

IMPACT REPORT

2024 - 2025





A WORD FROM OUR CEO



For the first time, we brought our unique approach to two new environments: an open prison and Oasis Restore, the UK's first secure school. These are powerful examples of how coaching can support young people and staff in different types of custodial settings, helping to build meaningful change.

Internally, we've continued to invest in what makes Spark Inside special — our people and our culture. This year we expanded our coaching skills training across the organisation and renewed our focus on a healthy, inclusive and values-driven culture. We know that to deliver lasting impact, we must continually learn and grow as a team.

As you'll read in the pages ahead, our work is more vital than ever — and thanks to your ongoing support, we're able to meet this moment with hope and determination.

Thank you for standing with us.

With gratitude,

Vicki Cardwell
Chief Executive Officer, Spark Inside

This year has been a landmark one for Spark Inside — a year of growth, innovation, and recognition as we continue to champion the power of coaching in the criminal justice system.

I'm incredibly proud to share that we were honoured with the Zurich Insurance UK DEI Award, a national recognition of our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the Black Hero's Journey programme. This award is a testament to the dedication of our team, coaches and young people.

We've also made exciting strides in expanding our reach. This year marked the early stages of our work in the East Midlands — a step toward our longer-term goal of reaching more young people across the country. Our coaching programmes are now helping to unlock potential in new regions, while continuing to deliver transformational impact in London and the South East.

INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

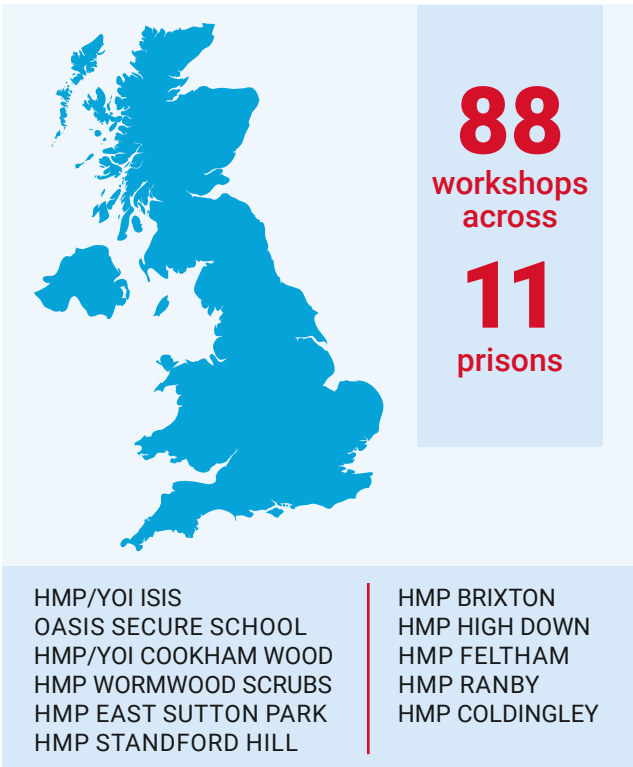
Hero's Journey

Hero's Journey is our award winning, life coaching programme that empowers young people in the justice system to rewrite their future. Through group workshops followed by one-to-one coaching, young people are supported to identify where they are in their life's journey and equipped with the tools, confidence and resilience to build a bright future that excites them.

In 24/25 we were delighted to reach more young people than **ever before**, coaching **274** people in prison, through the gate and in the community.

We are proud to see the positive impact our work has on the young people we work with.

% of young people who reported making progress in the following areas:	
Communicating	82%
Choices and Behaviour	78%
Interests and activities	78%
Education and Work	76%
Hopes and Dreams	73%
Health and Well-being	64%



Daniel, a young man who received one-to-one coaching from Spark Inside, had this to say about the experience:

“ You can either wish things were different or be the change you want to see. I chose the latter. After years of planning, sketching, taking notes, and learning, **coaching became exactly what I needed** to help me define my short, medium, and long-term goals — understanding my current state, desired state, and the obstacles in between.

I feel positive, ready, and determined to move forward. I'm chasing accomplishment. ”

This type of transformational work that supports young people like Daniel to lead purposeful, productive lives after imprisonment, has a profound impact on wider society. In fact, an independent Cost Benefit Analysis of our work found that every £1 invested in Hero's Journey generates at least £5.94 of benefits to society – a huge achievement.

Black Hero's Journey

In 24/25 we ran **8** Black Hero's Journey programmes, supporting **56** young Black and Mixed Heritage men across **3** prisons and through the gate, to explore their identity, heritage and culture and come away from workshops feeling empowered, uplifted and more able to carve out abright future.

“ Understanding that it's not about changing myself or how I look, but rather understanding why these perceptions exist and what I can do to help myself. ”

We published our report, [Black Hero's Journey: Stories of Identity, Affirmation, Resilience and Transformation](#), authored by Dr Noreen Dera, and shaped by the voices and experiences of ‘storytellers’ - seven young Black and Mixed Heritage men who took part in the programme.

We were heartened that the audit of this programme found it enables participants to **challenge negative stereotypes; navigate their own racial and cultural identities; celebrate being Black; develop a positive sense of self; develop a sense of ‘brotherhood’; discover greater purpose, motivation and hope for the future:**

“ I feel like I have got a calling in life, greater than what I limit myself to. Society and the system try to keep me boxed in, but I'm greater than that. ”



Coaching Young Women

This year we began coaching young women in prison for the first time, supporting women in HMP East Sutton Park through one-to-one sessions with our brilliant Coaches.

Our first two cohorts of women have been supported to build the confidence and clarity to tackle challenges like self-esteem, family relationships, and planning for release. And the results? Inspiring! One woman told our Service Delivery Manager:

“ I’ve got my mojo back! Since the last session, I’ve applied for loads of jobs and I’ve got two interviews next week! ”

Our team are working hard to pioneer a coaching approach tailored to the unique experiences of women in prison and we will focus on developing and growing this work in 2025/26.



The Conversation

In 24/25 we completed the first pilot of The Conversation, our systems coaching programme which brings together prison staff and residents, using Deep Democracy to enhance relationships, improve empathy, and support sustained, positive cultural change on prison wings.

Pilot 1 took place at HMP High Down, with a group of residents and staff coming together to explore how they could improve living conditions on the wing.

One of the facilitators said:

“ I witnessed profound listening, deepening of understanding and real shifts in relationships. I have been involved in so many prisons projects over the years, but this one feels different. ”

What stood out were the commitments made to make the wing a better place to live and work, including:

- 1 Residents would be given the opportunity work together with staff on what areas on the wing needed investment to help shape next year’s budget request.
- 2 A Custodial Manager reflected on how they could be more present and responsive.
- 3 Officers and residents collaborated on what activities could be offered in the social spaces under the new regime.
- 4 Residents were able to express their appreciation for the work the staff do.

We look forward to starting Pilot 2 in 25/26 at HMP Wormwood Scrubs!

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Prison Staff coaching

This year, we coached **50** prison staff members, supporting them in their wellbeing, to manage stress and build resilience in an environment that continues to be extremely challenging. The impact of this work, which is now core to what we do at Spark Inside, is clear in the feedback we receive from participants. One of the **20** Prison Governors we coached this year said:

“ Your sessions gave me the space to openly express my successes and failures without fear of judgment. Instead of feeling criticized, I felt guided- encouraged to reflect, learn and find my own path forward. ”

Also this year, we partnered with the Prison Reform Trust to coach **12** Deputy Prison Governors who were part of their Next Generation leadership development programme.

One participant said:

“ Every session to have added value to both my personal and professional development whilst enabling me to create a toolkit of skills to refer to and reflect on regularly. My wellbeing has improved as a result of developing strategies to deal with the complexities and dynamic nature of my current role. My leadership has improved through developing new techniques to generate a culture of accountability and self-reflection across my team. ”



Gym staff

We began an exciting pilot in HMP Brixton, delivering coaching skills training for prison gym staff. Gym staff are highly influential members of the prison workforce, who often enjoy positive relationships with young people in custody, connecting with them in a different way to other staff. For this reason, we wanted to equip this valuable team with coaching skills that enable them to have even more powerful, transformational interactions with young people.

This opportunity includes supporting staff to find coaching moments in their role at work; attune to listening for feelings and values; and how to ask excellent quality questions.

The feedback has been very positive:

“ I’ve learnt that helping someone to think is more powerful than telling them what to do. ”

We look forward to taking this work forward, furthering our mission to drive culture change in prisons so that rehabilitation is possible.



SYSTEMIC CHANGE

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



A key part of our mission is to drive culture change in the criminal justice system, so that rehabilitation is possible. We have ambitions to change entire systems, championing equity and opportunity, and we do this through our advocacy, policy and campaigning work.

Central to the event was hearing from the Champions about their experiences, ideas for change, and the impact of coaching on their lives. They spoke openly about stigma, the struggles of accessing support, and being vulnerable in a prison environment.

Being Well Being Equal

Building on the momentum of our ongoing Being Well Being Equal Campaign, in March 2025 we held our second roundtable, bringing together policymakers and practitioners in the justice and health sector, alongside Spark Inside Champions – young men with lived experience of the justice system who help shape our work. Guests and the Champions collaborated to tackle the question: **How do we promote the Mental Wealth of young Black men in prison?**

The term ‘Mental Wealth’, created by one of the Spark Inside Champions, is a reframing of mental health; which often carries stigma, particularly for young Black men in custody. His challenge was to view Mental Wealth as a wellbeing revolution, and as something you build, invest in and improve as you would physical health.

“ As young Black people in prison, it’s like mental health is so stigmatized within our cultures. It’s not something that’s acknowledged at all. So in prison now, everybody has got this mask on. And in terms of even being able to have that conversation with the next man, it’s like, how do I know you’re able to have that conversation? How do I break down this wall, especially if this wall is going to make me vulnerable? ”

The roundtable set the stage for bigger conversations about how young Black men in custody can get the mental health support they deserve and made it clear that real change must come from those with lived experience leading the way. We look forward to turning these insights into action and working with the Champions and other stakeholders to co-produce practical guidance and tools for prisons.



Champions

Our Champions Group consists of 8 young people who have had coaching with Spark Inside. They meet regularly and discuss topics relating to our work, inputting their views and ideas and shaping the way we do things.

In the past year our Champions have made monumental contributions to Spark Inside, including speaking at our policy, influencing and fundraising events, supporting us in staff recruitment, and contributing to our Black Hero's Journey report. One Champion, Jonno, wrote, scored and recorded a powerful spoken word piece with original

soundtrack, set to a co-produced animation which you can view here. We were hugely grateful to Jonno for performing the piece at the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Showcase Event, marking the end of our 5 year partnership with the funder.

We continue to offer development opportunities for this excellent team, including funding training and qualifications, and look forward to supporting them in their growth, as they support us in ours, in 25/26!

IPABS

Our In-Prison Advisory Boards (IPABs) continue to be a key mechanism for gathering insights from young people in prison. This year we continued working in HMP Brixton, and through a series of focus groups, one-to-one interviews and peer research, gained valuable insights into what support young people felt Spark Inside should offer through the gate, helping inform our HMPPS Innovation Grant funded Black Hero's Journey programme.



Changing narratives

We have continued to use our communications to make the case for coaching as a valuable tool in the criminal justice system. We use our external communications, our website, social media and traditional media to spread the word about the power of coaching and to 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, over **18,000** people followed us on social media and used our website, a **56% increase** on 23/24. We were delighted to be featured in The Voice Newspaper, we contributed to The Fabian Society Review and were regularly covered in the key justice sector news outlets. Next year, we will continue to champion coaching in the justice system and redouble our efforts to change narratives, shifting the focus to young people's potential, not their past.

WITH HUGE THANKS TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATION THAT HAS SUPPORTED US IN 2024/25!

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

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