Awards 2010

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Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 3

Winner
HMP/YOI Doncaster: Arts and Media Department ..................................................................................... 4

Runners-up
Kainos Community: Challenge to Change ................................................................................................. 5
Parc Supporting Families: Learning Together Club ..................................................................................... 6
The Prison Phoenix Trust: Developing prisoners’ spirituality ........................................................................ 7

Shortlisted entries
About Turn CIC: Forces for Good .................................................................................................................. 8
Catch 22: HBOS Financial Literacy Mentoring Project .............................................................................. 8
Choices Consultancy Service: Diary Dads .................................................................................................... 9
Cognition and HMP & YOI Parc (G4S): This is Parc (Your Voice Your Choice) ........................................... 9
HMP Forest Bank: Timpson’s Training Academy ........................................................................................ 10
Framework Housing Association: Target Accommodation Service ......................................................... 11
Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group: Routes to Roots ....................................................... 11
HMP Pentonville Prison Day Care Centre: The Freedom of Art/Release .................................................. 12
Prisoners Abroad: Helping ex-offenders resettle in the UK .................................................................... 12
Salvation Army: Calder Fountain Residential and Resettlement Programme ......................................... 13
Time for Families: Building Stronger Families .......................................................................................... 14
Introduction

The PrisonerActionNet Awards are presented by Lemos&Crane for outstanding work in the rehabilitation of offenders, with a particular focus on projects that promote and sustain relationships, positive identity and independence.

This can include work around:

- Visual arts
- Writing
- Spirituality and belief
- Numeracy and literacy
- Employability
- Housing
- Family and lasting relationships
- Parenting
- Peer mentoring
- Restorative justice

This document contains details of the winner, 3 runners-up and 12 shortlisted entries, which were announced on 21 October 2010.
Winner

HMP/YOI Doncaster: Arts and Media Department

The aim of the Arts and Media Department at HMP/YOI Doncaster is to improve prisoners’ confidence and self-esteem, provide skills that increase employability, strengthen ties between prisoners and their families, and explore issues that may be contributing to a prisoner’s offending behaviour. The department runs a number of projects designed to engage prisoners and improve their skills, including: an initiative that trains prisoners in the art of filmmaking and editing; a course where prisoners write and perform plays to invited audiences (part of this initiative is that prisoners can work toward a LAMDA qualification); a scheme where prisoners help to improve the appearance of the prison by putting street art themed murals on the walls; and a reflective reading group in which prisoners are encouraged to make connections between the behaviour of the characters they are reading about and themselves. A number of partners work within the prison on arts and media based activities, e.g. the Central School of Speech and Drama provides placements for students to work with prisoners as part of their MA or BA course, Doncaster College provides graphic design training to prisoners working on the prison magazine, and the West Yorkshire Playhouse works with prisoners and staff to develop a theatre programme involving ex-serviceman. Prisoners who have generally been unable to connect with mainstream interventions have engaged well with these activities and have been very successful at them. The feedback received from external agencies, including The Guardian newspaper, has also been has been very positive.

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Runners-up

Kainos Community: Challenge to Change
The objectives of Challenge to Change are to give medium to high risk offenders the opportunity to develop positive skills for life and, ultimately, to stop reoffending by providing a through-care service that supports offenders after release. The project is based on Christian values and incorporates weekly volunteer evenings where members of the outside community visit the prisoners. This enables inmates to learn and practice building relationships in a non-threatening atmosphere, free from the imbalance of power present when interacting with officers and programme facilitators. The project also runs Social Development Weekends over 3 full days whereby community volunteers come into the prison and join the men in recreational activities, team building exercises, art workshops, and talks by invited speakers. Once released from prison, graduates of Challenge to Change are mentored by community volunteers. A Family Day activity helps prisoners take their first steps to strengthen family ties by creating an open environment for men to spend quality time with their families. This is sometimes combined with Graduation Days; quarterly events giving family members the opportunity to celebrate the prisoner’s success at completing the programme. Weekly classroom and coursework activities help improve literacy and general cognitive skills. 641 participants of Challenge to Change have now been released from prison for at least 2 years. Research shows only 12.7 per cent of these have reoffended back into custody compared to over 35 per cent nationally.

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Parc Supporting Families: Learning Together Club

The Learning Together Club aims to develop, strengthen and maintain bonds between male prisoners and their children. The project involves monthly ‘homework clubs’ where children and prisoners work together, without mothers and without other visitors. Children bring school work for fathers to help them with and as a way for them to keep up-to-date with what their children are doing. Younger children are supervised by qualified early years staff in the ‘learning through play’ area. The local library provides a book lending service and runs badge making activities, and volunteers run face painting activities and help out in the crèche. The project has received positive feedback from fathers, families and children, and school teachers have commented on changes in children’s attitude and behaviour since starting to attend. The club has also been the topic of a CBBC documentary ‘My Dad’s In Prison’. The documentary selected a family to focus on and followed the child on their journey from home through to attendance at the club. It showed how both the child and the father felt about the club, what it had done for them and their separation at the end of the day.

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The Prison Phoenix Trust: Developing prisoners’ spirituality

The Prison Phoenix Trust responds to and encourages prisoners to develop their spirituality and sense of personal responsibility through the disciplines of meditation and yoga. This practice helps people feel calmer, improves their physical and mental health, and reduces offending behaviour by encouraging prisoners to see their cells as places of retreat. The project encourages prisoners to establish and maintain a regular discipline of meditation and yoga in their cells and trains qualified yoga teachers to work with them. Prisoners are also supported by the teachers in their substance misuse, anger management and education programmes. A daily practice of yoga and meditation calls for self-discipline and concentration, skills that many prisoners say they are not used to and which they become heartened to discover in themselves. This simple discipline helps people to come to a deeper understanding and acceptance of themselves, which in turn enables them to live more peacefully with others and relate better to the world around them. Over 4,300 prisoners each year contact the Prison Phoenix Trust for help in starting a daily programme of yoga and meditation. Currently 158 weekly yoga and meditation classes are delivered in around half the prisons in the UK and Ireland. A research project on the effects of yoga and meditation on prisoners’ behaviour and stress levels is due to be conducted by the Prison Phoenix Trust in conjunction with Oxford University in the near future.

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Shortlisted entries

About Turn CIC: Forces for Good
Forces for Good offers support and guidance to ex-servicemen and women who are experiencing difficulties in adjusting to civilian life, in particular those experiencing homelessness or housing problems, those incarcerated in prison or those involved with the wider criminal justice system. Forces for Good works with a range of volunteer ex-service men and women who support offenders serving time in HMP Durham upon release by helping them make sense of their situation. These volunteers include men and women who experienced difficulties upon discharge as well as those who settled back into civilian life without difficulty. The volunteers range from young veterans leaving the forces in their late teens to retired veterans in their 80s. The project prepares offenders for civilian life by developing their coping skills, increasing their sense of civic responsibility and boosting their self-esteem. Visits to the prison by external support organisations, such as The British Legion and Combat Stress, are also arranged. Participants in the project are followed up upon release for a minimum of 12 weeks. The project’s success has led to an extra branch being set up in north Wales. A big challenge for the project was developing credibility, this was overcome by campaigning, professional advocacy and delivering key-working sessions which produced good outcomes for participants in a short amount of time.

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Catch 22: HBOS Financial Literacy Mentoring Project
The HBOS Financial Literacy Mentoring Project works with all youth offending services in Stoke-on-Trent, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. The aim of the project is to reduce reoffending by young people leaving HMYOI Werrington by increasing their financial capability. The young people involved are helped to overcome barriers so that they can open a bank account, budget, plan and save, and get help with their debts. Volunteers from across Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are trained to become financial literacy mentors who provide practical help and support to the young men. As well as offering financial literacy support, mentors act as positive role models, offering a listening ear and help with practical tasks. This can include identifying training courses, preparation for job interviews, helping to maintain accommodation and helping to find out about new, positive leisure interests. Mentors meet the young person either while they are in prison or within a few days of release. They meet on a weekly basis and
the mentoring relationship lasts between 3 and 9 months. Since the project began, 57 young people have had a successful mentoring relationship. Every young person in supported accommodation has successfully maintained their tenancy as a result of the support they have received. All young people involved with the project reported an increase in their self-confidence and all said they had achieved or were working towards achieving their goals. 93 per cent now have a bank account and there has been a 75 per cent reduction in reoffending.

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**Choices Consultancy Service:** Diary Dads

Choices Consultancy Service offers one-to-one meetings with prisoners enabling them to discuss family issues. Some prisoners have concerns about absent children and some are unable to trace their children due to broken down or multiple relationships. Many fathers in this position feel totally powerless to pursue any kind of contact with their estranged children. Diary Dads provides the opportunity for fathers to communicate with their children through a diary, with the hope that one day their children will read it. The diary is written over a few sessions and helps to clarify feelings and emotions. Support is given during and after the process. For children that have been placed into care, diaries are lodged with social services or adoption agencies. The diaries develop in different ways according to need, for example some fathers use IT to create a diary cover, others receive support with writing. All diaries are handwritten and fathers are encouraged to be honest and truthful about themselves. The process is facilitated in a controlled, quiet setting so that prisoners are given time and space to reflect on their feelings and emotions. Although the project is unable to track whether the child reads the diary upon adulthood, the benefits of Diary Dads for the fathers have been very positive, allowing prisoners to express themselves and think clearly about their lives. Having the same person facilitating the whole process enables a degree of trust to be built where prisoners feel that they can start to unpick their experiences.

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**Cognition and HMP & YOI Parc (G4S):** This is Parc (Your Voice Your Choice)

The aim of This is Parc (Your Voice Your Choice) is to encourage a group of young offenders in YOI Parc to participate positively within the prison and in their communities on release. The project works with the group to produce user-friendly induction materials which encourage new prisoners to make the most of their sentences and improve life opportunities both inside and outside prison. The project worked with 9 young offenders over 4 months. Activities included:
using drama to explore the experience of new prisoners and decide the best form for new induction materials; deciding what advice and information should be included and how to communicate it in an easily understood, visual form; and filming material for a DVD using green screen technology. Working with each group member, a range of options were devised for continued participation in communities upon release, e.g. through volunteering as a Youth Justice Board community panel member. Information was also included on training, employment and housing options. There were no drop-outs from the core group and each group member significantly developed their communication and team working skills. Several have gone on to further develop their education and career prospects by engaging in other projects and gaining qualifications. The feedback received from serving prisoners who have used the literature and DVD as part of the induction process has also been very positive.

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**HMP Forest Bank: Timpson’s Training Academy**

Timpson’s Training Academy provides the opportunity of industry training and a guaranteed Timpson interview with the prospect of employment upon release for offenders who are willing to learn new skills and who are motivated and committed to gaining employment. As a company, Timpson’s provide a wide range of services, including key-cutting, shoe repairs, photo services, dry cleaning, locker repairs, house signs, engraving, and watch repairs. The project’s activities are not only to provide training, skills and experience but also to raise the aspirations of the trainees and get them focused on succeeding in employment upon release. The workshop environment and daily workload prepare prisoners for employment: it is not only a training academy but a service, as the trainees work on customers’ shoes that have been dispatched from local Timpson branches. The academy focuses on instilling the importance of employment in terms of the positive effects it has on reoffending rates and social inclusion. The partnership secures a minimum of 60 guaranteed interviews a year at Timpson’s for prisoners at Forest Bank and a total of 36 prisoners from Forest Bank have been interviewed and gained employment with Timpson. The partnership work and development of the academy was recognised at the 2010 GMEC Awards where Forest Bank and Timpson were awarded finalist status for the ‘Clean Slate’ Award.

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**Framework Housing Association:** Target Accommodation Service
The aim of the Target Accommodation Service is to support clients with offending histories, ensure that they maintain contact with their statutory providers such as probation, and to help reduce the likelihood of future reoffending. This is achieved by offering stable accommodation for up to 2 years and providing opportunities that enable people to move toward education, vocational training and employment. The project incorporates a number of activities. Service users can take part in several life skills workshops, e.g. a 6 week healthy eating programme, and a number of training and leisure courses, such as a bike club, a painting and decorating course, a DIY course, and a brick laying course. There are also several learning opportunities available, including courses on personal development and IT, to help service users gain basic skills and confidence. Service users are also supported in their daily activities, such as budgeting, going shopping, preparing meals and managing their homes. Some service users take part in meaningful day time activities, such as gardening, at the local homeless drop-in centre. A recent service audit found that the service is successfully moving people away from homelessness, chaotic substance misuse and offending behaviour, and is achieving good outcomes for people who have not had success in other services. All residents spoke positively about the staff and the way that action plans and reviews were service user led.

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**Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group:** Routes to Roots
The Routes to Roots course is designed to enable black and minority ethnic (BME) offenders to explore their cultural identity and raise self-esteem. It aims to empower BME offenders by tackling issues of racism and addressing the institutionalised discrimination often faced by this group. The course was designed via consultation with offenders and, among others things, aims to provide them with: a greater understanding of their relationships and social networks; better comprehension of identity in relation to history and place; improved communication skills; and heightened employment prospects. The course consists of 10 modular sessions lasting 2 hours each which can be flexible in their content and delivery style depending on the needs of the group. It utilises community-based facilitators from diverse backgrounds and is based on the concept of ‘interculturalism’, whereby different communities are able to come together to learn more about each other through a process of mutual learning and joint growth. Each participating facilitator is knowledgeable in their subject area and reflects the cultural background of the participants. Topics covered in sessions include culture and identity, stereotypes and perceptions, black history, and conflict resolution. Focus groups have revealed a very positive
reaction to the course. Particular praise was given to the session on black history and the BME facilitators, who the participants felt they could really connect with. Course graduates reported increased self-esteem and confidence as well as improved communication skills and better comprehension of black history.

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HMP Pentonville Prison Day Care Centre: The Freedom of Art/Release

The Freedom of Art/Release project aims to provide purposeful activity to some of the most vulnerable prisoners suffering from mental health problems by offering a range of activities to promote self-awareness, build confidence, address offending behaviour, alleviate stress and anxiety, and enable prisoners to tap into creative abilities in a nurturing and non-threatening environment. The activities and groups on offer include ceramics, art, pottery, drama, poetry, keyboard and guitar classes, survival cookery, art psychotherapy, yoga, and basic maths and English (to foster greater independence upon release). There is also a group specifically focusing on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and an exhibition showcasing prisoners’ work has been set up in a local daycare centre. The activities on offer help benefit the holistic wellbeing of inmates as they provide an outlet for vulnerable prisoners to express themselves, enable them to work together or independently, and develop their abilities to complete a piece of work under instruction and direction. Participants receive a lot of support, encouragement and positive feedback throughout. In the long run, the activities on offer provide prisoners with alternative avenues to follow upon release and can help to reduce reoffending. A big challenge for the project is the stigma attached to the types of clients that involved. This was initially a barrier but was overcome by creating a positive profile, advertising the project and the exhibition, and ensuring that works by the inmates were completed on time.

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Prisoners Abroad: Helping ex-offenders resettle in the UK

Based in north London, the objective of Prisoners Abroad is to support British ex-offenders reintegrate into UK society and build crime-free lives. This is achieved by trying to reduce and prevent street homelessness and destitution, facilitating referrals to specialist agencies, helping prisoners strengthen family ties, and creating opportunities for prisoners in terms of training, education and employment. The organisation also links service users with the arts awards schemes of the Koestler Trust. Prisoners Abroad works exclusively with ex-offenders who have previously registered with the organisation, usually through the British Foreign and
Commonwealth Office. On arrival at Heathrow and Gatwick airports, service users receive immediate support via Travelcare which funds their journey to the Prisoners Abroad office. Resettlement officers then carry out an initial needs assessment and a number of services are offered, including: emergency accommodation in hostels and B&Bs; help with welfare benefits; survival packs and hardship grants for clothes and toiletries etc; referrals to specialist agencies, e.g. mental health services; and information on all aspects of resettlement, from practical advice to emotional support. Over the past year 190 ex-prisoners have accessed Prisoners Abroad services in the UK. 73 per cent of family members who responded to an evaluation questionnaire said that Prisoners Abroad had helped prepare for the return of their loved one to the UK. For those aware of the organisation’s Resettlement Handbook the figure was 100 per cent.

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**Salvation Army: Calder Fountain Residential and Resettlement Programme**

The Calder Fountain Residential and Resettlement Programme provides housing and support to men recovering from addiction who experience mental health problems and helps them prepare for independent living in more permanent accommodation. Although not limited to ex-offenders, a large proportion of service users who engage with the programme have offending histories or have recently been discharged from prison. Based in Northern Ireland, the project provides a range of services to help support service users. These include a chaplaincy service, an addictions service, an education and employment service, mental health support and life-skills development support. A number of activities have also been implemented within the project centre, including a horticultural project which involves service users transforming a dilapidated piece of land into a community garden and vegetable plot. All service users involved receive NVQs in Horticulture. In partnership with the Open University the project is also delivering in-house tuition to groups of service-users who are completing an ‘Openings Course’ as a reintroduction to education. Service users can also take part in an art project which results in finished pieces being exhibited in Belfast Central Library. A significant challenge for the project was overcoming the prejudice and stereotyping directed at service users, particularly from the local community in gaining access to a plot for the horticultural project. This was overcome by negotiating with the local community and providing opportunities for people to meet some of the men involved in the project.

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**Time for Families: Building Stronger Families**

Building Stronger Families aims to strengthen prisoners’ relationships to ensure they remain strong throughout the custodial sentence. Couples come together to address their main stumbling blocks and talk through problems. The course takes a unique head-on approach to strengthening prisoners’ relationships with their partner/spouse and the prisoner’s partner is taken inside the prison for the 6 day course, giving the couple time together to work through the challenges they face. The course is split into 3 modules: Communication, Parenting and Money Management. Each module helps people learn and practice skills that can make a big difference to their relationship. This includes looking at good listening habits, giving and receiving love, identifying bad communication habits, forgiveness and budgeting. The course also includes a peer-facilitation element, giving couples that have successfully completed the programme a chance to recruit and deliver parts of the modules. Over 1000 couples have taken part in the course since 2004. Upon evaluation, 70 per cent of couples reported they were more satisfied with their relationship, which is a good indicator of the relationship’s stability. Through follow-up phone surveys, it is apparent that the couples retain and put into practice many elements of the course.

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**User Voice: User Voice Prison Council**

The User Voice Prison Council aims to improve the negotiation, conflict resolution and public speaking skills of prisoners, increase their sense of self-confidence and self-worth, and develop a neutral space for management and prisoners to work together. Prison councils are based on a democratic process that enables prisoners to have a say in their prison environment (although the legitimate authority of staff remains). Prisoners who want to be representatives put themselves forward for the party they are passionate about. There are 4 main party groups that focus on several key areas: Housing and Education; Employment and Training; Resettlement; and Community and Environment. User Voice delivers a number of training sessions which build up representatives’ campaigning skills. The people who deliver the training have all got experience of being in prison. Once elected members meet regularly with a senior member of staff and each party brings one proposal for change to the council. The council then votes on what it’d like to be taken forward, with proposals either being implemented or feedback on why not being given by senior managers. There have been some very positive outcomes linked to the development of User Voice Prison Councils and the participant rates were all above 50 per cent in participating prisons (Parkhurst, Albany and Isle of Wight). At Parkhurst the number of
segregation days reduced from 160 to 47 over the same period and in Albany there was a 37 per cent reduction in complaints from prisoners over the period the council functioned.

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