

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Fine Cell Work	Grant ref: 10304	Programme area: Improving Londoners' Mental Health\d) Prisoners, ex-prisoners & other in the Criminal Justice System
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 20/01/2011: £98,500 (£27,400, £29,500, £41,600) over 3 years towards the salary costs of a Studio Workshop Manager at H.M.P Wandsworth helping improve social and employability skills on release.		
Visiting Grants Officer: Jenny Field accompanied by Deputy Nash	Date of meeting: 5 th February 2013	
Met with: Katy Emck (CEO), Hilda Sheppard (Studio Workshop Manager) + several volunteers.		
1. Introduction to the organisation: Established in 1997, Fine Cell Work (FCW) uses trained volunteers to teach needlework to serving prisoners – 75% of them men. Despite the preconception that needlework is for women only and the 'macho' image of most male prisoners, the classes are very popular, always with a waiting list. The quality of the cushions, bags, wall hangings and quilts produced is very high and much of the work is commissioned. Prisoners also produce heritage commissions for such institutions as the V&A, Tate Modern, English Heritage and the National Gallery. Participating prisoners are able to earn a salary from sales of goods produced which is then saved and kept for their release.		
2. The project funded: The Trust's grant is towards the salary of the Studio Manager at HMP Wandsworth. The post was established to help expand the classes and increase the number of prisoners able to participate. We visited when a class was underway and we were able to talk freely to the volunteers and prisoners. The prisoners are able to continue their needlework during the long hours they spend in their cells.		
3. Work delivered to date: The project funded by Trust is approaching the end of its second year. During the first year, it worked with prisoners from the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit. A change in policy whereby these prisoners were re-located to different prisons around the country during the year, meant that the increased number of prisoners worked with at the beginning of the year, dipped towards the end of the year. During year 2, FCW has been working with prisoners from the main wing and the numbers have increased again during the year.		
4. Difference made: The prisoners we spoke to were very enthusiastic about the project. None of them had stitched before starting the classes but the quality of their work was most		

impressive. They clearly felt a great sense of pride and achievement. A couple of them talked about the calming effect of stitching and how needlework provided them with something useful to do when in their cells. One of them was working on a piece commissioned by the Trust - a wall hanging with an embroidered City of London Corporation crest.

During 2011, FCW commissioned an independent evaluation of 22 of the prisoners with whom it had worked, including 5 from Wandsworth Prison. Those interviewed reported increased self-esteem and a greater sense of self-worth, whilst those with mental health problems spoke of the therapeutic and calming benefits.

As well as teaching the prisoners with the technical skills to stitch, involvement in the project also teaches them 'soft' skills such as teamwork, co-operation and perseverance – all useful and transferrable in the workplace. In the longer term, FCW plans to build links with external employers and help those prisoners nearing the end of their sentence into paid employment upon their release.

5. Grants Administration:

The Trust's grant is clearly shown as a restricted fund in FCW's audited accounts for the year ending 31st December 2011. December 2012 accounts will be available in the summer of this year.

The first year's monitoring report was of a good standard with the information clearly presented. FCW were asked to provide more feedback from the prisoners about how they perceived the difference the project had made to them in their next report which is due in March 2013.

6. Concluding comments:

FCW is an impressive organisation, employing inspirational staff and volunteers. The work produced by serving prisoners is of a very high standard and attracts a wide range of commissions. Participation in the project connects prisoners to wider society whilst teaching them valuable skills. It also enables them to support their families with the money they earn.