

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

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| Organisation: Nehemiah Project | Grant ref: 10505 | Programme area: Positive Transitions to Independent Living(f) Resettlement of ex-offenders leaving custody |
| Amount, date and purpose of grant: 19/05/2011: A grant of £75,000 over three years (3 x £25,000) towards the salary costs of a full-time Supported Housing Worker. | | |
| Visiting Grants Officer: Tim Wilson | Date of meeting: 5 February 2014 | |
| Met with: John Patience (Chief Executive), Olivia Kilbee (Fundraising Manager), Elekwa Onwuchekwa (Supported Housing Officer) and various residents. The post-holder funded by the Trust (Barbara Holder) was on sick-leave at time of the visit. | | |
| 1. Introduction to the organisation: Nehemiah supports men who have a history of offending, helping them to understand, address and break free from the root causes of their harmful behaviours. Established in 1996, it runs from two residential properties in South London, providing a structured programme that helps men make the transition to independent living. Through a series of group and individual meetings each client examines the reasons why they offend, and receives support to move towards new patterns of behaviour. Nehemiah describes the work as a “tough love programme”. It only works with clients who are willing to change and who pass the organisation’s risk assessment. Men are asked to leave the programme if they do not adhere to an agreed code of conduct. | | |
| 2. The project funded: Following a successful pilot programme in 2010, where Nehemiah tested the viability of supporting its service through a combination of grant funding and housing benefit from residents, the charity applied to City Bridge Trust for a grant in 2011. Prospective residents attend interview, and are only accepted if they have already stopped drinking and / or using drugs. They pay their housing benefit to Nehemiah to cover the costs of their stay, whilst keeping any job seeker benefit or wages for themselves. Nehemiah sought funding towards the salary costs of a Supported Housing Worker. This post-holder works closely with residents, monitoring their progress and supporting them to achieve their goals. This is a key role within the charity, helping ensure that the organisation can deliver its intensive programme called “A New Future”. | | |
| 3. Work delivered to date: During the first year Nehemiah’s Supported Housing Worker supported 18 men who were resident in the charity’s Streatham property. The house has eight bed spaces and men stay for 12 weeks before moving on to the charity’s Clapham property. The Streatham house is the first residential environment for men entering the Nehemiah programme. 80% of clients come straight from prison through the probation services. | | |

During the second year 26 men were resident in Streatham, 16 of whom completed the programme. Unfortunately, the first year's monitoring report did not record how many men completed the three month programme, but during the visit the charity reported that they have reviewed and improved the schedule of activities to make these more engaging for the participants, suggesting that they have been seeking to improve completion rates.

The programme, called "A New Future" runs on a rolling basis with new residents joining the activities throughout the year. New residents are allowed to observe activities to begin with, to help them gauge whether the programme is right for them. If it is, then mornings are dedicated to time spent looking at behaviour and resettlement issues such as housing, money management and family relationships. The morning workshops are intended to help the men live together more harmoniously, and to provide each other with support. Afternoon sessions are personalised depending on the needs of the individual resident. There is frequent drug and alcohol testing to ensure that clients abide by the rules of the programme.

4. Difference made:

Including the pilot year, Nehemiah has worked with 75 men, 37 of whom have completed the full three-month programme. 25 men went on to employment, 5 to further training and 9 to voluntary work. None of the men re-offended during their time with Nehemiah, and all stayed substance free. All men moved on to safe and secure accommodation following their time at the programme.

Nehemiah tries to remain in contact with men after they complete the programme but this is not always straightforward as some seek to 'erase' anything that connects them to their offending past. Of the 37 'graduates', the charity is still in contact with 16 men, two of whom reoffended within two years of completing the programme and one of whom re-commenced abusing substances.

During the visit I had the opportunity to discuss Nehemiah's work with two residents Brian (55) has a long history of offending but spoke very positively both about his commitment to change, and the value of Nehemiah's programme for him at a time in his life when he was starting to fear the future. Ben (27) has also spent time in prison, and is battling alcoholism. He is now working towards establishing his own business and again spoke appreciatively of the support the charity has given him.

5. Grants Administration:

The charity has submitted two monitoring reports on the grant - the first judged 'satisfactory' and the second 'good'. The most recent report was received on 6 September 2013 and included clear beneficiary data, case examples and client testimonies. Accounts identify the City Bridge Trust grant as required by the conditions of funding.

6. Concluding comments:

Nehemiah's support programme is under constant review and the charity continues to look for ways to improve the outcomes of its work. The charity has developed more rigorous assessments to gauge prospective residents and Nehemiah has also appointed two full-time caretakers to strengthen the residential community. Since City Bridge Trust funding was awarded the charity has been successful in raising funds from several other grant-makers, and its website now includes positive testimonies from a number of supporters including the local MP.