



Enterprising solutions to reduce reoffending

# Can Social Enterprise Reduce Re-offending?

## 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 - Conference Report

38 delegates attended this event at the Steam Museum, Swindon. It was an interactive even with plenty of opportunity to question our presenters and share ideas and experiences.

The aim of the event was to explore the interface between the policy environment which aspires to make rehabilitation a central aim of the criminal justice system and the experiences of the those seeking to innovate through social enterprise.

### What our Speakers said

*[Note – All speaker presentation are available to download from [www.serif-foundation.org/events](http://www.serif-foundation.org/events)]*

The conference began with the **Plowden Lecture, delivered by Dave Nicholson**. The theme of Dave's lecture was to explore the role of and prospects for cooperative governance of prisons and prison services within the wider context of devolution and localism. He drew comparisons with trends to devolution in local government (directly elected mayors) and the delivery of education and health services (Academies and Foundation Trusts).

With creation of Reform prisons, why could not the same principles be applied to the prison and probation services.

In his research he cited examples of co-operatives and mutual delivering rehabilitation services in Italy, in Sweden and in the United States.

As part of the Reform prison agenda a pilot study is underway to establish two co-operative enterprises jointly controlled by staff and prisoners at HMP Coldingley.

After questions and discussion Dave's lecture was followed by a talk by **David Reeves-Turner** and **Stephen (Steve) Head** (respectively Head of Reducing Re-Offending and Horticulture Tutor at HMP Coldingley). David described the evolution of the project and its impact upon staff, prisoners and the regime. Steve emphasised the primacy of learning and education in the development of the enterprise. Both highlighted the transformation potential of learning and work environment based upon productive work and mutual support. "The big difference is that now the men are being encouraged to think about what they can do and how to develop a career for the future instead of constant reminders about why they have found themselves in prison in the first instance."

The morning programme concluded with two presentations about rehabilitative social enterprises in action from **Rod Burnett & David Bloch** from EDP Drug and Alcohol Services and from **Fran**

**Findlater**, the CEO of Bounceback. The speakers gave examples of how and why the social enterprises were formed, the clients they support, the changes which productive and creative work can effect in individuals and the positive reactions and encouragement of partner organisations. In the case of EDP the programme of recovery from substance abuse and the productive work in the woodworking workshop have proved mutually supportive for the service users. Fran Findlater in her talk cited examples of transformation for individual but also the very encouraging changes in attitudes from employers and customers to working with ex-offenders.

In the Q & A discussion which followed there was debate about how to select the right offenders to participate in social enterprise programmes and the extent to which wider public opinion would support such more enlightened regimes.

In the afternoon session the conference heard from **Rachel O'Brien** from the RSA and **Rev Fiona Sample** of the Oswin Project.

In Rachel's presentation she responded to some of the ideas and issues which had been raised in the morning – noting especially the positivity, optimism and enthusiasm of the presenters and contributors. Rachel described some of the policy background to the Reform prison agenda and the White Paper. Obviously the progress to enact these processes into legislation has been halted by the June election. This also may trigger a change of Justice Minister in the new government.

Against that background Rachel described the purpose of and plan for the New Futures Network – see also separate presentation and notes. The Network is intended to support and facilitate interchange and partnerships between those with a statutory role in the Criminal Justice System and private sector and VCSE actors seeking to deliver rehabilitative services. NFN will drive partnerships and innovation, and increase capacity, through brokering sustainable strategic partnerships and effective cross-sector relationships that support rehabilitation, employment and skills. It will champion good practice that supports rehabilitation through informing, engaging and persuading. and provide a channel of communication between frontline services and central government.

In the final presentation to the conference Fiona Sample shared the story of *Bakin' Free*, a social enterprise bakery partnership under development between the Oswin Project and HMP Northumberland (a private sector prison managed by Sodexo). Fiona described the highs and lows, and the many barriers encountered in seeking to lead the project from an enterprising vision into an operating reality.

### What our Delegates said

Through their participation in the Q & A session and their remarks on their feedback forms, it was clear that delegates had drawn inspiration and encouragement from the day. Some had gained new knowledge. All had made new contacts.

*"It was a pleasure to take part in such an interesting meeting and exchange of experiences."*

*"I liked that the event was small. I met interesting people - it was like being amongst friends"*

*"An open and positive discussion of topics. Food for thought about what solutions social enterprise can bring as a model of reducing re-offending"*

*"Inspiration and encouragement. We are not alone. I gained advice and new ideas"*

