



Northern Rock Foundation's Penal Reform Initiative

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northern rock foundation fact sheet

Over the past 13 years the Foundation has invested close to **£8 million** towards work with offenders and ex-offenders through a 'Penal Reform Initiative', and a wide range of other grants and developments. The main aims of the work were to:

- Develop, pilot and evaluate new approaches to resettlement to support reduction in re-offending and reconviction
- Provide offenders and ex-offenders access to opportunities to help build their confidence, self esteem and skills to help them find alternatives
- Provide evidence to the Home Office of the impact and value of these types of interventions to help secure future funding.

The main achievements of the work

Helping change the lives of offenders and their families.

All of the projects we supported can demonstrate that they have made a difference to the lives of offenders and their families. Examples include:

- The You Choose project showed a 45% reduction in reoffending rates compared to the national average of 17%¹
- The Pyramid Project worked with over 3000 people receiving national recognition for its work. The initial Foundation investment of £2 million resulted in an investment of £774 per prisoner to provide the support they need to resettle in the community.²

Developing new approaches and influencing government policy.

The Foundation supported research and projects that provided valuable evidence to increase awareness of the issues with statutory bodies and to demonstrate to local and national government the benefits of intensive support

- The Kings College pilot work 'Justice Reinvestment – A New Approach to Crime & Justice' was influential in persuading the Justice Select Committee to carry out an inquiry into effectiveness of spending on the criminal justice system in the UK that in turn led to the 'Cutting Crime: the Case for Justice Reinvestment' report in January 2010. The Case for Justice Reinvestment has also been cited as one of the drivers behind the Peterborough Social Investment Bond development
- Recommendations from research about the value of localising offender management services³ and effective ways of rehabilitating offenders⁴ are now part of accepted practice with the recent 'Breaking the Cycle' green paper recommending a local partnership approach
- Prison Reform Trust provided evidence for the Corston Review on women in prison. The review had a major impact on government policy with acceptance of 40 out of 43 recommendations
- Derwent Initiative provided valuable information about gaps in services to inform local service commissioners

¹ You Choose North East's final report to Northern Rock Foundation 2008 – based on figures from 2004-2007. Evaluation audited by Ernst & Young LLP

² 'The Pyramid Project: Meeting Needs & Creating Opportunities' 2008 Depaul Trust & nacro

³ 'Justice Reinvestment – A New Approach to Crime & Justice' Allen, Rob & Stern, Vivien Kings College London International Centre for Prison Studies 2007 London

⁴ 'Justice Reinvestment – A New Approach to Crime & Justice' Allen, Rob & Stern, Vivien Kings College London International Centre for Prison Studies 2007 London

The impact of the Foundation's support.

- Foundation funding strengthened the number and level of activities to support prisoners and their families in the region
- Projects were able to gain greater access to Home Office (especially the Regional Offender Management Service) and Prison Service support
- Ways of working that would not previously have been funded through mainstream commissioning were piloted and evidence gathered means they are now accepted as good practice
- Foundation support has helped fill gaps in services e.g. NEPACS provides support for families that would otherwise not exist in the region

The main learning from our work for Policy and Practice

Key success factors for reducing reoffending are:

- Effective individual assessment of prisoners needs and a holistic approach to addressing those needs (including mental health and substance misuse issues) while in prison
- Prisoners need to maintain links with their family to provide some stability on release
- Opportunities for prisoners to improve their basic skills and to train for work on release
- Comprehensive resettlement support including housing, debt and benefits advice, employment, education and training

These are now accepted practice for supporting prisoners and their families. The Penal Reform Initiative helped draw together existing evidence and good practice and provide a more complete picture of the issues.

Where we are now

Learning from this work has been widely disseminated and continues to inform policy and practice, several of the projects supported through this work are now part of mainstream service provision in the North-East and Cumbria.

Work continues in the Changing Lives Programme with a focus on key aspects of support including prevention work with young people at risk of re-offending, support for young offenders on short term sentences to re-settle on release and support to the families of young offenders to maintain links with family members while in prison.

A NEPACS facilitated event in May 2011 continued the work to bring organisations together to develop ways to make sure family ties are reinforced during and after prison.

More information about the Penal Reform initiative and research funded by the Foundation is available on the resources page of the Foundation's website.