

COACHING PRISON STAFF

Our impact report



INTRODUCTION

Spark Inside uses coaching to unlock the potential of individuals and drive culture change in the criminal justice system so that rehabilitation is possible. We believe in the power of coaching and we know it works.

To date, we have coached over 1,000 people in prison, and during the Covid-19 crisis, for the first time, we offered life coaching to prison staff. In 2020, when prisons entered a 'double lockdown' and only prison staff were able to offer support and care to those living in prison, we believed it was important for our passionate and skilled life coaches to talk to staff.

We are proud to be able to report on the impact that life coaching had on those people that continued to go to work in prisons and YOIs in London and the South-East, during one of the most uncertain and destabilising times we've ever known.

WHY COACHING?

We believe that coaching is a solution to many problems happening within our prisons.

Coaching is a facilitated conversation, allowing individuals and systems/groups to find their own solutions to their own problems. It empowers people living and working in prisons, enabling self-sufficiency, fostering independence and building personal responsibility.

We have a team of professional coaches, who use specific tools and techniques, like specific questioning and thought-provoking prompts, which can help transform lives and environments and achieve goals.

"As a coach for Spark Inside, I coach young men in prisons so that they feel empowered and are given the tools to develop a growth mind-set, helping them to turn their lives around. Like all of the team, I was deeply saddened by having to pause the coaching programmes due to the national lockdown. So, when Spark Inside made the decision to stand with the prison staff and support these essential key workers by offering them life coaching sessions, I was at the front of the sign-up queue. In fact, all of Spark Inside's life coaches wanted to take part, in solidarity with those who continue to put their lives on the line."

- Dorottya Szuk, Spark Inside life coach



PRISON STAFF AND THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Spark Inside paused coaching of young people in prison on 24 March 2020 following the WHO declaring a pandemic and the UK government restrictions.

Inspired by a health-sector pilot where frontline healthcare staff received free coaching in the pandemic, Spark Inside took the decision to offer prison staff coaching during the lockdown. We wanted to both support staff working in prisons at this difficult time and, in turn, impact positively on young people in their care.

The aims of the project were to:

Support those with **direct access** and **influence** over young people in prison.



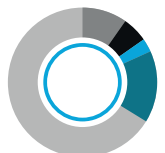
Support the person who might be the **only other person** a young person sees during extended lock up.



Maintain good relationships and presence in our key prisons to **support good understanding of coaching** when we resume coaching programme



Make use of our resources, including grant funding, to deliver on our **charitable mission**.



Support prison staff for their own **change** or **progress** in their lives.



Two phases of the coaching programme were run at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMPYOI Isis and Cookham Wood YOI. The clients held various job titles (both operational and non-operational) and had worked in the prison service for a wide variety of time – from someone who had recently completed training to someone with over 20 years of service.

In the first phase, the first coaching session took place on 11 May 2020 and final sessions were completed by 1 September, when feedback was gathered shortly after. During this phase, 21 clients across the three prisons received a total of 102 free coaching sessions from 15 Spark Inside coaches.

In the second phase, the first session took place on 3 December 2020 with the final session taking place on 4 May 2021. During this phase, which took place at Cookham Wood YOI, 10 clients received a total of 52 free coaching sessions from 10 Spark Inside coaches.

OUR IMPACT

Over 150 hours of coaching provided by Spark Inside coaches to prison staff during in the first year of delivering this project

94% of clients reported making progress in their lives

81% of clients completed their coaching sessions

81% felt they had progressed in the specific areas they worked on with their coach

100% of clients said they would recommend coaching for people living or working in prison

THE IMPACT OF COACHING ON PRISON STAFF PERSONALLY

"The way I got to know myself, discovered what I want and what I can do to achieve it. The things to prepare for each session were also very interesting and very challenging at the same time."

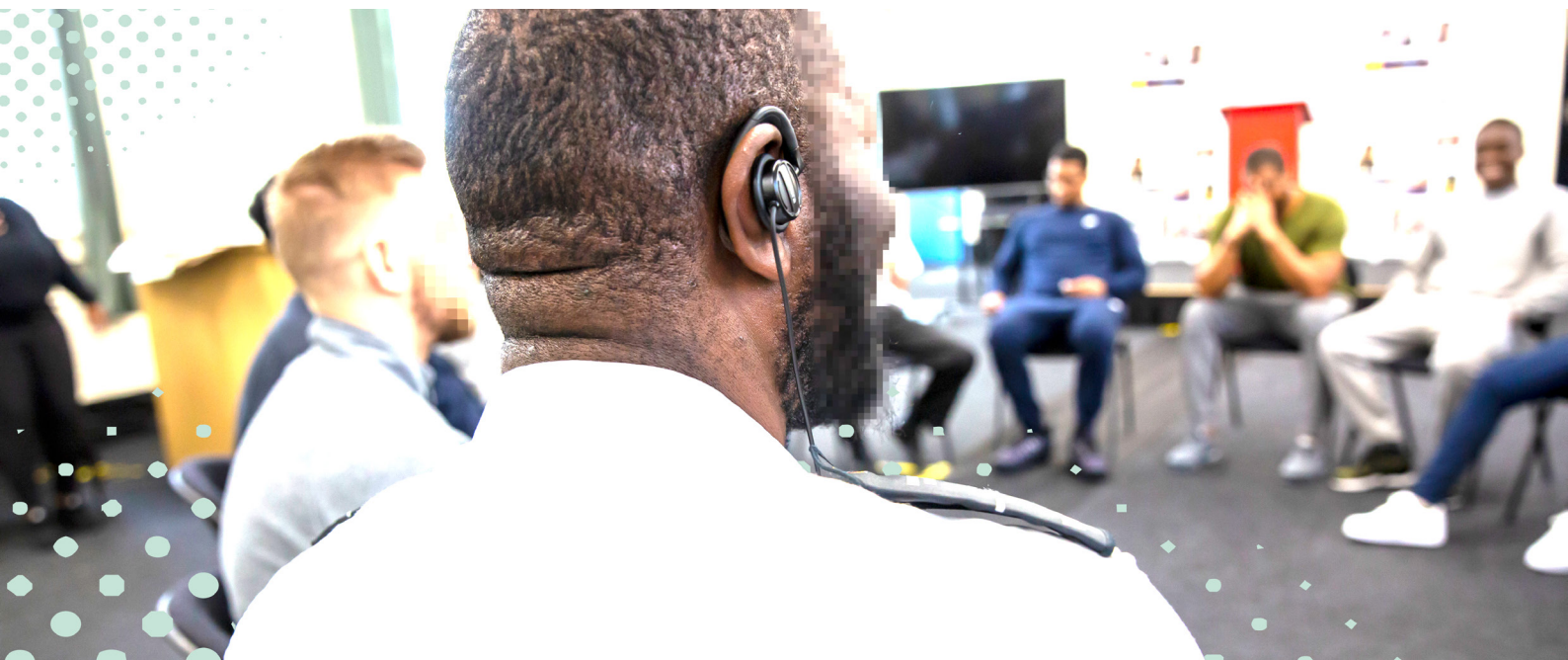
"It was good to be encouraged and told that I was doing well at picking up on things and that my approach was good. It filled me with confidence."

"It helped me realise my potential and the values I have."

The coaching helped some prison staff gain self-awareness and confidence.

"Looking at things more positively has changed my whole perspective!"

"I've learned how to manage myself and be more positive."



THE IMPACT OF COACHING ON THEIR WORK

Some staff reported that the coaching had impacted on the way they work in prisons, and directly on their interactions and support for people who live in prison.

“This has all translated into me being better at my job also, which is so important when working in a stressful environment.”

“I was able to sit back and take a look at what was happening from an outside view and other people’s views also, I realised that listening and taking in what people say is also a very powerful way of helping people.”

“I set goals for myself that I had to achieve in improving my impact at work which was lacking in some areas before the coaching sessions began.”

This could also impact on relationships with other staff.

“I took a step back to understand how I can be perceived if I listen and discuss instead of dictating. My team have taken well to this approach and I am able to delegate without as many complaints in my delivery of tasks required.”

“It also teaches you how to lead through behaving in a particular way, rather than just telling people what to do.”

A PRISON OFFICER'S STORY

James Kurszewski, a Prison Officer, wrote about his experience with coaching:

"I've been a Prison Officer working with young offenders for eleven years. These days, I'm a Physical Instructor, which means I'm working with the boys in the gym. I love getting to see a side of people that maybe they don't show in other parts of the prison – the reality is that colleagues in different parts of the prison unfortunately don't always have the time to be able to build relationships with all the boys. But there's something really rewarding about working collaboratively with the boys in the gym, heading toward fitness goals that are tailored to the individual – we all have to start somewhere at the end of the day!

I didn't quite know what to expect from life coaching, it wasn't something I knew much about before taking up the offer from Spark Inside. I've managed colleagues in the past, and it can be a stressful environment, for both prisoners and staff. A lot of my job is about being a listening ear to people, and reflecting back to them what some of the consequences of choices might be, and I thought life coaching might be able to help with that.



I had six sessions with Mark from Spark Inside, and I've definitely learnt things that I can take into working with the boys. One learning that really stuck with me was that I can sometimes be a bit too eager coaching people in the gym to make sure they have the 'right' answer, and I'm maybe a bit too keen to jump in, when I could be helping someone else to come to their own conclusions. You do that by asking good questions, listening, slowing things down and reflecting things back to the person you're working with. You lay down the first few stones on a path, and then help someone else to lay the rest of the stones themselves.

My experience of life coaching is that it builds people's ability to change, and helps them make better choices, in a way that just forcing the 'right' answer down someone's throat doesn't. It also teaches you how to lead through behaving in a particular way, rather than just telling people what to do. That's really important in a prison because you need to have more than one approach in your locker! But it takes time, and an investment to build that sort of relationship with someone. I've actually decided to pursue training as a life coach because I've seen first-hand how effective this way of working with people can be.

One of the best things about working in a prison is when you're able to help someone achieve something they didn't think they could. You sometimes have to work hard to encourage the boys to get a qualification while they are with us, especially when they haven't had positive experiences in education in the past, or just haven't had people telling them they are capable of achieving things.

After my sessions with Spark Inside, I felt like life coaching could help the boys. I took a proposal to the Acting Governor to provide life coaching to the boys and my colleagues and I'm hoping that we will be able to provide something soon. I know life coaching could help those of us working in the prison to be more effective in what we do on a day to day basis. Most importantly, I believe it could also give some of the boys the best possible chance to make changes, learn from their time with us, and take some positivity and growth out into the world when they leave."



NEXT STEPS

We are delighted with the positive feedback and impact of this project so far and we are now considering how we might continue to coach prison staff in the future, alongside our work with young people in prison and in the community.

Thank you to everyone who has taken part.



Visit us at www.sparkinside.org

To find out more about Spark Inside and the work we do, please visit our website or contact us below.

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