

## Ex-offenders - Mentor Information Sheet

### Programme Outline

In November 2009, Mosaic launched its pilot Offender Mentoring programme to provide focused support and mentoring opportunities to Muslim prisoners around the vulnerable period of transition from prison back to society.

In April 2008, the number of Muslim prisoners in prisons in England and Wales, either on remand or under immediate custodial sentence, totalled 9002, approximately 10% of the total male and female prison population (82,319). This figure meant that Muslims in prison exceed by three times their representation in the wider population and the figure is thought to have grown in the intervening three years.

There is growing evidence of the particularly acute difficulties faced by Muslim prisoners returning to mainstream society and, as a consequence, their vulnerability to negative influences. Research suggests that Muslim prisoners suffer from particular problems not encountered by their non-Muslim counterparts when returning to society and this stems from the social stigma that often attaches to them within their communities.

In 2004, Muslim Youth Helpline launched its inaugural “Behind Bars” campaign during Ramadan to raise awareness of the pressures for Muslim prisoners. With the support of Muslim chaplains and Muslim communities, the campaign developed with gift packages and messages of support being distributed to 1053 Muslims in 19 prisons in 2005, gift boxes being sent to 2500 prisoners in 2006 and 3000 boxes being sent to Muslims in 51 institutions in 2007. Following the 2006 campaign, MYH undertook an evaluation of the campaign distributing a survey questionnaire to 400 prisoners, of which 328 were completed. Key statistics revealed by this survey include the following:

- 30% of Muslim prisoners responding felt that the Muslim community could have played a better role in keeping them out of prison;
- 35% of those responding were re-offenders;
- of re-offenders, 63% did not find the support they needed upon leaving prison the first time;
- of re-offenders, 82% felt quite strongly that faith-sensitive, community support upon exiting prison would have prevented them from re-offending; and,
- there was nearly unanimous support in the same survey to the question asking whether prisoners would support a prison mentoring programme.

Mosaic’s Young Muslim Offenders Mentoring Programme supports 18-35 year-old offenders at the end of their custodial sentence, providing them with a trained mentor to support them through the difficult transition from custody back into their communities. The programme operates in London and the South East and has recently also moved into the Midlands, the North-West and Yorkshire Humber.

## The mentoring role

Mentoring begins up to six months before a prisoner is due for release and is expected to continue for a similar period post release. Mentors begin by visiting their client in prison in order to build trust, gain a better understanding of their client's needs and help prepare them for release. Mentors will be encouraged to make contact with the relevant Prison Service Offender Manager and Muslim chaplains working within the establishment as these staff members will be crucial to delivering the holistic help an individual needs. Mentors are also asked (where possible) to meet their mentees at the gate on the day of release as this is shown to significantly reduce the likelihood of that individual re-offending.

Following release, mentors will continue to support their mentee through the provision of emotional support, as well as practical support around seeking workplace opportunities, accessing housing, education, training etc.

We ask that all volunteers commit to the programme for a minimum of 12 months. Mentors are expected to be available at least twice a month for face-to-face mentoring sessions and be flexible as regards telephone and email contact.

## Training and Support

We are working closely with Her Majesty's Prison Service, Muslim chaplains and others in the field to ensure we deliver a programme that meets the needs of prisoners at the same time as ensuring effective support for those undertaking mentoring of this vulnerable group.

All mentors will receive the following:

- A full weekend of training covering an introduction to mentoring, an introduction to the criminal justice system and appropriate counselling and mentoring techniques;
- Prison awareness sessions organised by HM Prison Service;
- Support from prison Chaplains and Prison Service Offender Managers;
- Regular contact with the Offender Mentoring Programme Manager and Mosaic Regional Managers.

## Individuals supported

The mentoring programme is available to male and female Muslim prisoners aged between 16 and 35 who will, on release, reside within reasonable travelling distance from the following cities: London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bradford.

All categories of prisoner will be eligible for support. However, Mosaic cannot provide mentors to individuals convicted of terrorism-related offences and serious sexual offences. Mosaic understands, however, that mentors may have particular views concerning those convicted of certain other offences and we will respect such views in seeking to match mentors with mentees.

## Security Requirements

To be accepted on to this programme, all mentors will need to be security cleared by Her Majesty's Prison Service. This is a requirement for anybody wishing to work in prisons on a full-time, part-time or voluntary basis. Details of this will be given to individuals during their training sessions. Mentors may also need to complete an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.

## Further information

For further information please contact Julian Yorke, Campaigns Manager and Offender Mentoring Programme Manager

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