

Carney's Community: Utilising Boxing and Mentoring to Combat Youth Offending

About Carney's Community

Carney's Community is inspired by a local community hero, Mick Carney MBE, who turned around many lives through boxing. Having worked with both George Turner, an experienced youth worker (who has managed Family Intervention Projects and the Ending Gang and Youth Violence Team programme) and Mark Reigate, a trained boxing coach (who Mick and boxing had saved from a life of crime), Mick had the idea of a project which used boxing to engage disadvantaged young people, combined with mentoring, to support young people to fulfil their potential. George and Mark had started putting the idea into action on a small scale when Mick passed away in 2011. George and Mark then decided to make the project official and named the charity Carney's Community.

Carney's Community is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 25th January 2012, and registered as a charity on 31st January 2013. Carney's Community aims to reduce offending, re-offending and anti-social behaviour, whilst improving social mobility and community cohesion. Our services are targeted at disadvantaged young people aged 11 to 30 from deprived backgrounds in Wandsworth and Lambeth. Carney's Community also aims to build the self-discipline, self-esteem, and employability of disadvantaged young people, as this is key to reducing offending and enabling them to reach their full potential. In 2013/14 our expenditure is likely to be £44,000 and our likely income £74,000 (which includes a contribution to our 2014/15 costs).

The Need for Carney's Community

The London Boroughs of Lambeth and Wandsworth include areas of severe poverty. Lambeth is the fifth most deprived borough in London, and several wards in Wandsworth face severe deprivation. These deprived areas face high levels of child poverty; have significant numbers of residents with no qualifications; high levels of unemployment; and poor health. Wandsworth and Lambeth have high childhood obesity levels, and smoking and drug misuse is more prevalent in deprived areas. There is a clear link between social exclusion and crime, and both boroughs have high levels of youth offending and high youth reoffending rates.

One of the most successful ways to tackle crime is through sport. Sport can engage young people, combat boredom and provide a similar sense of belonging, status and excitement to crime, without being destructive. As well as increasing confidence and self-esteem, developing social skills, fostering discipline, promoting social cohesion, enhancing employment prospects, reducing obesity, improving mental health/wellbeing and increasing life expectancy, sport, specifically boxing, has been shown to support young people to disengage from crime. Young people attending the Boxing Academy in Tottenham are less likely to reoffend than their peers in Pupil Referral Units and the Fight for Peace Academy in East London found a 78% reduction in offenders known to authorities and a 64% reduction in gang affiliation. Whilst it has been argued that boxing promotes violent behaviour, research demonstrates that participation in boxing strengthens relationships with family and friends, provides participants with non-deviant peer networks, reduces exposure to risk factors associated with crime and enables individuals to control their emotions in conflict situations.

Evaluations suggest that sport is most effective at tackling crime when it engages with the most hard-to-reach in areas with high youth disengagement (like Lambeth and Wandsworth); utilises trained youth workers as well as sports coaches; works with young people over the long term; and provides opportunities, e.g. work experience, so young people can raise their aspirations and move away from crime. Our programme takes this approach, combining boxing with long-term 1-2-1 mentoring. Mentoring can reduce aggressive behaviour and drug use. Mentored young people are less likely to engage in risky behaviour, more likely to experience better physical and mental health, less likely to (re)offend and more likely to participate in education/employment. However, mentoring relationships are significantly more likely to be successful if they are long-term and underpinned by the formation of enduring relationships.

Consultation with local young people also demonstrates the need for our work. A focus group with 30 young offenders held in 2011, identified a need for positive role models, and for more local youth activities. The majority were interested in boxing, but felt that boxing clubs were too exclusive. We undertook a survey of 24 young people in December 2013. Of these, 58% faced issues relating to anti-social behaviour, 67% to offending/gang involvement, 38% drugs/alcohol misuse, 42% poor physical health or being unfit, 54% lack of employment opportunities and 50% experienced issues relating to boredom (with not enough to do in their local area). These 24 young

people asked that Carney's Community support them to: get fit (75%); get out of crime/gangs (42%); do something fun (63%); find/gain education and employment (38%); and improve their confidence and self-esteem (33%). In this survey, and in two further focus groups with 18 young people, young people told us they wanted Carney's Community to be better equipped, run more boxing sessions and provide more 1-2-1 mentoring.

Carney's Community is the only local organisation combining boxing with long-term mentoring. The other organisations offering mentoring (e.g. Youth Offending Teams) offer short-term support when agencies, rather than young people, feel it is needed, leading to high levels of disengagement. There is also a lack of consistency: beneficiaries report being 'passed between' agencies (one had to tell his story to 40 professionals before accessing support) which can cause frustration and disengagement. At Carney's Community, a young person builds a trusting relationship with a single person and support lasts as long as the young person needs it. Whilst we offer a unique service, we are committed to working with charities delivering similar services elsewhere (e.g. The Boxing Academy, Fight for Peace) and local groups (e.g. Wandsworth Children's Community and Voluntary Sector Network) to prevent duplication and share best practice.

Our Current Work

"Carney's Community have helped me turn my life around, if it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here right now."

Previous beneficiary

We run boxing sessions 4 times per week at Fitzroy Lodge Amateur Boxing Club (ABC) in Lambeth and twice a week at Earlsfield ABC in Wandsworth. Disadvantaged young people are referred to these sessions by Youth Offending Teams, Police, Probation, Social Services and schools. This included targeted boxing sessions in four local schools (to 19 of the most at risk pupils) and targeted boxing sessions with 15 young people subject to Probation and 14 high-risk gang members (all on the Metropolitan Police's gangs matrix). In 2013, of the 113 young people engaged in these boxing sessions, 93 (82%) had risk factors associated with offending.



Young person at one of our boxing sessions

In 2013 we also mentored 24 of the most at risk young people (and therefore the most costly to society): 88% needed support to address offending; 83% to find education or employment; and 33% needed housing-related support as they were at risk of eviction or homeless. Our mentoring support enabled young people to secure positive outcomes. Of the 24: 8 (33%) gained paid employment; 7 (29%) engaged or re-engaged in education; 11 (46%) accessed volunteering opportunities; and all 8 who were homeless/at risk of homelessness gained or maintained housing. Most importantly, 17 (71%) of the young people mentored reduced or stopped offending (this figure would be higher if we did not include the young people who we have only just started mentoring following their release from custody).

The impact on our work is demonstrated in the following case study:

Chris was introduced to Carney's Community 2 years ago - he had been expelled from several schools, had been arrested many times and had three outstanding court cases. At first he wasn't interested. He insisted that Carney's Community couldn't help him as previous youth workers had not. Initially we worked on persuading Chris to come along to the boxing sessions. Chris really enjoyed boxing; he was good at it and he liked the supportive atmosphere between the young people at the session. After building trust with Carney's staff, Chris decided he was ready to engage with mentoring. A personal development plan and contract was drawn up with Chris which utilised his love of boxing to promote good behaviour. The contract outlined that Chris could further his training by joining a boxing club, but only if he stayed out of trouble. He started training at Fitzroy Lodge and the changes were instantaneous. Chris's school immediately noticed the change in his behaviour and decided to give him a second chance (they were on the verge of expelling him). One day, a pupil challenged Chris to a fight, but Chris refused, through fear that he would not be able to box if he had been involved in fights outside of the ring. Two years on, Chris, now 14, is described by the police as a 'model citizen'. He has continued to engage with Carney's Community, but nowadays he is a peer mentor and is seen as a real role model – someone who has turned his life completely around.

Despite the positive impact of our work to date, there is more to do. In 2013, we ran ‘taster’ boxing sessions engaging over 50 young people, many of whom wanted to attend our boxing sessions. We have also had requests to run 5 more weekly boxing sessions. In addition to the 24 young people mentored, we had over 100 referrals and 33 young people attending our boxing sessions (all with risk factors associated with offending), expressing an interest in accessing mentoring support. At present we cannot meet this demand; we need to increase our capacity.

Planned Work 2014-17

“Support from Carney’s Community and boxing with my friends has improved my fitness levels and stopped me from committing crimes out there. Thank you”.

Focus Group Participant, current beneficiary

Over the next 3 years, the main project activities will be:

- Run 4 universal boxing sessions per week at Earlsfield ABC and the Wand Youth Centre. These sessions will be open to all young people aged 11-25, but will be specifically marketed to those in deprived areas. Sessions will focus on boxing fitness, and will be run by a qualified boxing coach supported by a team of volunteers. We will also run 4 Targeted Boxing Sessions to engage: at-risk pupils in mainstream and Special Educational Need schools, and high-risk young people known to the Probation Service or Police. Over the next 3 years, we intend to work with 8 schools and 4 groups known to Police/Probation. All sessions will engage up to 25 young people, and in total these Boxing Sessions will engage 150 young people per year. We will take self-referrals and referrals from probation, the Youth Offending Service and schools.



A Carney’s Community Boxing Session

- Provide intensive 1-2-1 mentoring support. Mentoring support will be promoted to all young people attending our boxing sessions (as well as others who do not wish to engage in boxing), particularly those engaged in, or at high-risk of, offending. Mentoring is provided by either a staff member or a trained peer mentor, and support ranges from 2 to 10 hours per week, depending on the young person’s level of need and risk. The young person signs a contract, outlining the code of conduct they are expected to adhere to (based on discipline, self-control, respect, routine and hard work). A personal development plan is then produced in partnership with the young person, which outlines how they will positively progress in offending, education, employment, etc. The plan is reviewed every 3-6 weeks with young people, to identify progress and to address any new issues. We liaise with all other agencies

involved with the young person (e.g. Social Services, YOT, GPs), to ensure an holistic approach to addressing their needs. We also work with schools and businesses to support young people to identify suitable

education/employment. Our mentoring support is consistent, not time limited and available when the young person is most in need. We expect that support will reduce gradually over two years, until it is no longer needed. If a young person ‘breaks’ their contract, this will be addressed through their mentoring personal development plan, or they will go back to the boxing sessions until they are ready to reengage with mentoring. We will mentor 50 young people per year.

- Provide development opportunities. Once a participant has demonstrated consistency, reliability and positive change, we offer them opportunities to continue their involvement in a different role, e.g. as a member of staff, as a volunteer peer mentor or as a volunteer coach. We expect that each year, 15 previous beneficiaries will work with Carney’s Community (either in a paid or volunteer capacity).



Previous beneficiaries, who have now trained as Carney’s Boxing Coaches, receiving their Boxing Tutor Award qualifications

- Social enterprise/business support. We aim to continue supporting more of our participants to set up their own projects/businesses/social enterprises. This can be done through investing in general mentoring, providing cheap facilities or business addresses at our premises and/or offering start up grants alongside business mentoring to help them continue on a positive path. We have started to deliver this work and do so alongside another charity called Business Launch Pad, who specialise in offering business counselling and support to budding entrepreneurs. In response for our investment into these projects (be it time/financial/facilities) we expect to benefit from a social return i.e. for their project to have a positive impact on our next generation of participants.

Overall, we estimate we will engage with 300 young people over the next 3 years. The outcomes from this work will be that at-risk young people will: engage in positive, constructive activities; reduce engagement in crime, anti-social behaviour and gangs; Engage, or re-engage, in education; improve employability skills, and access employment and volunteering opportunities; positively engage with other support services to address their complex needs (e.g. drug and alcohol misuse, housing issues); experience improved physical and mental health; improve their fitness levels; improve their self-esteem and self-discipline; and increase engagement with young people from other backgrounds, improving community cohesion.

We will monitor our work by: utilising online surveys and focus groups to ask young people their views on the boxing sessions; undertaking an initial (baseline) assessment of young people receiving mentoring, and reviewing this regularly in order to track a young person's progress and determine the impact of mentoring; using feedback forms/interviews/focus groups to gather young people's thoughts on the impact of the mentoring; and facilitating a service users' council so young people can feedback on the services Carney's Community provides. We will review monitoring data each quarter to evaluate the impact of our services, and how we can improve them.

How you can help

"The boxing sessions provided by Carney's Community gets my stress out, makes me focus and keeps me off the streets".

Focus Group Participant, current beneficiary

In the next 3 years, it will cost £408,040 to run Carney's Community, enabling us to meet the high levels of demand for our boxing sessions and mentoring; and ultimately supporting 300 young people over 3 years to turn away from crime and reach their full potential. This represents excellent value for money. The average annual cost to hold someone in a Young Offender Institution is estimated at £47,137¹.

We hope that you can contribute towards these costs - ensuring Carney's Community can grow to support the young people who need our help. To raise the remaining funding needed, we intend to submit applications to other trusts and foundations who have a specific interest in young ex-offender projects, e.g. The Big Lottery Fund, the Mercers' Company and the Drapers' Charitable Fund.



Current participant supported to set up his own business

¹ Corporate Citizenship, 2012