



Enterprising solutions to reduce reoffending

SERIF Briefing Paper – No 5

The Social Value Added of Social Enterprise Activity within Public Sector Prisons in the North East of England – an action research study (2015)

This Briefing Paper is a digest of the research findings – the full report is available as from the SERIF website – www.serif-foundation.org

Context

Funds were awarded by the ESRC Impact Accelerator Co-Production Fund in December 2014 to undertake this study. The research was carried out by Philip Angier on behalf the Social Enterprise Research and Innovation Foundation (SERIF) and was supervised by Dr Jane Gibbon of Newcastle University Business School.

The research method comprised a high level review of published literature, a conference event at Durham University, interviews with prison staff at HMP Kirkclevington Grange and a pilot social audit study at HMP Kirkclevington Grange.

Key Findings in Summary

The findings can be summarised under two headings:-

What evidential support for social enterprise in prisons can be found in published research or national policy guidance?

Many prisons operate some kind of horticultural activity which is often operated on a social enterprise basis. Whilst there is a clutch of university-led studies of horticultural activities involving prisoners/ex-offenders, there remains a relative paucity of published research either to map the extent of social enterprise activity in custodial settings in England & Wales or to assess its social value and contribution towards reducing re-offending.

There is some best practice to follow internationally – in particular in the context of mutual and co-operatives including examples from Italy, Canada and the USA.

The following extract from a 2011 study by Dr Faye Cosgrove's *The Impact of Social Enterprise on Reducing Re-offending*¹ fairly represents the conclusions from other commentators:

“Despite the clear connections between mutualism, employment and reoffending there is a distinct lack of documentation on the activities and/or achievements of social enterprises, particularly in relation to their impact on reoffending... very few post-release employment programmes have been subject to robust evaluation.”

The report continues:

“...there is often some gathering of data around job outcomes or numbers of people helped but too little about quality; still less an independently audited analysis of impacts”.

There is a presumption in favour of enterprising initiatives in prisons (including social enterprise) based upon a need to innovate because of continuing downward pressure on prison budgets. However, there is a lack of guidance from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to inform policy, governance or trading practices where social enterprise activity is being attempted.



SERIF champions socially enterprising approaches to the rehabilitation of offenders, and the diversion of those deemed at risk from offending behaviour. It commissions and conducts independent research and evaluations and publishes briefing papers.

info@serif-foundation.org

0191 272 0112

www.serif-foundation.org

What evidence is there to demonstrate the effectiveness and social value of NOMS North East social enterprise programme?

NOMS North East adopted a Social Enterprise Development Strategy in July 2013, the fruits of which can be seen in the gathering momentum of social enterprise activity across the six public sector prisons in the region led by HMP Kirklevington Grange.

The social enterprise strategy and its outcomes are:

- ✓ built around a clear set of strategic aims which marry with the national priorities for NOMS;
- ✓ delivering a range of local social enterprise projects and activities which have achieved rapid sales growth;
- ✓ offering a growing number of training and employment opportunities for offenders;

- ✓ winning support both from prison staff and from serving offenders;
- ✓ proving an effective point of engagement with the local community through the Visitor Centre at HMP Kirklevington Grange.

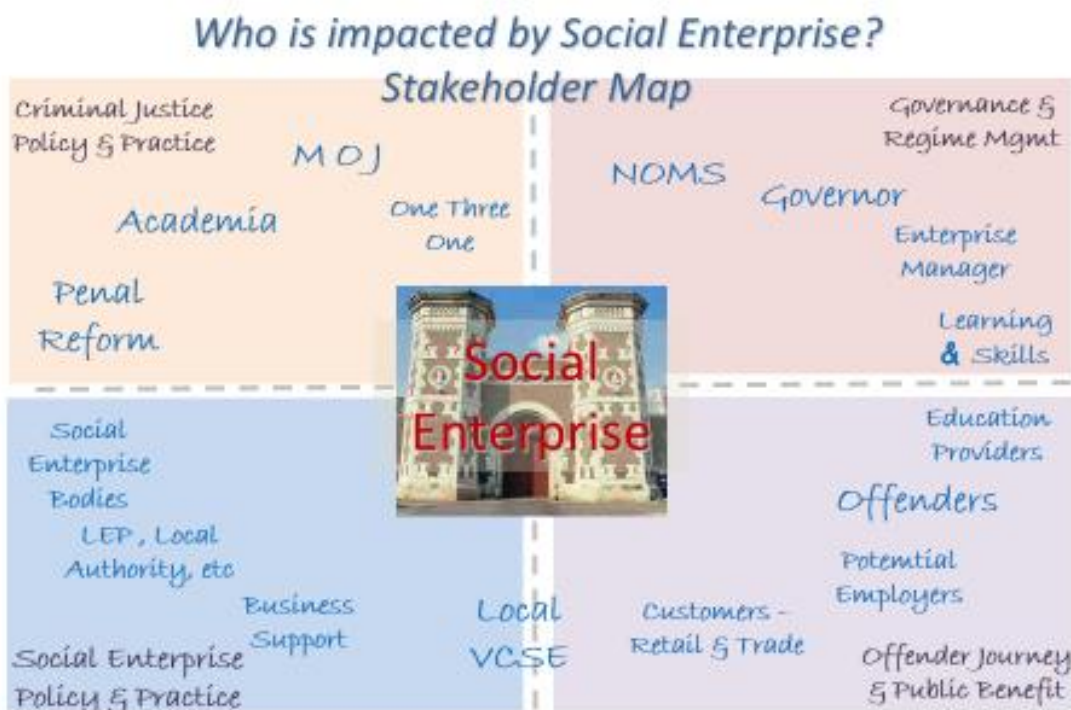
As yet the findings in relation to North East prisons and the local social enterprise strategy are provisional and not yet sustained, consistent or complete. However, they are supported by the feedback from delegates attending the Durham conference event.

The current social enterprise activities in North East prisons deserve closer self-evaluation and need to be measured over a longer time frame.

The pilot social audit study suggests the use a social accounting tool such as an Impact Map to give greater rigour to the identification of indicators and the reporting of results.

A Stakeholder Approach

Any enterprise activity conducted in a prison involves multiple stakeholder interests. The research method for this study employed a Stakeholder Map (see below) and ordered its findings by reference to that approach.



The top left hand quadrant considers the interests of those who advocate, develop and decide criminal justice policy and practice. The right hand quadrants consider how prisons work in practice. The bottom left hand quadrant considers the interaction of the prison social enterprise with wider social and community business practice.

Published Research & Policy Guidance

Criminal Justice Policy and Practice

Up until 2013 there was a social enterprise unit with NOMS National Headquarters supporting its European Social Fund (ESF) Co-Financing programme. This unit commissioned the Concilium Research Report (2009) *Reducing Re-offending Through Social Enterprise - a mapping exercise*ⁱⁱ whose findings embraced activities in both probation service and custody. The report both explored the theory of social enterprise and cited a number of funded pilot projects and social enterprise organisations working with offenders/ex-offenders. In its conclusions the report noted:

[NOMS should] recognise in policy and practice the value that social enterprises contribute towards reducing re-offending targets and their capacity to provide additionality. ... An awareness-raising programme for relevant staff within the prisons and probation services about social enterprises... Heads of Reducing Re-offending in Category D prisons were seen as particularly important roles.

Dr Faye Cosgrove's study (2011) cited above draws upon published research and first hand evidence from a number of social enterprise projects England and Wales working with offenders and their families, as well as best practice examples from the United States, Canada, Italy and Sweden.

From a policy perspective the MOJ's engagement with social enterprise has been aligned with its ESF Co-Finance Programme. The ESF Co-Financing Round 3 Programme, launched in 2014, places greater emphasis on pre-employability skills training for offenders in prison and partnerships with the VCSE sector to help to deliver these skills.

Dr Cosgrove's study concludes:-

"Despite the clear connections between mutualism, employment and reoffending there is a distinct lack of documentation on the activities

and/or achievements of social enterprises, particularly in relation to their impact on reoffending... very few post-release employment programmes have been subject to robust evaluation."

Governance & Regime Management

There is no published guidance for prison staff about how to make best use of any potential partnerships with the VCSE sector in relation to the operation of social enterprise activity in prison.

There was much comment by delegates at the Durham Conference about the absence of published guidelines for prison managers, eg:

- * *Disruptive innovation such as introducing social enterprise is counter-cultural to traditional 'command and control' management ethos. At best new ways of working will call for listening and understanding – at worst they risk resulting in the regime and the social enterprise pursuing separate targets.*
- * *There is a greater need to innovate because of the continuing downward pressure on prison budgets.*

The absence of published guidance is obliging those in the prison service who would innovate pragmatically to develop their own protocols in relation to the prison regime, drawing as appropriate upon the advice of their VCSE partners.

Offender Journey & Public Benefit

There are a number of published case studies observing the design and purpose of social enterprise activity with serving offenders and ex-offenders. Many offer anecdotal evidence of success of the positive impact upon the offenders they train and employ.

Studies cited in the full report include a review of mutuals and co-operatives (Weaver and Nicholson)ⁱⁱⁱ, 20 case studies documented by Clinks and Social Firms UK^{iv} and studies of several horticultural social enterprises including Greener on the Outside for Prisons^v (a pan-regional programme designed to improve the health and wellbeing of offenders, their families, staff, and local communities within the North West of England) and the Master Gardener Programme – HMP Rye Hill^{vi}.

The horticultural studies in particular offer a growing body of evidence about the potential health and wellbeing benefits of such programmes. There is less evidence available to confirm that the projects delivering these results are operating as sustainable social enterprises.

Social Enterprise Policy & Practice

In 2008 the Howard League for Penal Reform published findings from a pilot social enterprise project at HMP Coldingley^{vii}.

The report addresses with candour some of the challenges of trying to sustain within a prison context a market-led graphic design enterprise.

In 2011 Rachel O'Brien of the RSA published 'RSA Transitions - A social enterprise approach to prison and rehabilitation'^{viii}. This study offers a manifesto for the potential role of social enterprise activity as a tool for reducing re-offending. The report was followed by a feasibility study conducted around HMP Everthorpe and HMP Humber.

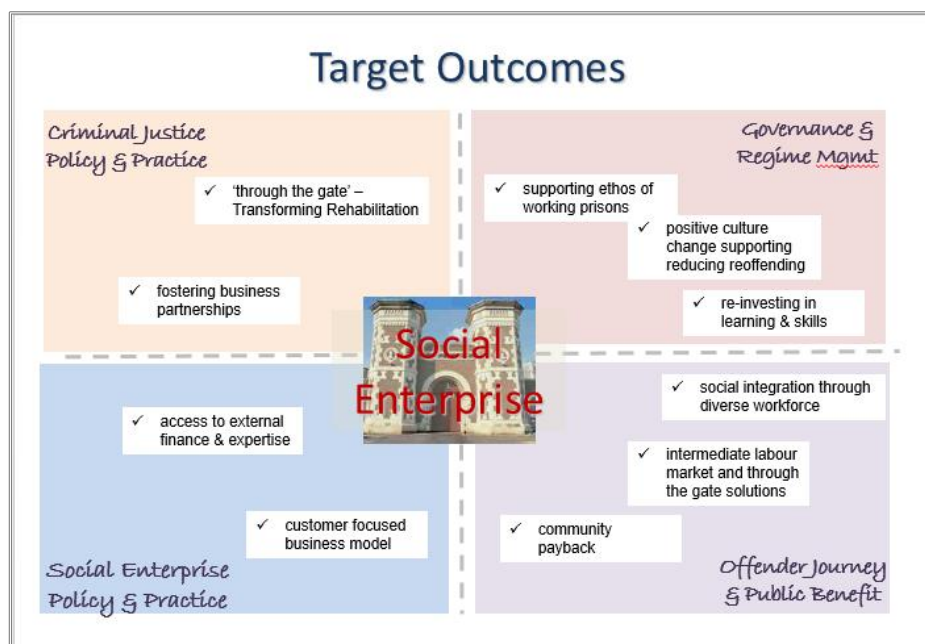
In 2012 and 2013, in response to an identified knowledge gap, SERIF published a series of best practice briefings. These dealt in particular with techniques for capturing and reporting the social value added of social enterprise activity.

Too many studies appear to have come to an early end, without a definitive 'proof of concept' or longitudinal study of their impact upon reducing reoffending.

For those considering operating a social enterprise inside prison, there is still a lack of published best practice with practical guidance about social enterprise design, form and governance.

NOMS North East Social Enterprise Development Strategy

This study charts the formulation and implementation of a social enterprise development strategy for North East prisons, and in particular the social enterprise activities delivered at HMP Kirkclevington Grange since 2012. The strategy has been formulated to deliver a suite of target outcomes which are consonant with NOMS overall objectives of protecting the public and reducing reoffending.



Time Line: 2012 - 2015

Having determined its regional strategy, there has been a rapid development of market-led social enterprise activity as illustrated in the table below. With only limited external support social enterprise activity across the region has quickly gathered momentum.

Year	Kirklevington Grange	Durham	Frankland	Regional/Other
2012	✓ Xmas Market in Stockton			
2013	✓ Car Valeting & Coffee Shop	✓ Sales of Woodwork products	✓ Expansion of Greetings Card workshop	✓ Other pilot studies including Sewing Sisters at Low Newton
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sales from Coffee Shop and Car Valeting doubles ✓ Other products added to the range including logs, horticultural produce, metalwork, eggs, etc ✓ Floorspace of Kirklevington Coffee Shop increased and meeting room added ✓ Internal Coffee Shop opened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Products offered for sale through other external channels – including partnership with Gateshead College ✓ External Coffee Shop opened with training support from Kirklevington Grange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Plans for Virtual Business & Innovation Centre (VBIC) ✓ ‘Let’s Innovate’ strategy adopted and prisoner panel convened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Products from other prison sites (Deerbolt, Frankland, Durham) available through Kirklevington Coffee Shop ✓ Regional Social Enterprise company registered ✓ Secondment of Social Enterprise Manager at regional level ✓ Feasibility study for Regional Warehousing & Distribution Centre accepted as part of long-term plan
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bakery products on sale in Coffee Shop ✓ Further site expansion including increased capacity for horticultural products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Feasibility Study initiated for external coffee shop and retail outlet at former Visitor Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ First prisoners in post at VBIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Plans advanced for expansion of facilities at Low Newton

A number of factors have made this flourishing possible:

- ✓ high-level backing from the North East Directorate;
- ✓ a governor at Kirklevington Grange willing to take a (commercial) risk;
- ✓ patient and persistent advocacy of the benefits from Heads of Learning and Skills;
- ✓ the appointment of staff in front-line posts with previous retail experience;
- ✓ access to external advice and seed funding;
- ✓ a regional Head of Finance willing to work with the grain of the proposals

The culture change has been neither linear nor even across the six public sector prisons. Not all of the prisons are engaged with the development of social enterprise to the same extent. Factors contributing to the different levels of response include:-

- Change can be implemented more easily in a low security establishment (eg Kirklevington Grange)
- Different prisons in the region have different priorities – some are imposed from outside, others reflect the collective vision for the establishment
- Some staff still share a traditional view the purpose of prisons as places of containment and control
- Staff cuts and budget constraints have hardened the attitudes of some against further change

Kirklevington Grange – a social audit pilot

It was agreed that part of the study would take the form of a pilot social audit assessment of the social enterprise activities at HMP Kirklevington Grange for the year ending March 2015.

Kirklevington Grange is an open prison for adult male offenders with an operational capacity of 283 offenders. The prison focuses on helping longer term prisoners from the North East and North Yorkshire to resettle on release.

The social enterprise activities at Kirklevington Grange were born out of a market study commissioned from Tees-side University in 2013. A coffee shop based at the Visitor Centre outside the prison gates was opened in September 2013 alongside a car valeting service. Over time sales of other products have been added including

horticultural products grown at the prison, logs recovered from woodland management work undertaken by offenders, wrought iron products from the prison's own workshops, greetings cards, woodwork and other gift items made in other

North East Prisons, eggs, honey and bakery products. An internal coffee shop serving staff and prisoners inside the prison compound was opened in July 2014.

The gross sales for the year ending March 2015 was £193,000. More than ¾ of the sales and value added comes from the external and internal coffee shops and the car valeting service. These operate 7 days per week, each service employing a team of 10 prisoners (ie 30 prisoner placements in total). The internal coffee shop was opened both in response to anticipated demand and to act as a 'training academy' for offenders wanting to graduate to the external coffee shop.

Prisoners receive training and obtain vocational qualifications alongside the work experience gained on the job. Wages for the external coffee shop staff and car valeters are the highest paid within the prison.

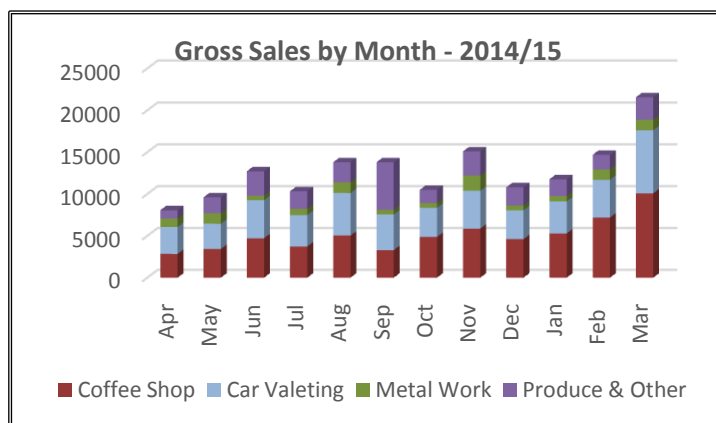
The social enterprise has created productive, value added roles for prisoners who might well otherwise have been employed on routine service functions inside the prison gates.

Impact on Culture and Relationships

There was some suspicion when the coffee shop was first proposed that it would be little more than a 'money-maker' for the prison service using low prisoner wages to ensure a positive financial outcome.

Attitudes have changed. Staff and prisoners

have come to understand that the purpose of social enterprise is to allow surpluses generated to be reinvested for the good of prisoners and for the community. The social enterprise sits well alongside



Kirklevington Grange's existing commitment to community engagement and community payback.

The social enterprise has been warmly received by the local community, which in turn positively affects the confidence and self-esteem of offenders working there. Staff have come to value the range of quality products and services available to them through the social enterprise – some even visiting the coffee shop on their days off!

Management have commented upon the improved staff-prisoner relationships.

The most recent Inspection Report (June 2015) highlights the social enterprise as an example of best practice:-

'The car valeting unit, the café and the goods produced in the workshops were all of a very high quality. These services had been thoughtfully combined to maximise opportunities for prisoner involvement. This was entrepreneurial and represented a clear example of good practice.'

Transfer of Skills

The offenders working in the external coffee shop have become so professional and proficient that when it was decided to open a coffee shop at HMP Durham it was the prisoners from Kirklevington Grange who were seconded to Durham to train the prison officers.

Impact upon the Local Community

The social enterprise is a success because it has identified and is serving a viable market within the local community. It serves a broad customer base of prison staff (including visiting staff), business visitors, local residents and local groups who use the coffee shop as a meeting place. Residents and carers from a local care home also patronise the shop.

The latest report of the Independent Monitoring Board comments favourably upon the impact of the coffee shop and car valeting service.

"These outside working areas of the prison have been accepted as a "good thing" with the public who use the car wash facility and the coffee shop. Family visitors to the prison are also users of this innovative facility. Verbal feedback from the public who use these facilities is full of praise for the industry and politeness of the prisoners involved."

Responding to increased demand, the floor space of the external coffee shop has been doubled in size with the addition of a meeting room which used by NEPACS and other visiting groups.

Since opening in 2013 there has only been instance of a complaint from local business. Several local employers with whom the prison had not previously had contact have been prompted to offer work placements to offenders after visiting the social enterprise shop.

In a recent development a neighbouring business has opened a farm shop outlet because of the additional footfall generated by the coffee shop.

There has been favourable coverage in the local newspaper and on regional tv.



Policy Implications for NOMS Decision-makers

- There has been no independent research supported by NOMS into the benefits and efficacy of social enterprise activities in the prison service since the Concilium Report (2009);
- The absence of clear policy guidance to prison governors and their staff about the operation of social enterprise is obliging those in the prison service who would innovate pragmatically to develop their own protocols in relation to the prison regime, drawing as appropriate upon the advice of their VCSE partners.

NOMS decision-makers may wish consider

- i. whether its strategic thinking and policy guidance would be better informed and more supportive of innovation in the prison service if support were to be given to further research into the social value and social impact of social enterprise?
- ii. how better to support innovation and cost-efficiencies in the prison service by giving clearer guidance to prison governors and their staff about the trading guidelines for or approved forms of social enterprise their structures and governance?

- The current social enterprise activities in North East prisons deserve closer self-evaluation and need to be measured over a longer time frame.
- The pilot social audit study at HMP Kirkclevington Grange suggests that the use a social accounting tool such as an Impact Map could give greater rigour to the identification of indicators and the reporting of results.
- SERIF and the North East Social Enterprise Partnership (NESEP) have already provided some guidance to the management of NOMS North East in the implementation of its social enterprise strategy.

NOMS North East managers may wish consider

- iii. How performance measures and reporting could be better used to inform the selection of social enterprise activities and to direct resources to maximise the positive impact of social enterprise activity?
- iv. Whether to train staff in the use the Impact Map or a similar tool to provide a more rigorous account of the social value added and impact of its social enterprise programme?
- v. Whether there would be benefits to the region and to the prison service nationally if the achievements to date of its regional social enterprise strategy to date were shared more widely?

References

-
- ⁱ The Impact of Social Enterprise on Reducing Re-offending - Dr Faye Cosgrove, Professor Maggie O'Neill School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University, May 2011
 - ⁱⁱ Reducing Re-offending Through Social Enterprise - *Social enterprises working with prisons and probation services - a mapping exercise for National Offender Management Service* CONCILIUM – November 2009 <http://www.ohrn.nhs.uk/resource/policy/SocialEnterprise.pdf>
 - ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20November%202012%20No.%20204.pdf>
 - ^{iv} Greener on the Outside for Prisons – http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/explore/projects/greener_on_the_outside_for_prisons.php
 - ^v A Fresh Start - <http://hmptryehill.mastergardeners.org.uk/2014/11/11/a-fresh-start/>
 - ^{vi} <http://www.clinks.org/resources-case-studies/providing-employment-and-training-opportunities-offenders>
 - ^{vii} Prison Work and Social Enterprise – the story of Barbed http://www.serif-foundation.org/pdf/Barbed_report.pdf
 - ^{viii} <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/rsa-transitions-a-social-enterprise-approach-to-prison-and-rehabilitation/>