

Case study 4:

Supporting care leavers with mental health needs

Five Rivers Child Care, a Social Enterprise, was asked to create a service providing emergency intervention and support for care leavers, in a large city, on a low budget, initially for 30 young people.



An emergency intervention service project for care leavers

The project arose from discussions with a director about the need for services shaped by care leavers themselves, who expressed concerns about the lack of support available on

leaving care whilst having emotional problems and diagnosable mental health conditions.

Five Rivers Child Care was asked to prepare a sustainable model of intervention that would help 30 young people initially, but had the scope to grow into a service that could support up to 100 young people. This model would continuously seek to engage the care leavers in its development and delivery.

Objectives

The emergency intervention and support service, facilitated by trained staff and led by qualified social work managers, had the following key objectives:

- To assist in immediate crises where there may be mental health concerns.
- To provide ongoing support through intensive mentoring.
- To offer overnight crash pad support.
- And in the longer term, to help prepare for 'moving on' into the next stages of education, employment or managing independence.

Working as a Social Enterprise means keeping the benefits of the services provided within the local community, using the project to upskill other related parties. Therefore in addition to the key objectives, further value-added social objectives were:

- To facilitate the progression of some of those care leavers to become trained support staff.
- To train and employ local people who may not have had the opportunity to normally apply for such positions through accessible developmental plans.

The service model

We devised a model of service which could be funded either through:

- The 'Innovate to Save' budget or;
- Through an 'Investment from a Social Enterprise Funder', where a soft loan would be available at 6% over three years (providing seed funding to cover the costs of recruitment and training of staff).

The initial costed proposal was delivered to the authority within eight weeks and after further meetings refining the specification, was then sent through to the 'Children's Director' and 'Committee' for consideration.

Within the model, an initial pilot phase would be held before expansion, enabling early troubleshooting and sufficient resource to be employed.

This would allow three underprivileged communities to have a local, community-based support service, helping to improve employment opportunities. It would also generate the funds needed to repay the loan or alternatively be utilised after the three years, to expand the services further.

Summary

Five Rivers Child Care has recommended that a partnership company should be set up:

- So that the authority would be able to count it as part of their own provision whilst taking advantage of the specialist skills offered by Five Rivers Child Care.
- Where a fee level was set (at the local rate being paid to other providers) and specific strategies were requested to prevent the high turnover of staff which had been experienced in other services.

This service can be replicated in this or other service areas. ■