



Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2006

WELCOME!

So, what's new in CARD? Nothing stays still for long!

It has been good to have the newest group of enthusiastic mentors on board. The matches are growing in number and duration, which is great: all due credit to the mentors and to Carol and Claire for making it come together.

We have been gearing ourselves up to work alongside statutory supervision within "Custody Plus", which was the last part of the Criminal Justice Act to be implemented and would require much injection of resources to do properly. We are all aware that the Home Office has had a few rather pressing problems in recent months and a decision has now been taken to forestall implementation yet again, this time indefinitely. At one level an anti-climax but CARD and Devon and Cornwall Probation Service will continue with broad plans to at least have a closer working partnership. This will include specific exploration of working more closely with probation service volunteers.

CARD has from the outset needed to restrict its activity to a manageable group. However, we are keen to expand our remit in a planned way to include working with women who resettle back into East Devon and so links with the women's prison estate are underway. This will require different ways of establishing and developing contacts in view of the distances involved, (there are no women's prisons in Devon.) An exciting challenge for us.

CARD in brief

CARD staff have now approached over 250 men in Exeter prison to see if they are interested in working with CARD

CARD mentors have now worked with over 60 offenders from Exeter and the surrounding area.

The average length of matches has gone up from nine weeks to twelve

The PORCH project, which will be working with prolific offenders on housing issues, has been launched. See back page for further details.

The latest training course for mentors is scheduled to start this Autumn

WANTED



See back page for details

WHAT IS MENTORING? A PERSPECTIVE FROM A MENTEE

As I explained in my last article, I am in the process of changing my life for the better. This will involve dealing with regressed emotions as they arrive at full-throttle and knock me sideways! Flying like a super sonic butterfly and stinging like a builder's shovel in the face!

I have as much experience of dealing with these emotions as a teenager. I started giving my emotions a safe place to hide by drinking and taking drugs at around 13, along with any other problem I'd rather not have dealt with, so I am now a 37 yr old adolescent!

My family disowned me around 10 years ago. I don't blame them, but would like the chance to talk to my parents about how and why we all went wrong.

I am the eldest of four, as we were all growing up and getting into trouble, so the blame was all laid at my feet, as I had done it all before and was not a good example for my 'perfect' parents. The proverbial black sheep, without a doubt, that's me!

Every month or so I call my parents. I always have to call them, the last time my mother called was last summer. The last time I saw any of my family was at my Grandmother's funeral in April 2000. They moved up to Yorkshire whilst I was serving a four year sentence.

They, as parents, made mistakes, so much so that I was taken out and cared for by my Grandmother, God bless her. I can forgive them, but can they forgive me? I've tried to show them how much I'd changed in the past, only to mess it up again by going off the rails!

I don't know how my partner put up with me for as long as she did. If I ever needed proof that she loved me then that is enough. Then again, we're going through a rocky patch at the moment, again! I blame it on myself, only to save everyone else doing it!

Like my parents, she's gone up North. Only because of work though, and I'm hoping to have her back at the end of the year. My life should be in some sort of



"Even though you are banged up, nurtured well, you too can do this."

"Not everyone is a waste of space, some of us do have a heart to help, but have the wrong path forced upon them"

Drawings and words from Karl, a mentee in HMP Exeter.

order by then and I will have some life to share with her. At the moment, I'm learning to live for myself. Maybe that was her plan all along.

So, as you can see, I have a lot of people to prove wrong. More importantly, I have to prove to myself that I can make it.

It's a hard pill to swallow, knowing that for 20 years I've been doing it all wrong. I didn't know then what I do now however, and as people say, it's never too late to change. I can start over, it's all I've ever done all my life, but I can't, nor do I want to, forget the past.

I don't have to listen to others, but I cannot run away from myself. I'm learning to be my very own 'tap on the shoulder', at times even a size 14 up the *#@! Wish me luck and good luck to you all. Till next time!!

Thanks to Nick Wilkins for this article

Story of a trainee mentor

So, there we all were, feeling ever-so-slightly anxious and apprehensive. New group and not knowing anybody, scared to make a slip-up and offend someone....to become..... the outcast!!!! Or someone else is Mad!!!! Bonkers!!!and they are..... sitting next to me!!!! (trust my luck, huh?)

Anyway, the tutor seems very pregnant and NORMAL (she makes mistakes) which is comforting. We do a few exercises (of a non-vigorous but brain-using nature) so as we can talk to the other strangers here. Maybe they're not so bonkers. Maybe I'll even get to like that one....and I haven't offended anybody....yet. Hey, they like my jokes. Maybe they could actually like me.

By the end of the first sesh, only 4 hours out of my time, I was feeling ok about coming to the next.

By the end of the 12 weeks i was glad i done it all, hurrah! (ok, i missed one session, nobodies perfect)

Why did I do it? Well, not in some crusading belief i could actually help anybody. I believe peeps get out of their own rut only when they want to and only for their own reasons. And there is nothing worse than a reformed junkie thinking s/he can 'help them all'.

However, I can stand beside somebody and just 'be there' for them. But, no, I'm nobody's caped crusader. I did it because I could and I did it because I needed to get out of my self-elected seclusion. And I met a couple of very nice folks along the way. I hope to meet a few more.

Thank you

Thanks to Pom for this article, and to all our volunteers for their great work

What Chaz feels on having a mentor

Having never had a mentor, or indeed anything of a similar nature, I was a little apprehensive to volunteer to place myself on such a scheme.

We had 'key workers' in the past and I had found them a little mechanical. Going through the motions, same old questions that seem to be drawn from the same source. I was concerned also that being paired with someone was rather a hit or miss affair.

When thinking about the word 'mentor', I imagined a person who can assist yes, but there was more. This was a person who you could not only confide in, but was a friend. Friends are in very short supply. I have numerous acquaintances, but few friends.

This was a novel idea, great if it worked, but potentially damaging if it didn't. To my relief, and my mentor's credit, I have found the mentor scheme to be very beneficial. I applaud her honesty and I think the mentor scheme should be extended.

People can be asked questions from the same sheet and one can come up with an idea of what they are like, but only with an ongoing relationship that the person being mentored finds fruitful, can anything of substance be obtained by both parties.

Greetings from Claire!

Hello to you all and especially to all our volunteer mentors. I thought I'd take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Mentor Co-ordinator. I'm by no means new to CARD having been a mentor myself for nearly two years, so I felt part of the team even before my first day here. It's almost like coming home.

In one of my previous jobs, I was the Mentor Co-ordinator for Prison Service Plus where I managed a team of volunteers working with offenders in three prisons across Devon so I do have quite a bit of experience in this area. I hope that I can put the skills and knowledge learned from that job and my experiences as a CARD mentor to good use in this new role and that together we can all help Close that Revolving Door for as many of our service users as we can.

Launch of the 'PORCH' project

The PORCH Project was designed to provide an important additional element to the supervision of, and support for, prolific offenders to that already made by probation, police, health and prison. The Project was launched in July with full support from the council, criminal justice and health agency representatives.

Prolific offenders often have a chaotic lifestyle and this is reflected in their accommodation circumstances.

The arrival of PORCH will provide a much needed focus for a range of associated issues to be addressed:-

- increasing offenders' ability to be reasonable tenants, by identifying skills deficits and referral to relevant training courses
- negotiating access to appropriate accommodation
- support for offenders to sustain accommodation
- support to accommodation providers
- explore opportunities to increase access to housing stock by close liaison with accommodation providers across the range-local authorities, registered social landlords and private landlords.

Like CARD, PORCH is overseen by Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI). Project manager is Paul Douglas who also manages the CARD Project.

PORCH and CARD are quite closely related in terms of the multi- agency connections and similarities between the client groups which will lead to cross-referral.

After a month of getting to know local agencies and spreading the word about PORCH, the project is now up and running and working with clients.

PORCH team



From left to right

- Paul Douglas (Project Manager)
01392 205851, paul@eci.org.uk
- Laura O'Connor (Community Support)
01392 205850, laurao@eci.org.uk
- Michelle Swinburn (Project Worker)
01392 205850, michelle@eci.org.uk
- Kevin Hunter (Admin Support)
01392 205800, kevin@eci.org.uk
- Sarah Richards (Project Coordinator)
01392 205850, sarah@eci.org.uk

WANTED

Exeter's CARD Project is looking to recruit mature (25+) volunteers mentors with a practical and non-judgemental approach to work with offenders at HMP Exeter who are due for release into the community.

The next training course is starting soon. For more information, or to ask for an application pack, call Carol or Claire on 01392 256246

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Website: www.eci.org.uk/card

Telephone: 01392 256246

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