

Coaching at Work

“A fair cop”

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A FAIR COP

With 60 per cent of its short-term offenders returning to jail, Hull had a huge and costly problem. That is, until ex-chief inspector, Russ Waterman, came up with a liberating solution. **Liz Hall** investigates



Russ Waterman used to be a “typical cop”. He went to work, did his paperwork and went home. But after a while he started to believe there were other ways to police. Why not treat causes not symptoms and work with the community to deliver what they want, not what professionals deem best?

And that’s what he did. The former chief inspector is now heading up a trailblazing multi-agency project in Hull to slash the city’s recidivism rate among those serving sentences of up to 12 months, a project with coaching and mentoring at its heart.

Some 58.8 per cent of Hull’s offenders on short sentences re-offend (60 per cent nationally), costing the city £60 million a year. Yet, in a matter of months the rate dropped to 12.6 per cent among ex-offenders on the Minerva Project’s 12-week programme.

Multi-agency partnership and coaching and mentoring have been key to the programme’s success,

believes Russ. For him the biggest part is the engaging of “volunteers” – the ex-offenders, both ‘inside’ and when they get out.

“It’s about trying to convince them there is a different way of behaving and channelling emotions,” he says.

Root causes

Russ’s thinking about policing shifted sharply when he launched the Hull Community Copshop ten years ago. Still going strong, it brought together different bodies, including play workers, social workers, Humberside Police and Hull City Council. Russ saw how innovation and asking rather than telling people what they wanted, worked wonders.

“It whet my appetite for different policing... We’d try to deliver what the community wanted, like a play scheme, asking them what they’d like and coaching them around what was achievable.”

Then at an event for a book prize he’d sponsored, he found himself sitting next to a professor who

persuaded him to undertake a Master’s in Criminology. His studies helped him create a meaningful framework for his ideas.

“I had some ideas about what was right and wrong; what studying did was give me the coat pegs on which to put the coats.”

At his retirement party from the police after 30 years in September 2009, when most might have been thinking about playing golf, Russ was busy exploring how he might work with offenders to help keep them out of prison.

Coaching and mentoring featured in his conversations that night – he could see its massive potential for tackling root causes and helping disadvantaged people find their own answers.

He landed a job as resettlement development manager at the Minerva Project, sponsored by Hull Citysafe, Hull’s Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The project offers prisoners with sentences of less than 12 months at HMP Hull a 12-week care and community plan to help them get back on their feet.

David's story

Before going back into custody, I had no clothes, I had bad drug issues and was at a real low point. I was self-harming, I have no family ties and I was living on the streets. I requested to go back into custody.

I fit the [Minerva] criteria and my support worker, Helen, is out of this world. I was re-offending often – I've had 14 sentences. The feel I get is support – masses. I can phone anyone and go on any training courses.

The biggest thing is accommodation. When they said I could have a two-bed flat, I was in total disbelief. My flat is marvellous, on top of an old Victorian house in a peaceful area in Hull.

A lot of prison and probation officers are very cynical but the team are wonderful, it's like talking to a friend, I can talk to them about anything without being embarrassed. The opportunities are unbelievable and the support is massive. Some of the team are prison and probation officers and I thought, wow, people do care. It's hard to take on board.

I am clean again. As an addict and ex-offender, I look for negatives but I can't big it up enough. I'd have been straight out spending my discharge money on trainers, and on someone's sofa where I didn't want to be. I'd have been using again and committing crime.

Lots of people re-offend because they've nowhere to stop and no clothes. I've got to do a lot of things myself, but this has put me on the right path.

David Lawson



Russ Waterman with David Lawson (right): 'The feel I get is support – masses'

Russ took up the post in September 2009, and Minerva had its first client in February 2010.

One of the reasons, says Russ, the target group is so likely to re-offend is that they are released with just £42 in their pockets – back into the same chaotic lifestyle.

Minerva helps ex-offenders on all fronts: finding housing, jobs, food, dealing with relationships, getting away from drugs. "We find latent capacity in mainstream organisations and use that. Very little slips through the gaps."

Minerva is even creating a sustainable business which will ultimately be run by ex-offenders – for ex-offenders. Through Minerva

Social Enterprise, volunteers are helping to refurbish a semi-derelict factory obtained via a community asset transfer from Hull City Council, installing business units, a crèche, a kitchen, and so on.

The volunteers are learning trades such as bricklaying and plastering as well as small business entrepreneurial skills. There will be job opportunities once the industrial units are up and running, including on the board.

Commonality

Russ has been working with Keddy Consultants, founded by former lead consultant of the Metropolitan Police Service's Leadership

Academy Jackie Keddy, to roll out four-day coach training for those on the front line. It draws on CBT, TA and Solution Focused Coaching. It teaches participants how to use models including TGROW, CIGAR, the Wheel of Life, and JAM (Just a Minute; see page 33).

Twelve Minerva employees, including Russ, went through the first programme. And Russ is keen to roll out the training more widely, giving the police, probation service, health and social services “a common language”.

“Coaching and mentoring gives us commonality. We all now understand each other better. We use coaching when we interact with staff. It’s been a real eye-opener.”

A three-day course is planned for support staff in February “so they

Minerva Project: Factfile

- Launched 2010
- Created along the seven pathways of the National Reducing, Re-offending Delivery Plan (*Ministry of Justice, 2004*), which proposes that ex-offenders stand a better chance of staying straight if they are engaged on any of these pathways: accommodation; education, training and employment; mental and physical health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefit and debt; children and families; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour.
- Funded by the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and the Hull Community Safety Partnership.
- Supported by the Hull Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Hull City Council, Humberside Probation Trust, Humberside Police and the third sector, including Barnado’s.
- 95 offenders engaged with the project on different pathways.
- Aims to keep volunteers on the programme for the critical first 12 weeks.
- Ex-offenders assessed by a Minerva worker, a release plan is created and they are met as they leave prison by a Minerva team member.
- Each of the seven workers works with 20-25 ex-offenders, via the telephone or face-to-face. Typical issues include stigmatisation when looking for housing and employment.
- 12 volunteers currently work for Minerva Social Enterprise; 30 are planned by the end of October.

“ Russ could see the massive potential of coaching and mentoring for tackling root causes and helping disadvantaged people find their own answers ”

can understand the methodology and language”.

He’s introducing the coaching and mentoring programme to the prison wardens too and the success of his approach thus far is reaching the ears of those at other prisons, including HMP Moorlands, Everthorpe and The Woolds. He’s been invited to speak to their governors and teams about what he’s doing. He’s also made contact with local women-only prisons including HMP New Hall.

Some enterprise staff have been trained in basic coaching and mentoring skills and next month (October), more staff and people from partners such as Barnados will



be put through the four-day programme. And in February next year, 12 ex-offenders will be the first such cohorts to go through it.

Keep it simple

Programme participants are also offered what Keddy calls “super vision”, “to check we’re not falling into any coaching pitfalls”.

Russ says his heroes include Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen “the champion of the underbelly of America” and his father.

“My dad came from mining stock in Shirebrook. He taught me to keep things simple and be honest.”

The project, says Russ, has proved far from simple to put together. Still, he has no regrets: “I come into work with a smile every day and I really believe in what I’m doing. I see people getting small wins. One guy hadn’t seen his kids for five years and he learnt to paint and decorate through us. He saved up to buy a small carpet and was finally allowed to see the kids. The smile on his face is what it’s all about.” ■