Volunteer Mentors

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SUPPORTING OTHERS THROUGH VOLUNTEER ACTION

In the next 20 minutes

- What is SOVA?
- Fashion or effective agents of change – volunteers?
- What do our volunteers do?
- Case studies
- Volunteer support for service users in CJ system

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SOVA

- the leading national volunteer mentoring organisation working in the Criminal Justice System and DWP in England and Wales
- started in 1975 by a group of volunteers working within the Inner London Probation Service
- in 1982 SOVA began working with Social Services departments, recruiting, training and deploying volunteers to offer support and advice to young people within local communities.

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SOVA's purpose

We support people who need our help to make a better life for themselves and where we live: by supporting people away from offending, in to work & training, out of debt & poverty, gain self confidence and improve family & personal relationships. We believe everyone should have the chance to get on in life & fulfil their potential

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SOVA working in partnership

SOVA projects exist throughout England & Wales developed in partnership with a range of agencies including:-

- The Prison Service
- Jobcentre Plus
- Social Services
- The National Offender Management
- Youth Offending Teams & Services
- Drug Action Teams
- Local Authorities
- Private and public sector
- Employers, national and SME
- Third sector

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SOVA projects and programmes

SOVA runs a wide variety of projects and programmes across England & Wales, delivering services including:

- Employment Training and Education
- Support – Mentoring & specialist staff
  - Reparation and Mediation
  - Befriending
  - Independent visitors
  - Provision of Appropriate Adults.
  - Circles of support with personality disordered offenders
- Volunteering
- Enterprises

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SOVA client groups

SOVA works with a wide client group including:

- Long term unemployed
- Offenders (adults and juveniles in the community and in the 'secure estate')
- Young people at risk of becoming involved in anti-social & criminal activity
- Asylum seekers
- Looked After Children (LAC).

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SOVA Volunteers

Volunteers are recruited via:

- local volunteer centres
- web e.g. do-it.org.uk
- universities running relevant courses e.g. criminology and psychology
- volunteer fairs
- word of mouth
- Over 1000 volunteer mentors today

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Who volunteers

Complete cross section of society and skills set.

- about 60/40 female/male
- ethnically diverse; 25% non white English
- students and younger adults
- peers
- Professional, unemployed, semi skilled and TV celebriti
- age limit is over 18.

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Volunteer recruitment & training

Volunteer recruitment process:

- initial interview
- 2 references
- enhanced CRB check
- 3 day training course
- second interview
- Safeguarding
- OCN / NVQ
- Peer mentoring

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So what do volunteers actually do?

Volunteers provide practical support, working with service users to help them obtain work, training or education, employability preparation, support to leave prison and stabilise in the community, support to comply with probation requirements, stay off drugs, away from offending peers, and get more self confidence.

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Volunteer Outcomes

Examples of numbers of offenders gained jobs and training in South Yorkshire Probation and prison area: Over 1700 service users

- Project over 4 towns and 4 prisons
- 196 in to employment
- 356 in to further learning
- 140 volunteer mentors recruited, trained, matched, supporting offenders
- Approx 60% of outcomes achieved were assisted by mentors

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Case studies

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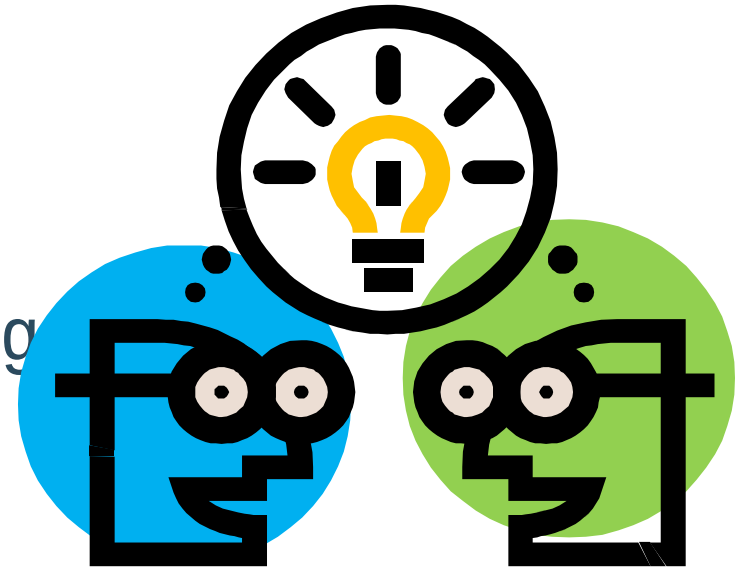
Volunteers & the work Programme

So why use volunteers in the work programme?

- highly committed
- a ‘critical friend’
- not from the system
- maintaining motivation / eng
- building confidence
- 2 heads are better than 1
- breadth of knowledge/skills
- Building a trusting relationship for the service user & become more prepared to try new things



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Thank you

Any questions?

www.sova.org.uk

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