

The Hero's Journey™ Life Coaching Programme

Impact Report Summary 2016-2019

SPARK
INSIDE
COACHING IN PRISONS®



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Spark Inside runs coaching programmes in prisons across London and the South-East, to encourage rehabilitation and contribute towards a reduction in reoffending. Coaching is not the same as mentoring or therapy. Coaches do not tell participants what to do, instead they empower them to make different choices for themselves.

In February 2016, Spark Inside appointed [The Social Investment Consultancy](#) (TSIC) to conduct the independent, external evaluation for its flagship programme, the Hero's Journey™. Launched in 2012, this is a structured life coaching programme for young men aged 15 to 25 in prison. It consists of group workshops and individual one-to-one coaching sessions, both in prison and following release.

The final report analyses the data collected from all impact evaluation reports of the Hero's Journey™ from 2016-2019. **It shows that across the three years, Spark Inside has made a clear, positive impact on the lives of over 350 young men in prison.** The Hero's Journey™ life coaching programme builds young people's motivation to change, equipping them to leave custody with the vital life skills they need to navigate change and challenge with resilience, and to make smarter, healthier and more fulfilling life choices.

Our impact

The results from across the three years (2016-2019) **are statistically significant across five outcome areas, suggesting that the Hero's Journey™ has a strong, positive and holistic impact on young people in prison.**

Specifically, the report indicates that when young people in prison participated in the Hero's Journey™ programme, they experienced positive changes in the following areas:

1. WELLBEING

2. FUTURE OUTLOOK

3. DECISION-MAKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

4. EMPATHY AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

5. RESILIENCE AND CONFIDENCE



Our impact

1. WELLBEING

The [Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale](#) (SWEMWBS) derives from a model of mental wellbeing that is more than the absence of mental illness, and involves feeling good and functioning well. The analysis of data collected between 2016-2019 shows that the programme positively impacted participants' wellbeing. The average score on the SWEMWBS increased by 1.5 points after the programme (statistically significant with a 95% confidence level).



"I have been here for 10 months, but I am getting out next month. The programme has made me think about what I want to do when I get out, maybe start my own business, stuff like that. It has given me the push to do something, instead of coming out and just looking for a nine to five job, make something out of it. I would not change anything in the programme, I liked the way the coaches talk to you and show you how even if you've been in prison you can still change your life, and what steps to take. I suppose it has helped me by thinking of the steps. I want to get out of here and try to make something out of my life."

*Chris, 22**

2. FUTURE OUTLOOK

Questionnaire responses measuring future outlook show that participants are more optimistic about the future following taking part in the Hero's Journey™ programme. T-testing confirmed that the 5% change in participants' future outlook was statistically significant (with 95% confidence). The qualitative data confirmed that participants felt positive about their future, with all of them saying that they were optimistic.



"I'm optimistic, I'm not coming back... I want to do something with the university course I've taken. The programme made me realised that my goals are reachable."

*Michael, 20**

"The Hero's Journey™ has helped me to focus more on my goals and to make my goals clearer. So, I now know what I want. Where I feel coaching helps because you're not being given the answers but asked questions to find the answers yourself. The Hero's Journey™ has made me more determined to go for my goals."

*Jay, 24**

3. DECISION-MAKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

The programme helped participants develop their decision-making and problem-solving skills. Looking at the data over three years (2016-2019), participants report a statistically significant increase of 8% in their decision-making skills. This means that most young men who took part in the Hero's Journey™ felt they were in a better position to make rational and thoughtful decisions. In the interviews, most participants explained that the programme helped them “take a step back” and think about solutions before acting, when they were confronted with a problem.

“After the sessions I just went back to my cell to reflect. I changed myself in the prison. I kept my head down, got a job and started helping other prisoners.

It changed me as it let me to think twice to find a better solution to resolve a situation.

It's something to wake up to, something to guide you and give you steps.”

Aaron, 23*



4. EMPATHY AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Questionnaire responses show that the Hero's Journey™ had a positive and statistically significant impact on participants' ability to show empathy and exercise emotional intelligence. Participants had increased empathy and emotional intelligence by 5%. For each year of TSIC's independent evaluation, a majority of participants who were interviewed, mentioned clear improvements in the way they treat their family and friends – with more patience and sensitivity, or because they are calmer. In 2019, most participants said that they were better at avoiding confrontation with staff or other prisoners, either by being more relaxed and/or adopting strategies to calm down.



"Coaching is like meeting with a non-bias third party where I get feedback of how my month was. When you do things, you need another point of view or perspective. It's not about being right or wrong but it's good hearing different opinions. I learned to keep calm and have an outside look on myself."

"Before I didn't listen...Now I listen and play it out in my head. I've learned how to use the Hero's Journey™ pattern. It helps confirm what is the right thing to do. When I've got a situation, I will check the pattern and see if I am going backwards or forwards. I run the test in my head and play it out how things might go."

"I think I now will be a lot more patient; I believe in the process and see it through. My thinking pattern has changed. Everything was rushed and messy before."

5. RESILIENCE AND CONFIDENCE

The analysis of data collected between 2016-2019 shows that the Hero's Journey™ positively impacted participants' resilience and confidence. The average score on the Brief Resilience Scale increased by after the programme, demonstrating a statistically significant rise of 4%. All interviewees in the 2019 evaluation responded that they were feeling more confident after the programme, particularly in relation to making and expressing their decisions.

In general, participants who completed the life coaching programme had more positive attitudes towards the future; improved self-image; and a greater sense of personal autonomy.

"My coach made me think about what I want to do with my life. It taught me how we bounce back from a knock back."

*Ryan, 18**



"I've learned that if something goes wrong it doesn't automatically mean that you fail. You've never fully failed it's just a step back. Before I wouldn't get to that point. I now know how to handle a setback."

*Jerome, 25**

Final thoughts



Spark Inside's CEO, Vicki Cardwell, says:

"It's so heartening to see statistically significant results like these. The data fills us with confidence that we are doing the right thing and strengthens the case for putting life coaching in all prisons. It's incredible for the team to see the positive impact our life coaches are having, and we will continue to work hard to make change happen in these young men's lives."



Spark Inside coach, Caterina Declas, says:

"I love coaching in prisons, where I have had the privilege to watch young men change over time from being withdrawn and unhappy, to talking more easily and having a laugh together, and seeing them grow in confidence and become more insightful about themselves."



Spark Inside coach, Louis Collins, says:

"Having worked as a coach to business leaders and executives for many years, I can honestly say that the coaching I have done with the young men in prison has been the most humbling and rewarding I have ever experienced. It is a privilege to be in the room when someone who previously felt lost, gains a spark of insight and clarity that sets them on a journey to a brighter future. The added bonus for me is that it has helped me become a better coach."



Spark Inside coach, Audrey Cairo, says:

"I've witnessed some great 'aha!' moments in my coaching sessions and honestly, sometimes it feels that my clients are teaching me something. They've taught me what true patience and resilience looks like."



Spark Inside coach, Mark Bixter, says:

"I clearly remember the moment when a client shifted from being suspicious, disengaged and disinterested to full of energy and potential as they said 'I get it now, I see how this can really help me!' that moment really landed for me and I could see the power and value of the work I was doing."



Spark Inside coach, Michael Roper, says:

"Just witnessing the positive energy shift in these young men as they navigated their individual Hero's Journey should remind us all to never, ever doubt the awesome potential lying dormant within every human being"

Data collection

The report relies on the following data sources:

- pre (N=324) and post (N=201) participant questionnaires;
- internal exchanges;
- previous independent impact reports authored by TSIC;
- interviews with participants from 2019;
- qualitative feedback from 2016-17, 2017-18;
- research carried out by Spark Inside in HMP Wandsworth in July 2018;
- a report from research company [EP:IC Consultants](#) on involving in-prison participants in the future development of the Hero's Journey™.

The quantitative element of this evaluation relates to the first component of the Hero's Journey™ programme – group workshops, with questionnaire data obtained both pre and post sessions. From 2020, we are changing our approach to evaluation and moving towards using [Outcomes Star](#) (Youth Star) to assess the full impact of the Hero's Journey™. Using Outcomes Star to allow us to measure the impact of the entire programme, including one-to-one sessions.



Thank you for your interest in Spark Inside

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To find out more about Spark Inside and the work we do, please visit our website or get in touch.

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