

Spark Inside

Youth Strategic Investment Fund
Partnership Summary 2019-24

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Who are Spark Inside?

Spark Inside is an award-winning charity that has transformed the lives of over 1,500 people living and working in UK prisons. For more than a decade it has pioneered coaching in prisons, showing the value of coaching to change lives and systems. Spark Inside is the only charity taking professional coaching to young people in prison.

Our mission is to unlock the potential of individuals and drive culture change in the criminal justice system so that rehabilitation is possible.

Our vision is a world where the futures of people affected by the criminal justice system are determined by their potential, not their past.

What we do

Spark Inside provide coaching for young people in prison and 'through the gate' as they return to the community, using coaching to unlock the potential of individuals. They also provide coaching to prison officers and staff to support their wellbeing, sense of agency and to impact positively on prison culture. In addition, Spark Inside use their experience in coaching to drive culture change in the criminal justice system to show that rehabilitation is possible.

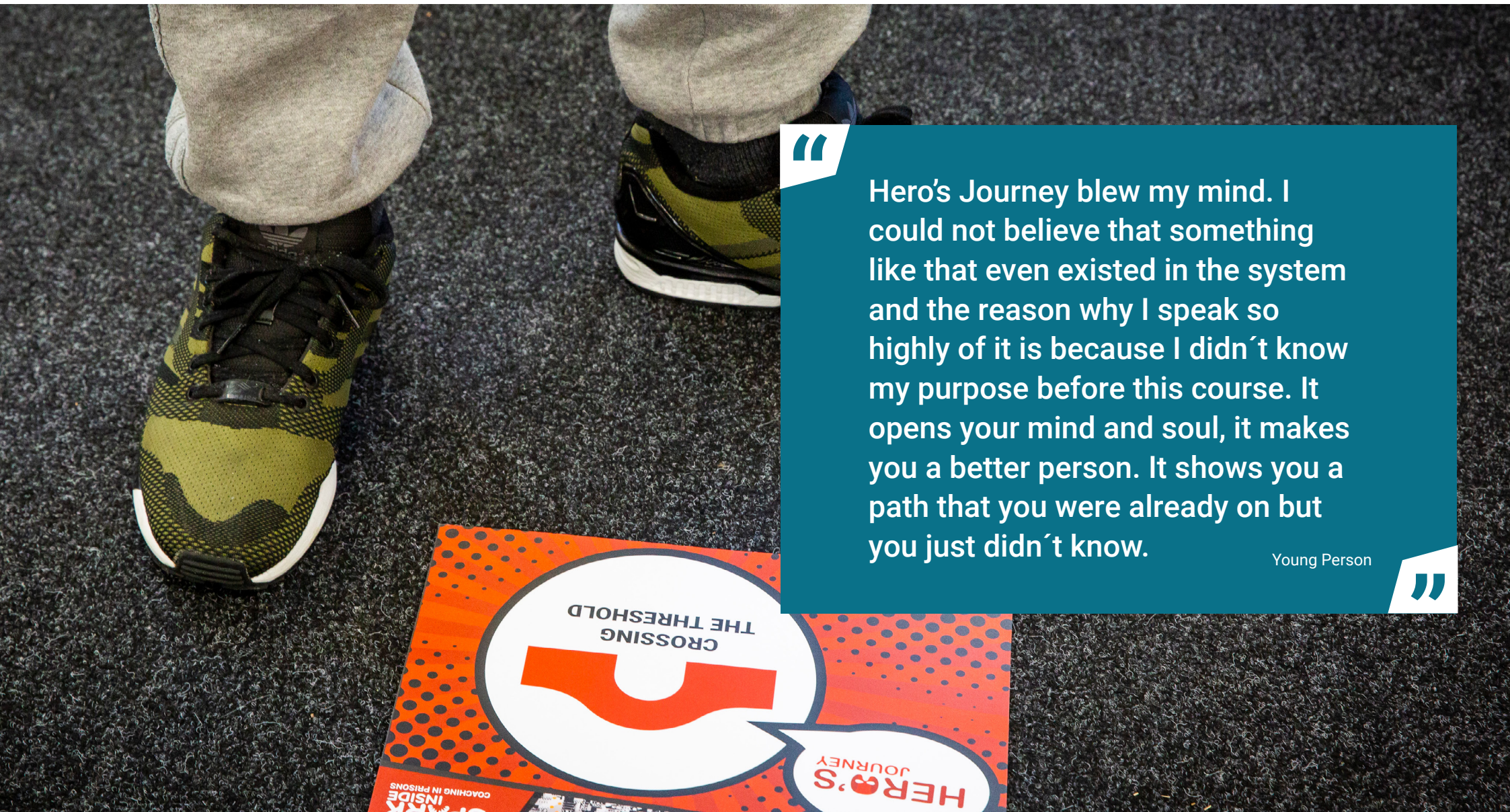
How we do this

Spark Inside provide a life coaching programme for young men (aged 15 to 25) in prison called Hero's Journey™ and supplementary one-to-one life coaching. This is the core of Spark Inside's delivery work and is complemented by coaching support for prison staff. Coaching enables a facilitated conversation, allowing individuals and groups to find their own solutions and do their best thinking to inform future actions. Spark Inside have a team of 20 professional coaches, who are fully qualified and trained, with over 2,000 hours of coaching experience. Coaches use tools and techniques which can help transform thinking, improve relationships, impact environments, achieve goals and change lives.

“Spark Inside genuinely makes a difference to young people's perspective and future decisions. I am so passionate about the astounding change and impact that can be achieved in some of the most challenging environments in our society.

Mia Wheeler, Governing Governor HMP Brixton





“

Hero's Journey blew my mind. I could not believe that something like that even existed in the system and the reason why I speak so highly of it is because I didn't know my purpose before this course. It opens your mind and soul, it makes you a better person. It shows you a path that you were already on but you just didn't know.

Young Person

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Who is Paul Hamlyn Foundation?

Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) was established by Paul Hamlyn in 1987. He died in 2001 and left most of his estate to the Foundation, creating one of the largest independent grant-making foundations in the UK.

PHF uses its resources to support social change, working towards a just and equitable society in which everyone, especially young people, can realise their full potential and enjoy fulfilling and creative lives.

“The Youth Strategic Investment Fund is a reflection of the Foundation’s commitment to long-term relational grant-making. We welcome the insights in this report that celebrate the impact of our funded partners and contribute to improving our practice in strengthening organisations that ensure young people can thrive.

Moira Sinclair, Chief Executive, Paul Hamlyn Foundation”

What is the Youth Strategic Investment Fund?

The Youth Strategic Investment Fund is a high value and long term package of support in the region of £750,000 over five years. The Fund is by invitation only and targets a small number of organisations each year that are already known to the Foundation through its Youth Fund programme.

The Foundation invites organisations to join the Fund that align with PHF’s current priorities, share their values and have demonstrated a track record of working with young people to achieve positive change.

The Youth Strategic Investment Fund is designed as a strategic investment that will:

- + Enhance the organisation’s impact in working with young people
- + Strengthen the organisation’s position within a specified field of practice
- + Secure its longer-term future through a focus on organisational development

The Fund was launched in 2017 and supports up to three organisations to enter the Fund each year. It operates with up to fifteen organisations active in the Fund at any time.

Why Spark Inside were invited to join this Fund

Spark Inside was known to Paul Hamlyn Foundation as their Founder had used a PHF 'Ideas and Pioneer' grant to establish the charity in 2012 prior to core fund support through the Foundation's Youth Fund. Despite being a very young charity, Spark Inside had demonstrated readiness for a longer-term strategic investment through the early success and impact of the Hero's Journey™ programme. An independent evaluation in 2015 found that Hero's Journey reduced re-offending by 33% six months post-release and a Social Investment Consultancy found that Hero's Journey had a statistically significant impact on young people's resilience, wellbeing and future outlook. Spark Inside had demonstrated a continuing commitment to enrich the programme, expand its influence and work towards systemic change.

Spark Inside were approaching their 7th anniversary year on invitation to join the Youth Strategic Investment Fund in 2019. They presented an ambition to expand the reach of Hero's Journey™ beyond their own delivery by inspiring and enabling others to adopt and deliver its model of coaching in prisons across the UK. This work had been supported in its development by Spring Impact with an ambition to engage partner organisations to replicate programmes in the following 5 years.

The team at Spark Inside presented a clear vision for ensuring young people were integral to informing and influencing the development of their work. A youth advisory board, drawn from young people directly or indirectly involved in the criminal justice system, had been advising Spark Inside since 2012. Spark Inside demonstrated careful consideration of how to involve young people in shaping its programmes in a mindful way in order to inform service delivery and strategy but also to demonstrate the longer-term impact of programmes.

“ Spark Inside demonstrated careful consideration of how to involve young people in shaping its programmes in a mindful way in order to inform service delivery and strategy ”

Organisational and strategic development needs

Spark Inside identified a step-change to investment in leadership and management as the core use of the Fund's resources that would enable the organisation to scale its reach and impact. Following a period of rapid growth from a start-up organisation in 2012, there was acknowledgement that – to achieve its future ambitions – it would need to consolidate this growth to grow its impact. The focus for PHF funds would be on senior posts that would lead the organisation forwards, addressing evidence and learning, partnership and networking, and organisational stability.

Anticipated impact

Spark Inside planned to enhance its impact through a combination of:

- 1 **Reach:** through expanding access to Hero's Journey™ in more prisons and through the development of partnership delivery and/or social franchising.
- 2 **Quality:** through further external validation of its programmes, their impact, and alignment within Ministry of Justice measures for evaluating reoffending, violence reduction and sustained employment.
- 3 **Influence:** through sharing evaluations with decision makers and thinktanks that evidence the value of coaching in prisons as a successful tool for rehabilitation and system change.

In summary, Spark Inside anticipated the Fund would provide the foundation for consolidating its growth and building a platform for wider reach and impact.



“When you’re in prison you’re at the bottom and Spark Inside can give you self-belief and help you see how you can be happy with your life again”

Young Participant

Spark Inside had to navigate substantial organisational, social and societal changes throughout the funding partnership. These have involved the navigation of transition from a Founder-led charity to the appointment of a new CEO; the interruption to service delivery for two years during the pandemic (involving a more literal ‘lockdown’ within prisons); and a crisis of overcrowding and staff instability across the prison estate. Despite this, the team have demonstrated remarkable resilience and perseverance during the Funds five-year investment. It can be argued that Spark Inside’s greatest achievement has been to survive these challenges however, they have gone further and have emerged in a position to thrive as they have refined, refocussed and reaffirmed their commitment to champion coaching in prisons.

2019-2020

From Founder-led to Future Focussed:

The work of Spark Inside had been conceived through the vision of its Founder, Baillie Aaron. However, shortly after securing the Youth Strategic Investment Fund in April 2019, Baillie decided to step down and the Spark Inside Board led the search for its first CEO appointment. The Fund provided tailored support to adjust to the Founder’s departure with transitional support provided by the YSIF ‘Critical Friend’. When new CEO, Vicki Cardwell, took up post in January 2020, she was supported to use the Fund’s resource to strengthen the team in preparation for realising Spark Inside’s future ambitions for wider reach and impact.

A new CEO provided Spark Inside with a fresh opportunity to look towards the future, building on the identified need to consolidate the early growth and success of Spark Inside’s work with the longer term vision for embedding coaching in prisons as a solution for rehabilitation of people caught in the justice system. However, Spark Inside’s progress and vision was abruptly interrupted by the global pandemic as prisons, work places and wider society were placed under Covid-19 restrictions.

2020-2022

Pivoting during the Pandemic

In March 2020, prisons went into lockdown and Spark Inside were forced to rapidly withdraw from direct work in prisons. Young people spent 23 hours a day in their cells much to the detriment of their mental health. Working conditions for staff also deteriorated: a staff survey found 85% of respondents felt burnt out (Prison Officers' Association, 2021) and prison officers left in droves. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 29% and serious assaults on staff increased by 6% between 2021 and 2022 (reported by the Ministry of Justice).

Spark Inside's coaching with young people was forced to pause but the team adapted its offer to provide one-to-one (remote) coaching to prison staff to help them manage the stresses of a job made even more difficult by the pandemic and to enable them to better support the young people in their care. This programme was very well received and has been integrated as part of Spark Inside's core offer. Since 2020, Spark Inside have coached over eighty prison staff across all operational grades including nine governors. A [University of Lincoln evaluation](#) of this work (in 2024) indicates it has enabled staff to build resilience, manage stress, improve their wellbeing, and aids staff retention.

The pivot to pro-active engagement with prison staff during Covid-19 lockdowns helped facilitate Spark Inside's re-entry into prisons as pandemic restrictions were eased. Prison staff recognised the value of Spark Inside's approach and so supported revisions to delivery during restrictions. Spark Inside were one of the first to re-enter Isis Youth Offending Institution using in-prison phone lines to undertake coaching with young people and were allowed to coach 'through the cell door' and on the wings in Wormwood Scrubs. This period of challenge served to reaffirm the determination of Spark Inside to reach young people in prison with the message of hope that underpins Hero's Journey.

“ This period of challenge [during Covid-19] served to reaffirm the determination of Spark Inside to reach young people in prison with the message of hope that underpins Hero's Journey™. ”



2021-2024

Refocussing the Future for Spark Inside

Throughout 2020, and under the leadership of CEO Vicki Cardwell, Spark Inside worked on clarifying its mission, vision and charitable objectives to be fit for the future as it worked through and looked beyond the pandemic. In 2021 they published a 3-year strategic plan including a new vision and mission statement with 5 key objectives:

- 1 To increase the number of young people who access coaching at more points on their journey.
- 2 To change prison culture through coaching people who work and live there.
- 3 To champion coaching as a transformational tool in the justice system.
- 4 To build a robust evidence base for coaching in the criminal justice system.
- 5 To fortify Spark Inside's foundations.

With the support of the staff team, Board and young people, this plan would guide Spark Inside on its journey from 2021-2024. The strategy enabled the development of programmes, sector engagement and organisational development. It enabled Spark Inside to expand reach, launch innovative programmes and partnerships, and strengthen organisational foundations.

Highlights from the 2023-24 [Impact report](#):

- + Over 74 Hero's Journey™ workshops delivered across six prisons in 2023-2024. This included a pilot, co-produced with young people, of a new Black Hero's Journey programme.
- + Over 240 young people provided with life coaching, with 98% of young people making progress in at least one area, 88% making progress in at least two areas and 82% made progress in all three areas of the outcomes evaluation.
- + An independent Cost Benefit Analysis quantified this impact as 'Every £1 invested in the Hero's Journey generates at least £5.94 of benefits, for criminal justice agencies, health services, victims and employers'.
- + Over 40 prison staff were supported with over 140 one-to-one coaching sessions, promoting change within and across institutions through coaching prison staff.
- + The University of Lincoln published its [evaluation](#) of Spark Inside prison staff coaching with a clear endorsement of the quality and impact of this work.
- + Publication of '[Being Well Being Equal](#)' and associated campaign activity drew the attention of policymakers in the prison service and healthcare commissioners to the wellbeing needs of young men, particularly young Black men, in prison; building a platform for systemic change.

2024 Re-evaluation and Exit

As Spark Inside prepared to exit the Youth Strategic Investment Fund they revisited these achievements and embarked on a further refresh of their strategic plan. They have been able to look forwards with confidence as their work has been underpinned by a 'robust evidence base', a clear ambition in their 2021 Strategy. This was demonstrated following submission of participant data to the Ministry of Justice Data Labs which found that fewer of Spark Insides beneficiaries reoffended compared to matched control groups. This, and other endorsements, have helped to secure over £200,000 from the highly competitive Prison and Probation Service Innovation Fund to expand Spark Inside's programme in two more prisons.

In 2024, Spark Inside will be working with more prisons and reaching more young people than ever before. The persistence and resilience of the Spark Inside team, their robust approach to impact measurement, and careful attention to organisational development mean they are exiting the Fund in a strong position to extend their reach and impact.

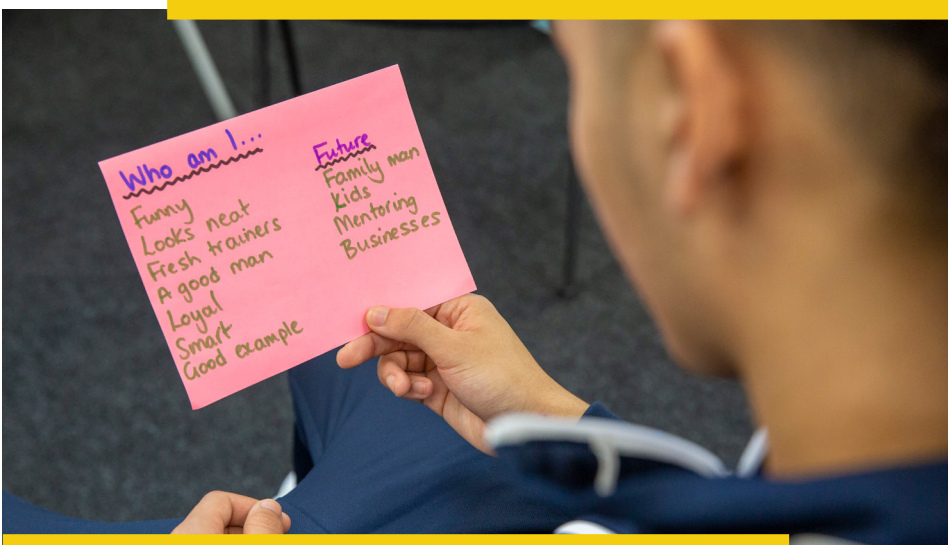
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The Impact: On Young People in Prison

Spark Inside have demonstrated that coaching creates longer-lasting impact and, while this has been validated by independent evaluations, it is most powerful when expressed in the voices of young participants:



▶ Watch our [powerful spoken word piece](#) written and performed by Spark Inside Champion and talented artist, Jonno Mambu.



“

When we first started the workshops, it wasn't easy to stand there and talk about everything in front of people we didn't really know. I came out of my shell when we did the 'possipping' exercise, where it's the gossiping but you hear things that people can see in you that you don't necessarily see in yourself. It makes you think positively about yourself.

In the workshops you make a promise to yourself to give it all a try, and I did it, I've not stopped trying since the programme.

When it came to the one-to-one coaching, I had more time to get down to the problems and the ways to solve them. My coach was just amazing. He didn't judge, and he understands that people make wrong choices, but just because they've made that wrong choice it doesn't make them a bad person. People can change, and it was having that one person sat there believing in me that helped me. The coaches help bring out the better person in you.

Since I've been out of prison, I've stuck to everything I said I wanted to do. My mum said that she's proud of me. She can see that I'm changed.

If someone came to me two years ago and said I was going to be like this, I would have laughed at them. But I'm stronger willed than I was before. Now, I'm just taking every day as it comes, carrying on the path that I want to be on. I've changed everything and I'm living as honest a life as possible.

”

The impact of Black Hero's Journey

“ Black Hero's Journey is about realizing our own skills and potential as a young black man in today's world, truly identifying our qualities, successes and barriers, and how to overcome them in order to get there, regardless of today's challenges we face or our current and past situation

Young Participant ”

A highlight during the Funds investment has been the impact of the Black Hero's Journey programme. Spark Inside began this development on joining the Fund in 2019. Young people in prison told Spark Inside it would be beneficial for their workshops to acknowledge the specific challenges young Black men face. A wealth of data highlighted how young Black men in prison face significant barriers so it was clear from feedback and research that tailored support was needed. Spark Inside set about co-creating an adaptation of Heros Journey™ for Black young men that was rooted in a strengths-based approach, that was hopeful, empowering, and focused on potential. This programme was carefully constructed and then piloted in 2022 at HMP Isis and HMP Brixton, which was met with very positive feedback:

“ We have seen brilliant engagement from young people for the programme, as there is really nothing else like it in the prison system. We have also seen and been impressed by the positive changes in young people after their participation.

Emily Thomas , Prison Governor ”



The Impact: On Organisational Development

“The investment in leadership roles has been central to how we have developed as an organisation.

Spark Inside **”**

The funding partnership was framed around an investment that would allow a step-change in leadership and management as the core use of the Fund's resources and enable the organisation to scale its reach and impact. The focus for PHF funds were on senior posts that would lead the organisation forwards, addressing: evidence and learning, partnership and networking, and organisational stability. These were seen as key posts and resources that would strengthen the position Spark Inside could fulfil in a complex and turbulent sector.

Investing in Organisational Leadership

The core investment provided Spark Inside with the confidence and financial security to invest in leadership roles. The Fund supported restructuring during the transition from Founder to new CEO and, with the publication of the new strategic plan in 2021, the creation of two key roles: a Head of Impact and Innovation, and a Participation and Engagement Manager. Prior to the Fund's investment, these functions were incorporated in to other roles and were not distinct. The creation of these roles enabled the Head of Service Delivery to focus on 'good growth', expanding Spark Inside's coaching into new prisons and to more young people.

The Head of Impact and Innovation has led on the quality, monitoring and evaluation of Spark Inside's delivery leading to even stronger endorsements and a robust evidence base that supports the role of coaching in prisons. This, in turn, has fuelled the development of innovative projects which have included the Black Hero's Journey; Prison staff coaching; and a systems coaching programme called The Conversation® that brings together young people and prison staff to build empathy and understanding.

The Participation and Engagement Manager has led on work with young people with lived experience of the justice system, providing opportunities for them to have their voices heard on the issues that matter to them, and to shape Spark Inside's services and strategy. These have contributed to the co-creation of new programmes like Black Hero's Journey and the campaign 'Being Well Being Equal' that have highlighted the challenges faced by Black young men in prisons.

Strengthening Organisational Culture

The support of the Fund in building capacity and providing expert support has provided Spark Inside with the resource to grow in a thoughtful and considered way. The extra capacity and space created by development funding has provided Spark Inside with time to reflect and prioritise 'good growth', meaning that as the organisation chooses to expand reach, so too does its quality. This has been validated in academic research and reflected in the financial security of the organisation.

This has also required careful reflection on the internal culture of the organisation. Driving 'culture change in the criminal justice system so that rehabilitation is possible' is a core part of Spark Inside's mission outside the organisation. The team have sought to replicate this through building a strong and healthy culture inside the organisation. They have been intentional and committed to creating an environment in which they listen well, challenge effectively and are committed to growth – as individuals and as an organisation. This has involved making time for regular in-person team building days and investing in coaching skills training for all staff. This has included accredited coaching courses, and access to 12 personal coaching sessions a year for every member of the team with a coach of their choice, on any topic of their choice, and in complete confidence. In adopting these principles and practices, Spark Inside have highlighted the importance of leading by example.



Future strategic priorities for Spark Inside

Spark Inside used support from the YSIF in the final year of the Fund to produce a refreshed three year [strategic vision \(2024-2027\)](#). The strategy places a focus on 'Unlocking potential and driving culture change so that rehabilitation is possible'.

The plan sets out four strategic priorities that have been co-created by Spark Inside staff team, Trustees and young people with lived experience of the criminal justice system. Spark Inside will aim to:

1 Coach many more young people in prison and 'through the gate'

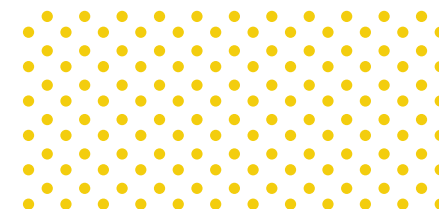
We will ensure our programmes reach as many young people as possible. We have a strong foundation in London but many young people in other areas of the country have access to fewer programmes and even less charity support, so, our goal is to expand into a new area of the country. We will pilot coaching young women in prison – a first for Spark Inside - and offer through the gate coaching to every young person we work with, to have greater impact over the long term.

2 Champion a coaching culture in prisons

To give individuals the best chance at flourishing within the prison environment, we have got to make an impact on prison culture.

We will innovate new approaches that champion a coaching culture in prisons. We will coach more prison staff, prove the concept of this work to support sustained cultural change on prison wings, and pilot coaching skills training for people who live and work in prison so they can unlock their own and others' potential.

“Our vision is a world where the futures of people affected by the criminal justice system are determined by their potential, not their past.”



3 Continue to be effective and to evidence this impact


As we grow, maintaining our standard of training and equipping our coaches and team will be ever more important, as will continually improving our programmes with the latest, external evidence.

We will continue to prioritise meaningful participation work, ensuring the voices of people with lived experience shape our programmes and strategy. We will continue to seek external evaluation and analysis of our programmes and their effectiveness, and we will regularly review and improve our programmes.

4 Be a skilled, diverse, and sustainable organisation with our own coaching culture

We want to change the prison system, but we cannot outperform our own culture. We will deepen our own coaching culture – one that listens well, challenges effectively and is committed to growth, of the organisation and of each other.

As we champion equity and opportunity for young people in prison, we need to put equity, diversity and inclusion at the heart of all that we do too. We will grow our reach in a sustainable way, with diverse income streams. As we grow in size we will grow our quality, and we will only seek funding opportunities that allow us to maintain our high standards.



“Every area of my life, [my coach] sat down and helped me realise what I could do better, and I’ve taken that on board. I’ve now got my own business, which I’m building, I have the highest paying job I’ve ever been in by far and I’m in a healthy relationship. Everything is better now.

Young Person ”

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The Funding Relationship

The Foundation provides a five-year, fixed-term package of support through the Youth Strategic Investment Fund that includes:

A core grant in the range of £500,000 over five years to support the core costs of senior leadership and/ or specific developmental posts that create the capacity for the organisation to evaluate, implement and embed strategic development.

A restricted annual budget of up to £30,000 per year to spend on development priorities that are agreed with the Foundation, for example: short-term commissioning of consultants, skilled developers, system upgrades and researchers.

The appointment of an independent consultant as a 'Critical Friend' to the Chief Executive, senior leadership team and Board of Governance as they navigate strategic development.

Access to a learning community of senior colleagues from across the YSIF portfolio, providing networking opportunities between senior staff and convening activities to address common strategic development themes.

A relationship manager for the Foundation who meets regularly with the partner organisation to co-ordinate the full package of support, share learning insights and monitor the organisation's strategic development journey.

The investment targets and monitors strategic development that will include at least two of the following areas:

1

Quality:

strengthening their services and consolidating their position as a leading organisation within their field of practice

2

Reach:

enabling greater engagement for young people in an established service through the development of projects, methods or technologies

3

Scale:

replicating a project or service through, for example, geographical expansion, social franchising or digital technologies

4

Influence:

in terms of shaping sector-wide practice, amplifying impact through knowledge exchange, advocating for systems change and/or enhancing policy approaches

Four principles guide the Foundation's relationship with funded partners:



1 Partnership

The Fund adopts a collaborative approach, working closely with funded partners to identify their priorities for strategic development throughout the funding period. It seeks to build relationships of trust that, while remaining fundamentally supportive, can withstand critical challenge in pursuit of a shared vision between stakeholders for working with young people to achieve positive change.



2 Ownership

The Fund works alongside an organisation's own plans, goals and ambitions to grow its impact in work with young people. It seeks to support these plans through providing financial resources, commissioning expert advice and offering guidance that will strengthen the organisation to achieve its expressed mission and purpose.



3 Flexibility

The Fund is designed to support the complexities of organisational development and the organisation's ambitions to achieve growth in impact. A bespoke package of support is tailored to support the leadership of each organisation in a responsive, timely and flexible way. The focus is maintained on strategic development but priorities are reviewed quarterly and acknowledge that things change during the lifetime of the investment.



4 Dialogue

The focus for engagement, monitoring and feedback is conversation and dialogue. The regular cycle of face-to-face meetings and continuous communication enables responsive decision making to support each organisation's needs. This approach allows for learning to be actioned and applied in the 'here and now' using a record of continuous dialogue rather than waiting for any formal reporting points.

“

We have valued the partnership approach of this Fund which has allowed for honest and productive conversations that have enabled Spark Inside to strengthen the organisation and clarify our strategic direction

Spark Inside

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8

Partner's reflections on the Fund

Spark Inside have reflected on their journey through the Youth Strategic Investment Fund to support Paul Hamlyn Foundation to learn what impact this funding approach has. The Foundation wants to understand whether the Youth Strategic Investment Fund is tailored effectively and proportionate to the role that it plays alongside other funders, agencies and individuals that support any given organisation.

What Spark Inside valued through the Youth Strategic Investment Fund:

Spark Inside most valued the partnership approach and flexibility of the Fund. They described the regular face-to-face meetings as enabling 'honest and productive conversations' that supported development, backed by the 'flexibility of using core funds where they were most effective.' There was also an appreciation that monitoring had focussed on dialogue with the funder and 'not to have the pressure of writing regular, lengthy reports to the funder, which can take up significant resources and detract from day-to-day work and delivery'. There was also recognition of the value of engagement with other sector leaders through portfolio gatherings and the useful connections to organisations on similar developmental journeys.

There was special mention of the value of additional funding made available during Covid-19 and the restricted fund for staff wellbeing, 'this meant that we could invest in our staff, including prioritising quality, in-person time as a team' in recovery from the impact of lockdown.



What changes the investment contributed to at Spark Inside?

Spark Inside were very cognisant of the strategic role the Fund had played in enabling significant organisational development and growth during the five-year investment. It was described as contributing to change that has led to 'deepen quality and impact, refresh our vision, mission, charitable objectives and strategic direction, invest in the growth of our team and expand our reach'.

What could the Fund have done differently?

Spark Inside expressed how 'our experience over the past 5 years has been incredibly positive, and it is difficult to pinpoint anything specific that we would change'. Pushed for what could be developed within the Fund to provide further support, Spark Inside suggested: 'we may have benefitted from more engagement from the funder with our Board of Trustees from the start of the grant' having valued the insights shared with the Board at the end of Fund's cycle. There was also a suggestion that 'we would also have welcomed being introduced to other grant-makers by the funder, though we did appreciate PHF acting as a referee to us when applying (successfully) for other grants'. Spark Inside also suggested that PHF could share more, with other funders, 'to encourage more relational and reliable funder relationships, both with foundations and corporates.'

“ Our experience over the past 5 years has been incredibly positive, and it is difficult to pinpoint anything specific that we would change

Spark Inside **”**

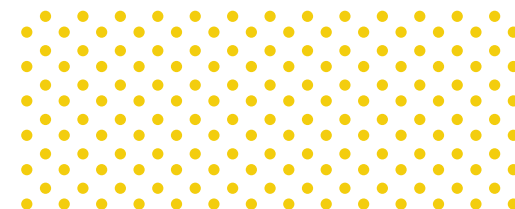


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The persistence and resilience of the Spark Inside team, their robust approach to impact measurement, and careful attention to organisational development mean they are exiting the Fund in a strong position to extend their reach and impact.

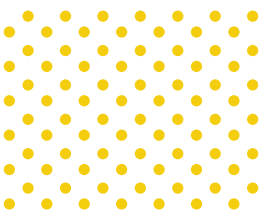
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Spark Inside are part of the third annual intake of organisations to exit the Youth Strategic Investment Fund. The Foundation was clear when launching this Fund that it would be committed to listening, learning and changing the way it works in order to provide targeted organisational development that leads to an increased impact with and for young people.



Partners that have completed the five-year investment cycle have taught us:

- + The Fund rationale, design and investment model provides a valued package of support. Each element has merit in its own right but has proven most effective when blended to form a package of support that can flex and respond to the changing needs of an organisation over the five year investment. This focused but flexible approach has been well received by funded partners and provides the tools for a sustainable focus on organisational development and impact.
- + There is high value in a long-term but fixed-period of support for strategic development. It takes time for an organisation to fully assess its needs, identify the best use of available resources and implement change. It also takes time to build trust between the organisation and the funder. Conversely, it needs an 'end point' to focus attention on using the Fund effectively in a given period of time.
- + That strategic development can be compromised when organisations are pressured to achieve growth for growths sake. A common assumption is that strategic development is about growing the size of an organisation at the expense of securing strategic position, quality and impact. The Fund was, initially, called 'The Growth Fund' and it was clear that this created a pressure to seek out growth opportunities when it was not always in the best interest of the organisation. The Fund was renamed the Youth Strategic Investment Fund in 2020 and funded partners have taken a more measured approach to growth (exemplified by Spark Inside) with the three exiting partners in 2024 demonstrating greater stability, strength and sustainability at the point of exit.





+ That codifying and valuing different types of strategic investment provides permission for organisations to use funds in the most appropriate way to achieve their mission as is relevant for their stage of organisational development. The Fund now recognises different pathways for sustainable development. These pathways allow for strategic journeys that can be codified as:

- 1 **Consolidation:** typical of organisations after a period of accelerated growth.
- 2 **Refresh:** typical of more established organisations seeking to renew or implement change.
- 3 **Scaling:** typical of organisations seeking to replicate or amplify a successful model at scale.

The Fund has been evaluating the scale pathway in more depth throughout 2023-2024, with recognition that 'scaling impact' through replication has presented particular challenges for the integrity and sustainability of some organisations. Conversely, the Fund is observing more success in organisations that adopt an amplification approach that involves knowledge exchange and empowering other like-minded organisations with a view to scaling impact outside the organisations geographical location.

+ That building a healthy and regular working relationship between the funder, the organisation, and additional external expertise cannot be underestimated. The Foundation committed to meeting in-person on a regular basis and providing independent support through a Critical Friend. This provides the basis for continuous feedback with support that is both proactive and responsive to ensure the full investment is used effectively. The relationships between the Foundation, Critical Friend and partner organisation provides valuable insight that supports good decision making and gives the investment its best chance of success.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation has been pleased to work with Spark Inside throughout the investment in their ambitions to make a positive difference in the lives of young people in prisons. They have fully embraced the opportunity presented by the Youth Strategic Investment Fund and secured a robust evidence base for promoting a coaching culture in prisons.

The Foundation's aim for the Youth Strategic Investment Fund is that, on exit, the funded partner has good evidence of its impact in working with young people, is strategically placed within its field of practice and has strengthened its organisational sustainability. Spark Inside has achieved excellent progress across all of these aims and it is the Foundation's view that it occupies a strategically important role amplifying that coaching in prisons increases the future life chances for young people and that rehabilitation is possible.

Spark Inside have been bold in recognising the organisational journey required to achieve its mission. They have positioned themselves through careful use of resources to secure quality in programme delivery, representation of lived experience and wider reach across the system. Their focus on a robust evidence base for the impact of coaching in prisons has been rewarded with recognition through academic evaluations, the Ministry of Justice Data Labs, and an independent Cost Benefit Analysis which found that every £1 invested in the Hero's Journey generates approximately £6 of benefits, for criminal justice agencies, health services, victims and employers.

It has also maintained an unwavering determination – especially during the Covid-19 crisis – to address the needs and wellbeing of young people in prison and the staff that engage with them. They have campaigned, successfully, for policy to recognise the particular challenges facing Black young men in prisons with recognition of their 'Being Well Being Equal' report; and in the development of the highly regarded Black Hero's Journey programme. Importantly, these developments have combined to strengthen Spark Inside's strategic position in facilitating the growth of coaching in prisons as it exits this Fund and looks towards the next 3 years of its strategic plan.

“ Spark Inside have secured a robust evidence base for promoting a coaching culture in prisons ”

However, with a vision to unlock the potential of many more young people and to drive culture change across the prison system - and given the lingering impact of prison dysfunction post-Covid-19 - this work will require persistence and perseverance in order to achieve lasting change. Spark Inside will need the continuing support of foundations, agencies, sponsors and individuals who share in their vision. Their success will require a collective effort from those that support their mission to use coaching to unlock the potential of individuals and drive culture change in the criminal justice system.

We hope our investment has provided confidence in how Spark Inside are positioned to achieve better outcomes with and on behalf of young people. We are grateful to the Spark Inside team for working with us in this partnership and encourage like-minded funders to support their future work.

The Youth Strategic Investment Fund

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

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Contact details:

Spark Inside

Unit 386
Salisbury House
London Wall
London
EC2M 5SQ

0114 258 4595 | team@sparkinside.org | [@Spark_inside](https://www.instagram.com/Spark_inside)

www.sparkinside.org

Charity Registration no: England and Wales 1148420

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

5–11 Leeke Street
London
WC1X 9HY

020 7812 3300

information@phf.org.uk

phf.org.uk

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