into other significant issues such as housing, substance misuse, mental health, domestic abuse, relationships, finance, and debt.

Young women offenders in Sussex experience the additional challenge of having served their sentence at a Young Offenders Institution or prison some distance away from their home. This can make post release support difficult due to not having built relationships of trust with locally based organisations as pre-release work can be logistically difficult due to distance. And due to the vulnerable nature of many young women who have offended, without this support network they quickly leave a chaotic prison system and return to even more chaotic lives. However, it is known that meaningful activity, such as employment, can not only provide a status, identity, income, and routine but it also prevents reoffending.

Many young women leaving prison lack the skills to become independent and so become disempowered and unable to be self-sufficient when taking on tasks. SP has a long track record of helping ex-offenders to develop a tool box of strategies to assist them with positive resettlement which includes emotional coping strategies, specialist support and practical guidance. With reoffending rates high, particularly for those who have served short sentences, women are particularly vulnerable to not being able to move on with their lives. Work that SP currently does, with young men, funded by the Ministry of Justice highlights unemployment rates of around 60% and has made real progress in addressing this with local employers. For young women this figure is likely to be higher as some of the industries that are sympathetic to criminal convictions either aren't appropriate for, or accessible to, young women.

SP wants to now provide a similar project for young women that will tackle behaviours that lead to reoffending and that prevent young women from being able to secure and maintain a job. Twelve months ago, SP launched a Women's Project, and this proposal will build on this project and enable an employment focus to be added. An Employment Support Coordinator will identify local employers suitable for this group of young women and work with them to build relationships and raise awareness of the needs of young women offenders. They will support the young women to develop the skills to

be work ready, help them apply for jobs and develop strong interview skills and then support the employer to address any challenges that may arise to avoid job losses. The young women will also be paired with a volunteer mentor who will provide support with other needs such as accommodation, substance misuse, mental health, domestic abuse, relationships, finance, and debt. SP already has a well-established volunteer mentoring programme with highly trained volunteers supporting a range of ex-offenders, many with complex needs.

### **Expected Key Achievements in Year 1**

#### **EKA 1**

To form links with 15 local employers to initiate opportunities for young women ex-offenders for unpaid and paid work.

#### **EKA 2**

Recruit 5 volunteers to provide support to the young women re any additional needs impacting their ability to achieve employment.

#### **EKA 3**

At least 10 young women being supported will have enrolled on a course by a local employment, training, and education provider.

### **Request and Budget**

SB is requesting **£49,272** over 2 years for the salary costs of a part time Employment Support Coordinator and project costs.

**£24,636 in year 1** - £13,536 (salary), £9,600 (Project Manager support), £1,000 (volunteer costs), £500 (phone and travel).

**£24,636 in year 2** - £13,536 (salary), £9,600 (Project Manager support), £1,000 (volunteer costs), £500 (phone and travel).

### **Conclusion**

Sussex Pathways is an impressive organisation who are led by a knowledgeable, committed, and ambitious team. Shirl and Lucy have a clear vision and their deep understanding of the sector, and the issues faced by offenders, particularly young women, makes this an extremely strong proposal.

It was clear throughout the assessment that SP has the ability to engage with and support people of all ages with highly complex needs. They hold strong relationships with relevant local partners and stakeholders and their track record, and the respect others have for them, is bearing fruit in terms of funding and contracts.

The proposal that they have submitted is rooted in building on work that they are already doing with women and based on existing success they are seeing with the male prison population. This makes the chance of success high as they are coming from a place of deep knowledge and using a model that they know works. The young women SP work with are extremely vulnerable and have complex needs. Many have been deemed not suitable for other services and SP is their only route into being able to achieve a new direction and a positive outcome that doesn't include further offending.

Lucy who will be managing the project has a huge amount of expertise and has been instrumental in developing the Women's Project that this project would become a part of. She is well linked into local networks and the impact of the work that are doing with women has already started to ripple through to partners who are making referrals. There is a clear understanding that due to the vulnerabilities of the women who will be supported that this work will take time and change will not happen overnight. This is an ambitious project but one that is needed and one that SP is well placed to deliver.

Work with young women is always going to be different to the work that takes place with young men. Some of this is due to logistics and the fact that young women are often released from prisons far away from their local area due to the smaller women's estate. There are also issues linked to previous and current trauma though, which often require sensitive and expert support, and which can be huge barriers to any kind of rehabilitation. SP understands these issues well and are the only organisation in Sussex who are able to provide this kind of support through both well trained volunteer mentors and expert paid staff.

The application didn't mention client numbers so we discussed this at length and the number of young women who would be supported is modest. In year 1 it is anticipated that 10 will be supported, with 5 expected to go on to secure employment. In year 2 this number will increase as the referral networks and links with employers will be better developed. These are quite small numbers when compared with some other projects, however the complexity of the women who will be worked with shouldn't be underestimated and the outcomes for them will be significant. Therefore, whilst smaller numbers in terms of beneficiaries the impact we will be contributing to will be stronger and merits both this approach and our support.

SP applied for a smaller amount than the maximum available and this meant the hours of the Employment Support Coordinator were quite low. On discussion this clearly was due to trying to make a conservative application rather than the actual need, which was acknowledged to be more significant than the hours currently proposed.

SP was thoroughly impressive both in terms of what they have achieved to date, their staff (and leadership) team and their Trustees. They are clearly on an upwards trajectory in terms of growth, and it is an exciting time for them. The focus on young women will be a good additional to our portfolio and as such be prioritised for funding. Therefore, I would recommend a grant and further recommend that the award be increased to £60,000 to enable the hours of the Employment Support Coordinator to be increased to 25 per week.

<b>Recommended Priority Rating</b>		
Risk = Low	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High