

Study shows support for prison leavers cuts crime

A pioneering crime reduction project has been shown to substantially cut re-offending rates, potentially saving the taxpayer millions of pounds, a report launched today reveals.

The independent study into offender charity St Giles Trust's Through the Gates programme has demonstrated that re-offending rates were cut by 40% when prison leavers were given intensive, specialist support.

This is the first study initiated by charity Pro Bono Economics and carried out by leading economics consultancy Frontier Economics. It concluded that the programme offered 'outstanding value for money to society' and calculated savings of over £10million pounds to the taxpayer were brought about from the £1million scheme. Pro Bono Economics aims to bring economic analysis to help charities measure their impact.

St Giles Trust now hopes that similar schemes to Through the Gates will be rolled out on a national basis, providing the opportunity to make a real impact on re-offending.

The London Probation-funded Through the Gates programme, which started in July 2008, offered intensive support for over 1,500 prison leavers returning to London, helping with the difficult transition from custody to community.

The caseworkers, many of whom were trained, reformed ex-prisoners themselves, provided one-on-one support in the crucial early days after release when the risk of re-offending is high if the right support is not in place. This included help with accommodation, finances and employment support – all factors affecting the likelihood of someone re-offending.

Rob Owen, Chief Executive of St Giles Trust, said:

"Through the Gates was a phenomenal success and offers a beacon of hope in the drive to tackle re-offending. This research shows that investing in Through the Gates is a positive investment for society as a whole. Aside from the savings in the public purse, it reduces the misery that crime brings to the victims, the perpetrators and families of both.

"By working closely in partnership with London Probation, we were able to turn around hundreds of lives. Through the Gates offers a model of good practice which could be replicated in other areas of the country."

Pro Bono Economics added the following statement:

"Through the Gates is the first report initiated and supported by Pro Bono Economics. Volunteering their skills to help charities is not the norm for economists. As this report demonstrates, a lot of good can be achieved by economists lending a hand with a spreadsheet rather than a paintbrush.

"We hope the report will play its part in building greater understanding and appreciation of the work of St Giles Trust"

Michael Ridge from Frontier Economics said:

“My team and I were delighted to give our time to carry out this important study. We have been prudent in our approach and the results still demonstrate that Through the Gates is a programme with exceptional benefits. We have estimated that for every £1 spent, there is a return of £10 in terms of the savings associated with reduced re-offending. I hope that these findings will help inform policy makers and opinion formers.”

Lord Phillips, President of the Supreme Court and Patron of St Giles Trust, said:

“Many judges see the same offenders entering and leaving prison on a regular basis, at great cost to that individual, their victims, their families and society as a whole. St Giles Trust’s Through the Gates service helps break this destructive cycle and instead sets in motion a wholly constructive one, helping individuals reform, become productive members of society and positive role models for their families. Anyone who is interested in bringing down rates of re-offending should take a closer look at this work.”

Theo Paphitis, Chairman of Ryman Stationery and advocate of the work of St Giles Trust, said:

"Crime is a huge burden on society, both in financial and human terms. People leaving prison have to overcome many barriers to get their lives back on track and leave their old ways behind. St Giles Trust have a real solution to address this problem, which affects the lives of so many people in the UK."

Dame Liz Forgan, Patron of St Giles Trust, said:

"The long term costs of ignoring the problems of crime and re-offending far outweigh any sums of money now invested into services which are proven to tackle them effectively. Children whose parents are caught up in the cycle of crime and re-offending are likely to become the next generation of people ending up behind bars. Investing in high quality services such as Through the Gates will pay society huge dividends for generations to come."

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT TAMSIN GREGORY AT ST GILES TRUST ON 020 7703 7000, 07872 063285 OR EMAIL tamsin.gregory@stgilestrust.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

St Giles Trust aims to break the cycle of re-offending. It creates safer communities by turning lives around and preventing the children of offenders becoming the next generation involved in the criminal justice system. It puts offenders at the centre of the solution and believes they have the power and will to change, given the right support. It has won multiple awards for its work, including ranking in The Sunday Times Top 100 Companies in 2010 and 2009. www.stgilestrust.org.uk

Through the Gates was funded for one year by London Probation and offered intensive, one-on-one support for people leaving prison to help people settle back into the community and stay away from crime. It worked with individuals returning to 14 London boroughs from prisons across the UK. During the 16 months it was running, it worked with over 1,500 people, housed over 1,000 and assisted many more with other issues such as sorting finances and accessing other services.

About Pro Bono Economics

Pro Bono Economics (PBE) was founded in 2009 with the aim to broker economists into the charitable sector to help on short and medium-term assignments, typically addressing questions around measurement, results and impact.

PBE seeks to improve the effectiveness of the charitable sector, in particular when evaluating the wider impact of its activities and when presenting these results effectively to an external audience. PBE seeks also to provide a mechanism by which the economics profession can contribute to a well-functioning charitable sector, both as an end in itself and as part of professional development for economists.

Charitable work can have wider social and economic benefits. Quantitative evaluations by economists can help in measuring those benefits and in determining the most effective ways of channelling support to achieve them. www.probonoeconomics.com

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