

IMPACT REPORT

2023 - 2024



A WORD FROM OUR CEO

Real world impact for our participants is what makes us tick! So, I am very proud this year that an incredible **98%** of young people we coached reported making progress in their lives. This is testament to their commitment combined with the skill and passion of our team.

Taking just one area of progress – Hopes and Dreams – we know from the robust evidence base that hope is a powerful force for change. With hope, change is possible. We are proud to help young people see and commit to a future that excites them. Another key area - Work and Education – a brilliant **75%** of young people made progress, giving them the opportunity to move away from crime into productive and positive futures.

Our work is needed. As the Prisons Inspectorate says regarding young adults in custody “if action is not taken, outcomes for this group and society will remain poor for the next decade and beyond” (HMIP, 2021). We take this seriously.

For this reason, I am proud to report that this year we powered up our coaching, reaching over **240** young people and over **40** prison staff across six prisons and in the community.



Vicki Cardwell, CEO

The team grew, and we brought on board a second Ambassador, Sophie Ruddock, who joins Kenny Imafidon to champion our work.

This has been our busiest year to date! Through the well-reported challenges of working in prisons, we remain true to our values. One quote that sticks with me: “Psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best.” (Seligman, 2000)

This approach is working. Every **£1** invested in the Hero’s Journey generates at least **£5.94** worth of benefits to society.

Thank you from me to everyone who has supported Spark Inside on our journey.



Spark Inside coaches and staff



Spark Inside staff

INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

USING COACHING TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF INDIVIDUALS

Hero's Journey

Hero's Journey™ is our award-winning life coaching programme for young people in contact with the criminal justice system. The programme consists of group workshops in prison, where our life coaches support young people to identify what they want in life and how they can achieve their goals.

In 2023/24 we delivered over **74** workshops across six prisons, supporting young people to embark on their Hero's Journey.

Specific impact reported by young people:

- 81% made progress in Hopes and dreams
- 75% made progress in Education and work
- 71% made progress in Health and well-being
- 71% made progress in Communicating
- 71% made progress in Choices and behaviour
- 69% made progress in Interests and activities



HMP/YOI ISIS
HMP/YOI COOKHAM WOOD
HMP BRIXTON
HMP WORMWOOD SCRUBS
HMP HIGH DOWN
HMP COLDINGLEY

After the workshops, young people can choose to receive one-to-one life coaching sessions that start in prison and continue on release.

We are proud to have coached **242** young people this year!

We measure the impact of our coaching with young people using the Youth Outcome Star, a recognised industry tool, where young people assess their progress against a number of metrics including interests and activities, hopes and dreams, health and wellbeing, education and work, communicating, choices and behaviour.

We were delighted that this year **98%** of young people reported making progress in at least one area, **88%** reported making progress in at least two areas and **82%** made progress in three areas.

"Hero's Journey benefits us because it opens our minds and our souls, it makes you a better person. It's about giving yourself a chance and you going to this course will make you think."

- Young man in custody



Black Hero's Journey

In 2023/24 we completed our successful Black Hero's Journey pilot at HMP Isis! We were commissioned to deliver the programme in HMP Wormwood Scrubs.

Towards the end of the year, we were delighted to win a highly competitive HMPPS Innovation Grant to further pilot Black Hero's Journey at HMP Brixton and HMP YOI Feltham with a focus on through-the-gate. Our bid scored 30/30 for programme quality.

We have got started. Here is what one young man had to say about the programme:

"It's about realising our own potential as a young Black man in today's world, truly identifying our qualities, and how to overcome barriers, regardless of today's challenges or our current and past situation."

We look forward to publishing our evaluation next year.



Black Hero's Journey coaches gather for training

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Prison Staff Coaching

This year, the University of Lincoln published its evaluation of Spark Inside prison staff coaching. The independent report was a fantastic endorsement of the quality and impact of this work. The coaching was demonstrated to: develop skills and abilities; increase confidence; improve wellbeing; improve communication and have a positive impact on retention.

We were also heartened to hear how coaching can impact on people in prison in their care:

“I’m able to ask questions differently... and I think I’m quite liked by the boys, they feel they can talk to me, and I like it, it’s good for me... I can ask how do you actually feel? Then they soon open up, and they tell you the truth... They all like to talk to me, it’s given me a lot of confidence how to deal with people.”

In 2023/24 we coached **44** prison staff through **143** one-to-one coaching sessions.



Key benefits of the programme

Prison staff told the evaluators:

“I just knew that this was going to be a life changing experience . . . there was somebody that I could trust with what I was saying. . . it was completely transformational.”

We were also pleased to see the ripple impact on prison culture.

“I line manage six individuals, and I do find myself talking very differently in catch ups with them. I try and get them to tell me what’s going on, as opposed to me telling them. I guess I am unconsciously using some of this coaching stuff.”



The Conversation

This year we assembled our coaching team and got started on redesigning The Conversation programme. The programme will bring groups of prison staff and people in prison together to:

- enhance their relationships
- improve empathy, and
- support sustained, positive cultural change on prison wings.

In addition to workshops, the new programme will include engagement and training before the workshops, and be more embedded to create long term culture change. We look forward to piloting this in HMP High Down next year.



SYSTEMIC CHANGE

DRIVING CULTURE CHANGE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM SO THAT REHABILITATION IS POSSIBLE

Being Well Being Equal

This year we continued to highlight issues and solutions from our [Being Well Being Equal Report](#). Our [campaign](#), calling for the prioritisation of the wellbeing needs of young men, particularly Black men in prison, was our first major step in influencing policy in order to create a system that truly supports young people to build a brighter future.

Building on momentum, we hosted an event in collaboration with the HMPPS Race Action Programme in September 2023. We were delighted to present our findings to 50 attendees including prison governors and Diversity and Equality Leads.

At the event we premiered a [brand new film](#) – an interview with Donell, a young man who began his coaching journey with Spark Inside in custody aged 15. Donell shared his own experience of mental health and wellbeing support as a young Black man in custody, and what he felt could be improved in order to meet the needs of other young Black men in prison.



Noel and Donell filming

To prison staff, Donell gave the following advice:

“Stop trying to use your system to punish. The young people have been sentenced already. You’re in there to rehabilitate and support [young people] in their time and while they go through their journey.”

Donell talked about the impact that coaching had on him:

“That helped me to see my spark inside. And not just want to do better, it made me realise I need to do better because there’s so many people that value me, that care for me... It just allowed me to feel like there’s a network around me to support me, to love me, to care for me, to try and empower me to do better.”

We had the opportunity to show the film at the following: HMPPS Race Action Programme Conference; Transition to Adulthood Alliance meeting; HMPPS Young Adults Board meeting; and at the Central and North-West London NHS Foundation Trust conference on ‘Addressing Health Inequalities in Secure Settings’.

The CNWL event’s Chair, Dr Sarah Allen, Lead Psychologist for Health and Justice Services, fed back to us:

“We so appreciated your perspective, and it was brilliant for our staff to get an insight into your work and your organisation. I am sure it will also be helpful in future initiatives and work together.”

We look forward to working alongside the new HMPPS Young Adults Team, to turn our recommendations into practical guidance and operational change.

Empowering young people to have their voices heard

This year we continued to build on our Champions Group and In-Prison Advisory Boards – two initiatives that empower young people with lived experience of imprisonment to shape our work and speak truth to power.

Champions

Our Champions Group consists of young people who have spent time in prison and who have been coached by Spark Inside. The Champions meet regularly, for socials and for group discussions to shape Spark Inside’s work.

In 2023/24 we provided opportunities for members to develop in the areas that matter to them, and offered them the chance to take part in Spark Inside projects that excite them.

“Even if I find myself within a box I use my mind as a tool for freedom, I see no obstacles, my development grew and went from strength to strength, I’ve been here before.
Over time my confidence just built and my self-worth became prominent, I moved different so how can I get myself caught up within a race of dominance with another man with no finish line?
My mental health is in line just knowing I am still in line, It’s me versus me.”

Spoken word piece by Jonno AQ
Spark Inside Champion and Hero’s Journey Graduate



Spark Inside Champion Jonno’s spoken word piece

We were pleased to fund one Champion to complete an accredited Coaching course, which they successfully passed meaning they are now a qualified Life Coach! We involved another Champion in our Black Hero’s Journey evaluation, supporting him to conduct focus groups with participants in prison to gather their insights on the programme.

We have collaborated with one Champion to create a new Spark Inside film about why coaching is particularly powerful for young people, in order to promote coaching to more young people in prison and the community. This exciting collaboration has seen this talented Champion create and record a spoken word piece and work with a designer to create accompanying graphics that represent his words and journey. We look forward to premiering this in 2024/25!



Vicki, Jeffrey and Donell presenting at Kinglsey Napley

We also continue to provide speaking opportunities to those Champions who are passionate about sharing their experience. We were delighted to have a Champion speak alongside his coach about their journey together at our Big Give Christmas reception, at the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust conference, as well as speaking to an audience at Kingsley Napley Law Firm.

In-Prison Advisory Boards

In 2023/24 we began our first In-Prison Advisory Board in HMP Brixton. Our model involves recruiting a small group (typically 2-4) of young people in prison as Spark Inside Ambassadors. We equip them with the skills, tools and confidence to survey and interview their peers on the wings, on a topic that relates to Spark Inside's work, in this case, 'What through the gate support should Spark Inside offer and is there anything in particular we should consider when working with young Black men through the gate?'. The findings will help to ensure we're offering the best possible support to young Black men leaving prison.

The insights we have gathered so far have been incredibly valuable, including the below from one young person:

"I think the idea of a mentor or coach is brilliant especially if they work alongside your probation worker and all are aligned with you trying to get into work or education. I am terrified of being recalled for any slightest thing. I have zero plans of reoffending and would like to do education whilst also making a legit living."

Championing coaching in the justice system

We continued to make the case for coaching as a transformational tool in the criminal justice system. We champion young people as a group who face specific challenges and have distinct needs, but who also possess unique strengths and have the greatest potential for positive change.

This year, **11,500** people followed us on our social media platforms or used our website. We saw a **100%** increase in engagement on our LinkedIn page. *The Times* featured our fantastic Coach Alex Kergall on the parallels between coaching CEOs and young people in prison with Spark Inside.



Spark Inside staff and coaches

WITH HUGE THANKS TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATION THAT HAS SUPPORTED US IN 2023/24!

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

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