

# Key Achievements

November 2012

## Scheme Overview

New Leaf was set up in 2010 to deliver volunteer led mentoring and practical support to offenders sentenced to less than 12 months, planning to return to the Buckinghamshire area.

## Progress

Since 2010 we have expanded the geographical remit of the scheme to include Milton Keynes in 2011 and Oxfordshire in 2012, having secured funding from the Home Office Community Innovation Fund.

In addition we are piloting three new areas of support;

- A high level support scheme based around the first few weeks after release using teams of volunteers to support an individual, delivering support up to 6 days a week.
- Support for offenders who are completing their statutory supervision period with probation, but who are still in need of additional support in the community.
- We have developed an emergency pack, called the Community Pack, containing toiletries, emergency shelters and raincoats. The packs are supported by donation of goods or financial gifts from the local community and are handed out on the day of release. Each pack costs £13.50

## Scheme Impact

In the past 12 months:

- New Leaf received information about 130 short term offenders (compared to 56 received in the previous reporting period).
- 84% of the offenders were eligible for the scheme, an increase from 79% in the 2011 and 59% in 2010, indicating that our partner agencies, including Probation and the Prisons have a good understanding of the remit of the scheme.
- 95% of offenders were visited in prison and completed a needs assessment and 28% received a follow-up visit from a volunteer during their custodial sentence.
- 42% of offenders accepted onto the project were collected “from the gate” on the day of release.
- 38% of individuals engaged with their volunteer mentor on release.

We are looking into innovative ways of reducing the drop out rate from the scheme and increasing the level of support available during the first few weeks after release. We are currently piloting a high level team based support, with a volunteer available up to 6 days a week.

## **Volunteers**

In the past 12 months we have trained 12 new volunteer mentors and are currently arranging further training sessions in Oxford, and High Wycombe. Four mentors have left the scheme due to gaining employment and six have left the scheme due to changes in personal circumstances, leaving 32 trained mentors on the scheme.

- 5 mentors (16%) are ex-offenders, or have a close relative who has been in prison.
- 7 mentors (22%) come from an ethnic minority
- 9 mentors (28%) are male
- 10 (31%) are under 30 year old, 18 (56%) are between 30 and 60, and 4 (13%) are over 60

In addition to acting as mentors, New Leaf provides volunteers to man the Thames Valley Partnership Family Matters Court desks. The court desks offer immediate crisis support to the families of those who have been imprisoned or may be imprisoned as a result of pending court proceedings. The court desks are located in Aylesbury, Amersham and Oxford Crown Courts. To date 20 volunteers have been trained for the court desks.

## **Reduction in reoffending rates?**

To date there are too few offenders who have been supported by the scheme to do a full evaluation of the impact on re-offending rates. However, using the data held on the Thames Valley Probation Case management database, re-offending rates of people accepted onto the scheme are currently around 45% within 12 months of release (non proven). This compares favourably with the 2005-2008 national cohort study which found approximately 59% of short term offenders reoffended within 12 months. In order to get a clearer idea of the impact on re-offending we will need to look at proven reoffending (looking at court cases in the 18 months following release) and use Police National Computer data to ensure that all convictions are correctly noted. We are compiling an evaluation strategy and programme.

## **The Future**

New Leaf secured funding for our work in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire in 2012-13 from a variety of sources in addition to the grant from the Allen Lane Foundation, with the majority of funding coming from the Home office Community Innovation fund. Additional contributions have been made from Thames Valley Probation, The MK Community Foundation, The Bucks Foundation and Bucks Community Foundation and Aylesbury Community Chest. Several other donations and personal contributions have also been received.

In order to reduce the reliance on trust funds we are looking into the possibility of setting up a small social enterprise, which will also increase employment opportunities for our service users. At present we do not have funding to continue beyond June 2013.