

# Novas Scarman Institute

## Innovation Briefings – Offenders Series No.1

This series of briefings highlights key aspects of our work with people in contact with the criminal justice system.

Through these, we focus on identifying innovative approaches, highlighting what works and what needs to change.

### Effective community-based preventative services significantly reduce re-offending at significantly less cost

#### **Award winning service turns lives around**

Novas Scarman's Floating Support Team for High Risk Offenders has received an Outstanding Award from the Howard League for Penal Reform 2008 Community Programme.

Funded by Supporting People, the team has supported an average of 173 men and women each year, across Bristol and the surrounding local authority areas.

*89% of those supported have successfully maintained their tenancies and not been convicted of further offences, which for those on a high offending tariff represents excellent results*

Demonstrating a range of positive outcomes for individuals and the wider community, the service offers real value for money to the public purse: at a cost of just £890 per person per year, compared with the average annual cost of keeping someone in custody, at £37,500. **This one service saves the public purse up to £4.7 million in one year.**

Working closely with Probation, Supporting People and a wide range of voluntary and community organisations, the service is a successful model for partnership in action.

**We challenge the government to invest less in institutional provision that wastes lives and money, and more into successful community based preventative schemes run by the Third Sector.**

## Summary of project and key findings

The service delivers targeted interventions to individuals who are assessed as high risk in terms of the prolific nature of their offending, or in terms of the nature of their offending.

One 25-year-old man who has been supported for over a year and had previously managed only 3 weeks out of custody before re-offending, says of the service:

*“Without the support and help from my Support Worker I would probably have gone back to prison within a few weeks – they don’t tell me what I want – they ask me to set my own goals for positively changing my life and ensure that I can meet these.”*

The service works closely with Multi Agency Public Protection Panels, with staff from Avon and Somerset Police and Probation Area and the Prison Service.

Carol Price, Avon and Somerset Probation MAPPA Accommodation Officer, says,

*“It is evident that those who have moved into general needs accommodation within the community with the assistance of floating support provided by our partnership with Novas Scarman successfully sustained their accommodation and made their journey towards a crime-free lifestyle possible.”*

The service demonstrates key benefits and outcomes:

- Offenders with support delivered at an early stage have a stronger chance of breaking the cycle of offending
- Good three-way communication between offender, supervising officer and support worker ensures a joined up service, drawing on the expertise of the Third Sector to form trusted relationships
- With an average of 27% supported from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, the service is responsive to diverse cultural needs, as well as gender specific needs
- Skilled staff enable individuals to move into and sustain their housing – a foundation for reducing re-offending and supporting longer-term change

## Sally’s story

Sally was referred to the Novas Scarman service 6 weeks before her release from Eastwood Park prison. She was vulnerable due to her mental health, her history of abuse, and chaotic drug use. Coming up to release, she was at risk of homelessness.



As a result of our early intervention, Sally moved into one of our emergency housing schemes for women, where she received additional support. She was picked up from the prison and taken straight there on her release. The Support Worker found out about her previous tenancy and made arrangements with the local authority to resolve previous tenancy issues.

By referring at an early point to the mental health team, this service was engaged, liaised with her previous GP and carried out a needs assessment with Sally. This meant she continued to receive her medication – vital to sustaining her health. Sally was also linked in to the local specialist drugs service, where she received support for her drug problem.

Six months on, Sally is preparing to move on to longer-term housing and a safer future.

## Marcus’ journey

Marcus, aged 21, was referred to the service by the Public Protection Team shortly after moving into a self-contained flat. He had convictions for assaults against family members and was given a 3-year supervision order. With a history of self-harming, Marcus had spent periods in hospital, and was prescribed anti-depressants. A risk assessment conducted with Probation and psychiatric service input led to a coordinated Support Plan.



Marcus needed assistance with practical issues such as furnishing and maintaining his flat. His Support Worker made successful grant applications to enable him to purchase carpets, furniture and cooking equipment. He was also supported to develop his budgeting skills.

*“Supporting and enabling individuals to take control of their lives, the service represents outstanding value for money”*

Marcus was encouraged to access alcohol services and counselling, as his offending had been linked to his alcohol use. Once Marcus started to feel more confident about managing his flat, his Support Worker helped motivate him to gain qualifications through the local college.



During the two years we worked with Marcus, a trusting and positive working relationship was formed, where he felt able to talk honestly and openly about issues as they arose. Quarterly reviews with his Probation officer and Support Worker were helpful for all parties, enabling Marcus to move forward with achievable goals.

Marcus recognises he has made huge progress, and his next step is to gain employment.

## Social and Financial Impact

The cost of providing the Floating Support Service is £154,000 per year, supporting an average of 173 individuals over that period. The annual cost to the taxpayer of keeping those individuals in custody is estimated to be £4.8m. On this basis, the service represents a saving of up to £4.7m per year.

The service not only assists people into accommodation, it helps them to sustain it. Individuals are also guided to achieve their goals of re-connecting with families, making new positive social networks and moving into training, education and employment. This generates positive social and economic outcomes for whole communities.

By responding effectively to the needs of people from BME communities, who are over-represented within the criminal justice system, the service is helping to tackle inequality and promote inclusion.

By significantly reducing re-offending rates, the service brings further savings to the community as a result of less crime. Probably most importantly, higher levels of community safety and well-being are felt by everyone - almost impossible to put a price on.

## Recommendations

It is our belief that this model demonstrates not only good practice but also outstanding value for money. We recommend that:

- This successful model is extended as part of a community-based holistic approach to working with offenders, and those at risk of re-offending
- This model can be focused to work with young offenders and to meet the specific needs of women, as part of a preventative strategy
- Holistic and coordinated services are delivered prior to, during and after release from custody
- Funding for volunteering and mentoring programmes should be extended, to add further value, as part of the package of support. Schemes should be supported to further enable people with offending histories to contribute back into programmes that change others' lives
- More funding is invested in commissioning services from voluntary and community organisations, in line with the government's vision of transforming public services, and encouraging a thriving Third Sector.



## **Novas Scarman services and contact points**

**The Novas Scarman Group** is a major social justice charity at the cutting edge of tackling social disadvantage through social enterprise, innovation and positive impact.

Our work to reduce re-offending, includes:

- Outreach, housing and floating support services, for high risk offenders (subject to MAPPA), individuals with mental health support needs and drug and alcohol problems, for over 600 people each year, with average re-conviction rates of less than 10%
- Skills development programmes, learning and pathways into work, and social enterprise development creating work opportunities
- Partnership work to engage and strengthen communities such as work with gang cultures and community courts
- An Accommodation Gateway service, run in partnership with Bristol City Council to prevent homelessness and secure positive accommodation outcomes
- Initiatives and programmes to improve outcomes for women, BME communities and other groups who face particular disadvantage
- Accommodation based support services – providing a stepping-stone to independence
- Research including recent projects on the health needs of women who have been in prison, and the barriers faced by offenders seeking work.

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