# Empowering people to build brighter futures after prison.

Stand

### StandOut EVALUATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**RUSSELL WEBSTER** 

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#### Introduction

The charity StandOut commissioned Russell Webster to undertake an evaluation of the organisation's work delivering long-term holistic support to people both while serving sentences in Pentonville and Wandsworth prisons and in the community on their release. The evaluation also examines the work of the StandOut helpline.

#### Methodology

The evaluation is built on the cross-referencing of information from four principal sources:

ethnographic observation of the programme in operation (in prison and the community), analysis of quantitative data focusing on both outputs and outcomes (particularly employment); qualitative interviews with 26 stakeholders and, perhaps most importantly, the views of 58 programme participants.



#### The programme

StandOut sets out to empower people with the skills, confidence and mindsets needed to realise their potential, find employment and move out of the justice system for good. The programme is delivered by a team of trained coaches who aim to build trusting relationships with people and address whatever is holding them back. This relationship-based support seeks to identify people's strengths and is offered without a time limit. A coaching manager supervises and supports the coaching team which comprises two coaches embedded in each prison and two community coaches to provide support on release. Improving trainees' employability is an important goal, but the aims of the programme go beyond this by equipping them to feel confident about their future and build stability in their lives. The programme is divided into three phases:

#### Phase 1 – intensive groupwork programme

StandOut's support begins with an intensive four-week programme inside prison to prepare people for life on release. Group work is combined with in-depth one-to-one sessions so that coaches can get to know each person's needs and their hopes for the future. Shorter programmes have been offered throughout the pandemic because of prison restrictions, but

## Russell Webster

the organisation is hoping to restore the full programme this Autumn. The course is comprised of 12 full-day sessions including:

- Developing positive mindsets and new ways of thinking,
- Overcoming trauma and building the resilience needed to handle setbacks,
- Developing key life skills in communication, leadership, and organisation,
- Visits from employers who believe in second chances for prison leavers and
- Volunteer-led CV writing and mock interview workshops.

#### Phase 2 – continued support pre-release

After the course, coaches continue to offer one-to-one practical support and work with people to plan for life and work beyond release. This work is often carried out in collaboration with other support services such as housing and substance misuse recovery workers. The fact that coaches are regularly on the wings allows them to keep in constant contact with people who have done the Phase 1 programme.

#### Phase 3 – continued support in the community

StandOut gives a commitment to provide open-ended, one-to-one, holistic support after release for as long as required. This support looks different for everyone; it is designed to be individually tailored to each person and focuses on employment, education or training but also involves wrap-around support to help people build stability across all areas of life. This can include support with housing, recovery from alcohol and substance misuse, issues with family or difficulties with mental health.

#### Outputs

StandOut ran a total of 12 workshops at both prisons until all group work was suspended in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic. Unable to provide a service to people in prison, StandOut launched a Helpline in May 2020 designed to resolve the critical needs of people leaving prison during the pandemic by providing them with practical and coaching support. This support included access to housing, food and benefits as well as longer term coaching support and mindset work, the Helpline was paused at the end of July 2021. In order to comply with prison covid restrictions, StandOut developed an abridged version of the programme, cut down to four half-day sessions delivered within the same week. A total of 21 of these abridged workshops were run at both prisons during the period between May 2021 and March 2022. The evaluation examined the outcomes from all these activities.





#### Outcomes

The key distinguishing feature of the StandOut programme is its commitment to provide ongoing support to people on release. More than eight out of ten (176 = 81%) of the people who have participated in the programme and been released from prison have been in contact with StandOut in the community.

StandOut were able to identify 61 participants who had found work, many of these individuals had found more than one job (up to five) and a total of 110 jobs were recorded. This represents almost two in five (39%<sup>1</sup>) of programme participants released from prison. This compares very favourably with the latest national data which found that an average of 23%<sup>2</sup> of people released from prison found work within six months. It should also be noted that the employment figure for those released from local/remand prisons such as the two establishments in which StandOut works is substantially lower than this average.

StandOut also measured the intervention's impact on mental wellbeing for participants who took part in the full programme via the internationally validated Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). A large majority of the participants who completed the survey before and after the programme (61 = 84%) reported an improvement in their mental wellbeing of between 1 and 34 points with the median improvement being 9 points. WEMWBS guidance states that a positive gain of between 3 and 8 points can be considered "meaningful". Ten people recorded a fall in their mental wellbeing of between 1 and 7 points with the median reduction being 4 points) and two people recorded no difference.

It is not yet possible to report formally on reoffending outcomes; in order to access official reconviction data, StandOut would need to submit details about the cohorts it works with to the Ministry of Justice Data Lab, an action which it is currently considering.

The StandOut Helpline responded to 4,328 calls providing support to 608 men, offering support with a range of issues. Almost three out of five (58%) Helpline callers were provided with information, advice and guidance and signposting to other helping services, while more than two out of five (42%) were provided with coaching support to motivate and assist them to resolve their own challenges. More than one third (37%) were directly assisted with housing issues, more than a quarter (27%) with benefits issues and almost one fifth (19%) with help finding work and training. StandOut intervened to ensure that 53 men had temporary hotel accommodation until they were provided with housing provision. The organisation also gave urgent support to 53 people who left prison with only the clothes they were wearing; providing vouchers for food and travel, clothing packs, toiletries, and basic mobile phones with credit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 176 graduates have been released from prison but eighteen of these are ineligible for work because of health problems or immigration status.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> MoJ (2022) Employment on Release statistical release to March 2022



#### Stakeholder views

Stakeholders universally held the view that the StandOut programme was well-designed to help people leaving prison, identifying four critical success factors:

- 1. The individualised approach stakeholders described the programme as being very focused on the participants and offering an approach that helped participants overcome their individual problems, rather than a generic one-fits-all model.
- 2. There was general approbation that the programme was seamless, continuing after programme delivery in prison and, critically, on release into the community.
- *3.* The overall positive mindset of the programme was mentioned by many stakeholder interviewees, who discussed the organisation's focus on building self-confidence and resilience.
- 4. Finally, a number of interviewees talked about StandOut's willingness and desire to work in partnership with any other organisation that could help its participants. Interviewees talked about a different level of partnership work.

In addition to the critical success factors described above, individual stakeholders highlighted three other positive attributes of StandOut's work: their proactive approach, the honesty and transparency which characterised the organisation's relationships with partners; and their willingness to adapt and problem solve.

#### Participant views

Participants were asked to identify the most useful aspect of the programme. While some identified specific components (seven identified the help with developing a CV, six the funding they had received for specific courses or for tools or equipment and five the help with job searching), the majority focused instead on the overall qualities of the programme, in particular the level of support provided, the continuity of care on release and the dedication and commitment of staff. These views are illustrated by the following quotes:

"StandOut have been great, they support you when you're locked up and when you get released. I was generally surprised how they were always there for me when it felt like no one else was."

"I was made to feel that even though I was in prison, I could still achieve and better myself. Stand<mark>Out</mark> helped me stay motivated and positive, which gives people hope that even after prison they can still achieve and live a prosperous life."

*"It has given me confidence to apply for work and not hold back to apply because of my criminal record, I did gain employment after release and I don't think I would have even tried to apply for the job if I had not done the StandOut course inside prison."* 

*"It was much better than fluffy, feel-good courses which don't look at barriers and how to overcome them."* 





"I got sectioned at one point but they came to see me at the hospital. I don't think I would still be alive, if it wasn't for their support and belief in me." "I'm still in employment because of them. StandOut were there, they were genuine, they stuck by me."

"They've walked along my journey with me every step of the way."

#### Conclusion

The evaluation concluded that StandOut has developed an impressive and effective programme to help people in prison and on release maximise their chances of living a personally fulfilling and crime-free life. StandOut works with a client group who are entrenched in a criminal lifestyle and have experienced a disproportionately high number of life challenges. The programme has been particularly successful in maintaining contact with people on release and helping many of them find work. Professional stakeholders and programme participants hold extremely high opinions of the programme which was consistently described as being superior to other forms of support available to people leaving prison. The key differentiators are summarised in a graphic at the end of this report.

There remain some key challenges. The model of providing open-ended support is obviously much valued and a defining characteristic of the programme, but clearly requires a proportionate increase in resources in order to continue delivering a service to an evergrowing caseload. Although participants value the one-to-one support in the community (mainly delivered by telephone), many would appreciate more face-to-face work and the support of their peers. StandOut is aware of this desire and is in the process of developing provision to satisfy it. The organisation also needs to develop its recording and monitoring system so that it can identify which groups of participants (differentiated by age, ethnicity, geography and type of challenge – e.g. substance use, mental health) are more or less likely to succeed. Understanding the potentially differing impact of the full and short programmes would also be invaluable.

It is clear that StandOut has developed an effective holistic resettlement model which is valued by prisons, partner organisations and, most importantly, by the participants themselves. The programme is unique in its approach and has proved successful in engaging participants on release and in helping them find work and supporting them in resolving a wide range of difficulties. In order to continue to be successful, StandOut will need to continue with its plans for a community hub and give careful consideration to having its impact on reoffending formally validated by the Ministry of Justice DataLab.



Executive Summary July 2022