

ACCELERATING CHANGE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION



SOS Project
United Kingdom
Junior Smart, St Giles Trust
www.stgilestrust.org.uk

TRANSFORMING INNOVATION



A holistic peer-to-peer mentoring programme run by ex-offenders that helps former prisoners reintegrate back into society and prevents young people from getting involved in crime.

SOLUTION

A peer-to-peer training scheme for ex-offenders and high-risk groups, developed by an ex-convict and incorporated into St Giles Trust's existing framework of criminal justice programmes.

Through the Peer Advisor Programme, the organisation trains ex-offenders to become professional, qualified advice workers. After the training, they are placed at the heart of services for their ability to help other people with multiple vulnerability factors and provide them with tailored solutions that meet their complex needs. This two-fold approach not only contributes to cut re-offending rates, but also impacts the mentors themselves, who are trained and qualified as professional caseworkers, increasing their skills and employment prospects.

STRONG EVIDENCE (offence prevention)



PROMISING EVIDENCE (employment)



Outputs:

- Between 2015 and 2017, over 500 prisoners were trained as Peer Advisors¹.

Outcomes:

- In 2015, 38% of St Giles Trust's staff involved in the SOS Project were ex-offenders².
- One of the programmes delivered by Peer Advisors presents a cost-benefit ratio of 1:10. For every £1 invested, £10 are saved through the reduced costs of re-offending³.

Sources: The organisation has a rigorous follow-up and measurement system, reflected in its 2016 Annual Review. Other external evaluations support the impact evidence level.

¹ JH Consulting (2017) "Improving outcomes for prisoners: the St Giles Trust Peer Advice Model".

² St Giles Trust Annual Review 2016.

³ Pro Bono Economics (2009) "Through The Gates – An analysis of economic impact".

RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS

Top 10 companies to work for, The Sunday Times (2015). Best Advice and Guidance Project, Charity Awards (2014). Longford Prize (2014). Ashoka Fellowship (2008).

TOOLKIT FOR IMPLEMENTATION SOS PROJECT

HOW IT WORKS

The project offers ex-offenders and other disadvantaged people the opportunity to become professionally trained and progress into employment, whilst supporting others to move their lives forward. It provides training towards the Level 3 Advice and Guidance qualification, which includes knowledge on areas such as communication, interviewing techniques, advocacy and equal opportunities. Many of the people trained support St Giles Trust's services through volunteering and some progress to become caseworkers. The majority of SOS employees are trained, reformed ex-offenders with first-hand experience of the issues their clients are facing.

By using this mix of first-hand insights coupled with specialist training, participants provide a tailored, high quality service that reaches some of the most disadvantaged people, often not engaged in or excluded from other services. Work is delivered through small teams and in partnership with statutory agencies to ensure participants are properly linked into other services and make effective use of them. SOS caseworkers deliver the following services:

- 'Through the Gates'. Support to young men with gang affiliations upon leaving prison, with the aim to prevent reoffending.
- Assistance to victims of violence. Support to young people who are admitted into the major trauma unit of Royal London Hospital as a result of serious youth violence and sexual violence.
- 'SOS+'. A school-based, preventative programme aimed at young people at risk of gang crime.

REGIONAL ADAPTATION



Initially developed in Southwark, London. Implemented across the city and replicated in Ipswich and Essex. Peer Advisors are also trained in Leeds and Cardiff.

THE OPPORTUNITY FRAMEWORK

The innovative nature of the model, developed by an ex-convict, lies in its ability to generate positive role models and win-win situations through training service users as Peer Advisors and placing them at the heart of the organisation's services.

Leveraging their credibility, ex-offenders build unique relationships with clients that are facing similar life experiences and help them identify and achieve alternative aspirations and goals, breaking the cycle of re-offending and generating a positive and lasting impact on their lives. There is simply no-one better qualified at understanding the complex realities of their clients. In turn, while participating as advisors (either in a volunteer or a professional way), ex-offenders gain direct experience and develop employability skills that are highly valuable for their job and social reinsertion.

The methodology of SOS can also be utilised for a range of different societal issues, such as unemployment, homelessness, healthcare, support services, and immigration. With regards to the challenge of long-term unemployment, SOS fosters collective empowerment among the ex-offenders, breaking the isolation of this highly stigmatised and vulnerable group and creating new jobs for them.

INCOME MODEL: ESTABLISHED IN ORIGIN



St Giles Trust raises funds for SOS through a partnership with the investment bank Nomura and was initially funded through the Peterborough Pilot Social Impact Bond.

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The programme benefits from support from charitable foundations and receives donations from individuals and companies, including from Google and the investment bank Liberum. Professional training for ex-offenders is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

INCIPIENT TRANSFERENCE MODEL



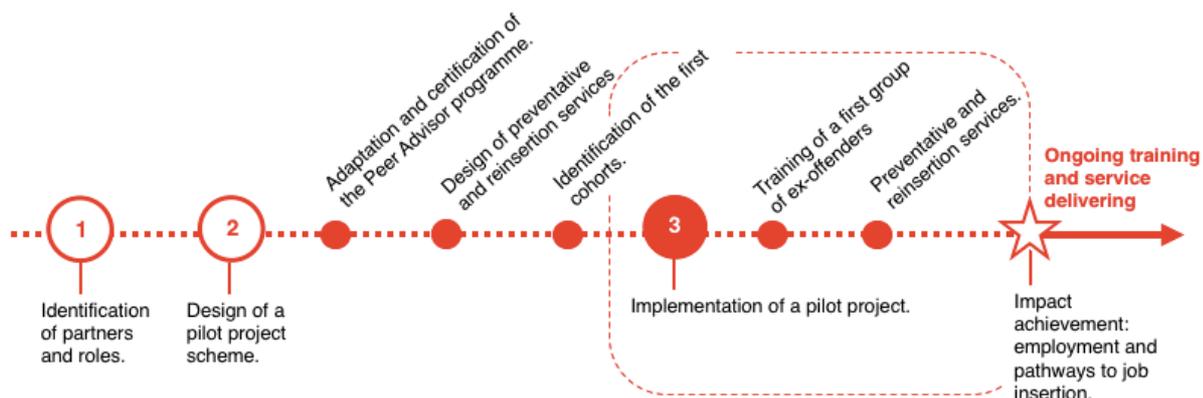
The founders of the project would support the knowledge transfer process to other cities, partnering with a lead organisation in the first instance and using their quality assurance methods to establish the project by overseeing its conception and development.

KEY AGENTS AND ROLES

Several agents are needed to replicate SOS in a different local context:

- A lead social organisation with experience working with ex-offenders, delivering training courses complemented by on-the-job training, monitoring and supervision. Also providing the right infrastructure and a package of support around staff to help them deal with their own challenges.
- Connections with the labour market (businesses, social organisations...) so that beneficiaries can move into actual employment after the training. In the past, different organisations have tried to replicate the SOS project by solely using volunteers, and they have failed to do so.
- Government agencies and public institutions in charge of both the employment and the justice systems, willing to facilitate and support preventative interventions of this kind, for instance under payment-for-success schemes (Social Impact Bonds).
- A strong referral system of youths at risk of offending, integrated by institutions and organisations close to situations of violence (borough offices, hospitals, schools, youth and community organisations, parents' associations...).
- A strategic collaboration network of local agencies and organisations providing appropriate, specialised services to fit the needs of both young people and ex-offenders, for instance in the fields of housing, education and employment.

FIRST STEPS



1. Identification of partners in all needed roles.
2. Design of a pilot project scheme:
3. Adaptation and certification of the Peer Advisor training programme.
4. Design of preventative and reinsertion services for vulnerable youth and ex-offenders.
5. Identification of the first cohort of Peer Advisors and the target population.
6. Implementation of a pilot project in two phases:
7. Training of a first group of ex-offenders.
8. Engaging them in preventative and reinsertion services providing.
9. Training other cohorts or target groups and service delivering.

*TOOLKIT FOR IMPLEMENTATION
SOS PROJECT*

OTHER RELATED LINKS

Video presentation

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/5sD7Ms6OQ5A>

JH Consulting (2017) "Improving outcomes for prisoners: the St Giles Trust Peer Advice Model"

<https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/misc/The%20Peer%20Advisor%20Model%20in%20Prisons%20-final%20final.pdf>

St Giles Trust Annual Review 2016

https://stgilestrust.org.uk/misc/StGilesTrust_Impact_Report_2015-16%20final.pdf

Pro Bono Economics (2009) "Through The Gates – An analysis of economic impact"

<https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/misc/Evaluation%20into%20Through%20the%20gates%20full%20report.pdf>

ACCELERATING CHANGE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION - ACSI

Catalysing the transfer of successful innovations among European cities.

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