



# Care After Prison

An emerging success story

October 2012

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### Glossary of acronyms

CAP	Care After Prison
CCC	Carmelite Community Centre
CDYMCA	City of Dublin YMCA
ISM	Integrated Sentence Management

## 1 Mission

The goal of Care After Prison (CAP) is to promote safer communities and to support ex-prisoners in leading crime free lives.

We recognise that we must serve our service users effectively and we commit to providing them with a high quality, creative and results-orientated service.

We take a genuine interest in our service users, and strive to understand their objectives and meet or exceed their expectations. We recognise that respecting the dignity and confidentiality of our service users is paramount to our success.

We dedicate ourselves to these values:

For our service users, we will work hard, provide our service on a timely, effective and efficient basis and maintain the highest standards of professional integrity at all times.

For those who work on our behalf, we will foster an enjoyable working environment, based on open communication and mutual respect, and will encourage initiative, innovation, teamwork and loyalty.

## 2 The need

*"I was working in Mountjoy [as chaplain] for six years ... I was very conscious coming from a prison background that we might be able to do something here ... What I realised when I worked in Mountjoy was that a lot of lads came back in, perhaps if the support was there they may not have reoffended."*

Fr. Charlie Hoey, 2012 <sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 The prompts

The City of Dublin YMCA (CDYMCA) has been running a supported accommodation project since 2006, offering 38 self-contained bedsits for 18 to 30 year olds experiencing homelessness <sup>2</sup>. Of those who came to this unit directly from prison, there was a shocking 0% success rate in tenancy sustainment, with the vast majority of newly arrived ex-prisoners staying only one night before leaving, often directly back into the world of criminality. This compares to an average length of stay of six months at the accommodation project and a positive move-on rate of 64% <sup>3</sup>. It was clear to the organisation that current services were simply not adequate.

<sup>1</sup> Mags Gargan, Y-pod club offering work, rest and play, *The Irish Catholic*, 8 March 2012, p. 25

<sup>2</sup> [www.ymca.ie/index.php/homelesservices.html](http://www.ymca.ie/index.php/homelesservices.html)

<sup>3</sup> CDYMCA, *YMCA Homeless Service Annual Report 2011*, July 2012

The Carmelite Community Centre (CCC)<sup>4</sup>, which is located adjacent to the CDYMCA and with whom it delivers a number of partnership initiatives, was able to relate similar tales.

Something had to be done.

## 2.2 Crime

Latest recorded crime data show that crime levels in Ireland are falling for all categories of offence, except kidnapping, burglary, fraud, deception and related offences<sup>5</sup>.

Although there was a reduction in crime rates in the period 2006 – 2010, 83% of respondents in the Quarterly National Household Survey felt that crime in Ireland was a serious or very serious problem<sup>6</sup>. In terms of community safety, 40% expressed worry about being a victim of crime<sup>7</sup>.

Research has shown an alarming rate of recidivism within Ireland. A major 2008 study, for example, showed that c. 29% of inmates were re-imprisoned within one year of release, and c. 49% within four years<sup>8</sup>.

## 2.3 Imprisonment

Ireland's 14 prisons suffer from chronic overcrowding. In 2010, the average number of people in prison on any given day was 4,290<sup>9</sup>. That same year, 7,356 (c. 59%) of committals following conviction were in respect of sentences of three months or less and a further 2,049 (c. 16%) were for sentences of three to six months<sup>10</sup>. More than a third of prisoners are from Dublin<sup>11</sup>. Various studies<sup>12 13 14</sup> have shown the link between high levels of socio-economic deprivation and the likelihood of entering prison.

*"The problems in prisoners' lives are often highly complicated and interrelated. They require a coordinated multi-agency response, within prison, across the cultural transitions between community and custody, and sustained long-term care after release. Without this they are likely to fall between the gaps in available services. This task is made more complex by the need to assess the risks posed by released prisoners to public safety ... For those employed in the prison service or in the community, the opportunities and rewards for innovation in rehabilitation work are currently far too limited."*<sup>15</sup>

The average annual cost of providing a prison space in 2010 was €70,513<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.carmelites.ie/ireland/whitefriar%20st/whitefriarstreet.htm](http://www.carmelites.ie/ireland/whitefriar%20st/whitefriarstreet.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Central Statistics Office, *Recorded Crime: Quarter 1 2012*, 28 September 2012

<sup>6</sup> Central Statistics Office, *Crime and Victimisation: Quarterly National Household Survey 2010*, 28 October 2010

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ian O'Donnell, Eric P. Baumer and Nicola Hughes, Recidivism in the Republic of Ireland, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 8 (2), 2008, pp. 123-146.

<sup>9</sup> Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, *The Irish Prison System: Vision, Values, Reality*, Dublin, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> For example: Paul O'Mahony, *Mountjoy Prisoners: A Sociological and Criminological Profile*, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> For example: Ian O'Donnell et al, When Prisoners Go Home: Punishment, Social Deprivation and the Geography of Reintegration, *Irish Criminal Law Journal*, 14 (4), 2007, pp. 3-9.

<sup>14</sup> For example: Harry G. Kennedy et al, *Mental Health in Irish Prisoners: Psychiatric Morbidity in Sentenced, Remanded and Newly Committed Prisoners*, National Forensic Mental Health Service, Dublin, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> CAP, *Submission to Subcommittee on Penal Reform*, November 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, *The Irish Prison System: Vision, Values, Reality*, Dublin, 2012.

## 2.4 Release from prison

*"I believe that society's interest and those of the offender who mends his or her ways can coincide. It is in everyone's interest that offenders who have paid their debt to society and want to leave crime behind are encouraged to do so."*

Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Mr. Alan Shatter TD, 2012 <sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, many of Ireland's prisoners are set free in an unplanned fashion, as post-prison care and integration is not on a statutory footing and responsibilities for rehabilitation remain unclear.

The work of the Probation Service covers only a limited number of prisoners and ex-prisoners <sup>18</sup>. Persons aged over 21 with a custodial sentence of less than a year, for instance, are not required to be supervised by Probation Officers on release. Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) – which includes the drawing up of a Community Integration Plan to prepare for release – is a welcome development. However, ISM is not yet rolled out in all prisons and only a small number of inmates are eligible for the system. In any case, the number of prisoners who are prepared to engage with statutory authorities in programmes such as this remains small.

In general, therefore, there is a lack of planning for release. As a result, prisoners may be completely unprepared for re-entry. This can be especially problematic for young people who have little life experience and for long-term prisoners who have been institutionalised. Temporary Release continues to be used to relieve pressure on prison spaces, rather than as a structured tool to support post-release integration <sup>19</sup>. Prisoners are often released early on Temporary Release, frequently without prior notification and regularly during evenings and weekends, when accessing services is difficult. Coupled with possible barriers such as low literacy, addiction and/or mental health problems, the chance of things going wrong almost immediately is high.

The Subcommittee on Penal Reform has explicitly recognised that supports need to be put in place for those leaving prison <sup>20</sup>. Having strong family support, in particular a supportive spouse, significantly increases the likelihood of successfully desisting from criminality <sup>21</sup>. A recently published report on the integrated family support service offered by the Prison Advice and Care Trust in the UK revealed that for every £1 invested, in the region of £11.41 worth of social value is created <sup>22</sup>.

The expressed and latent need for services such as those provided by CAP is clear.

<sup>17</sup> Irish Times, *Spent Convictions Bill Published*, 4 May 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Agnieszka Martynowicz and Martin Quigley, *"It's Like Stepping on a Landmine ..." - Reintegration of Prisoners in Ireland*, Irish Penal Reform Trust, Dublin, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Subcommittee on Penal Reform, *Interim Report on Penal Reform*, 29 March 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Deirdre Healy, Betwixt and Between: The Role of Psychosocial Factors in the Early Stages of Desistance, *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 47 (4), 2010, pp. 419-438.

<sup>22</sup> Ben Estep and Natalie Nicholles, *Economic Study of Integrated Family Support Programme*, New Economics Foundation, London, 2012.

### 3 The intervention

*“ ... an opportunity to transform lives ... a place that offers respect, dignity and hope ... ”*

President Michael D. Higgins, January 2012 <sup>23</sup>

#### 3.1 Founding CAP

CAP was formed in response to the clearly identified need for such a service, building on ad hoc work with ex-prisoners previously undertaken by the CDYMCA and the CCC. CAP was established as an independent organisation, rooted in the community and structured as a company limited by guarantee without share capital. It opened its doors in October 2011 and was formally launched that month by Cllr. Maria Parodi (then Deputy Lord Mayor) and Mr. John Lonergan (former Governor of Mountjoy Prison), with 88 people in attendance.

#### 3.2 Pilot phase

##### 3.2.1 Initial plans

A sixth month pilot phase focused on the Dublin 2 and Dublin 8 postal districts. These locations were chosen because most of the service users of the two founding organisations are based there, and because they represent areas with above average levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

The organisation intended during this pilot phase to work with any <sup>24</sup> recently released adult ex-prisoners who were originally from these parts of Dublin, or now residing in these parts of Dublin. It expected to work with up to 35 ex-prisoners referred to them by other agencies. It proposed to offer a free, open and non-judgmental information and referral service on topics such as social welfare entitlements, accommodation, addiction services, education/training, employment opportunities, etc. In so doing, it would provide a much-needed safety net during the difficult transitional phase between leaving prison and resettlement, opening up different avenues for recently released ex-prisoners, rather than witnessing them slipping straight back into re-offending.

##### 3.2.2 Adapting to emerging needs

During the course of the pilot, it soon became apparent that the need for the service was indeed significant and was in fact broader than initially envisaged. The service was therefore extended and made more holistic in a number of ways:

- Geographically, to cover all Dublin postal districts.
- Volume-wise, as far more service users were helped than originally planned.
- Age-wise, by expressing openness to working with youth offenders before their situations escalate to imprisonment.
- Encompassing self-referrals, as well as agency referrals.

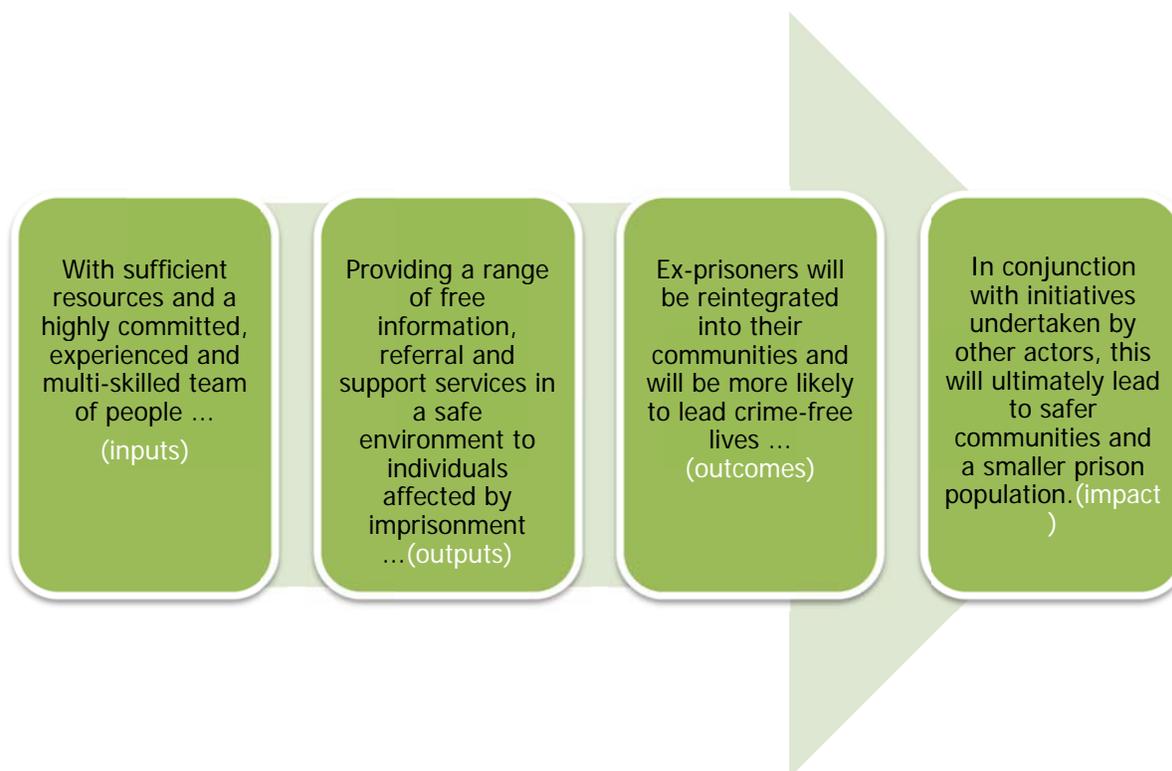
<sup>23</sup> Mags Gargan, 'God bless your work' – President, *The Irish Catholic*, 26 January 2012, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> CAP does not deal with anyone convicted of sex offences, referring any such individuals to Sr. Imelda Wickham in Wheatfield Prison.

- Providing counselling and peer support as well as information and referral and similar one-to-one supports.
- Providing services to family members and loved ones, as well as to the ex-prisoners themselves.
- Providing services prior to entering prison, as well as pre- and post-release services.

### 3.3 How CAP makes a difference

CAP is gradually developing its 'theory of change'<sup>25</sup>. Its present proposition is as follows:



### 3.4 Inputs

#### 3.4.1 Financial resources

CAP income to date has been as follows:

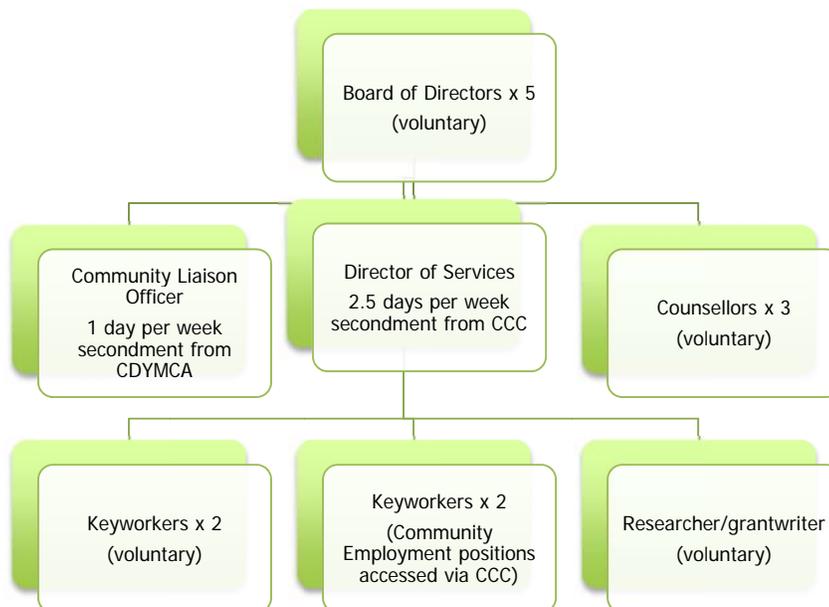
Source	Amount
Private start-up loan	€10,000
Fundraising events (concert and golf classic)	€9,000
American Ireland Fund	€5,000
St. Stephen's Green Trust	€5,000
Dublin City Council	€400
	<i>€29,400 TOTAL</i>

Office accommodation costs at the CCC are offered at below-market rates and include utilities, telephone and use of meeting rooms. The design of the organisation's logo and website were in-kind donations.

<sup>25</sup> See [www.theoryofchange.org](http://www.theoryofchange.org) for further details.

### 3.4.2 Human resources

The organisation is currently structured as follows:



CAP board members offer a skilled and experienced governance function (see appendix 5.1 for a full board profile).

Staff and volunteers have a range of life, work and educational experiences. CAP is testing a peer support model, based on the Scottish Routes out of Prison project <sup>26</sup>, in which two of its key workers are themselves ex-prisoners. Early indications are not only that this model is working well, but indeed, that this is the key to the success of CAP.

All paid staff and volunteers undergo Garda vetting and avail on an ongoing basis of training opportunities offered by the CCC, CDYMCA and other relevant providers. The following human resource policies are in place: health and safety, keyworker induction, prevention of violence, and volunteering.

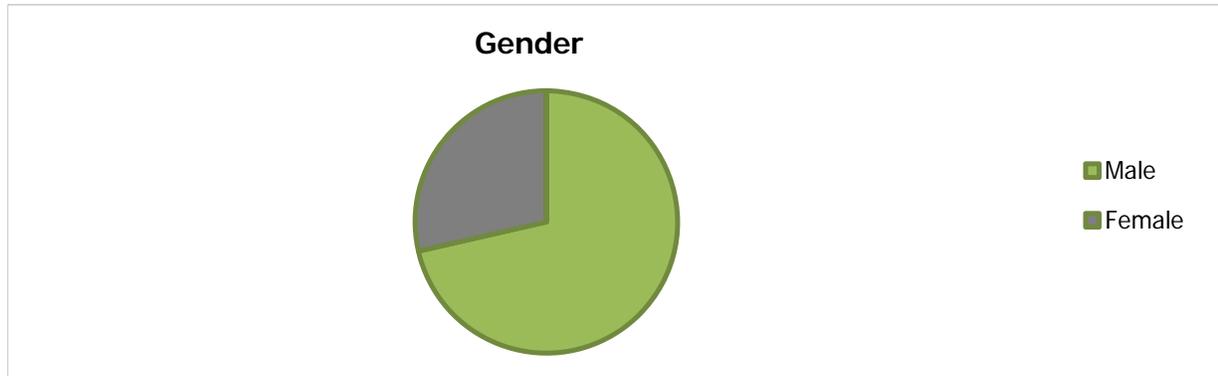
## 3.5 Outputs

### 3.5.1 Service user profile

Although the primary focus is on individual prisoners as they leave prison, their successful reintegration is also dependent on their families, their local communities and on society as a whole. The range of services offered by CAP reflects this reality, with certain activities taking place prior to prison release and many activities involving not just the ex-prisoner, but also a range of other stakeholders.

To date, CAP has engaged with 133 service users (ex-prisoners and family members). This is a staggering 280% more than originally planned for the pilot. 95 of these were men and 38 were women.

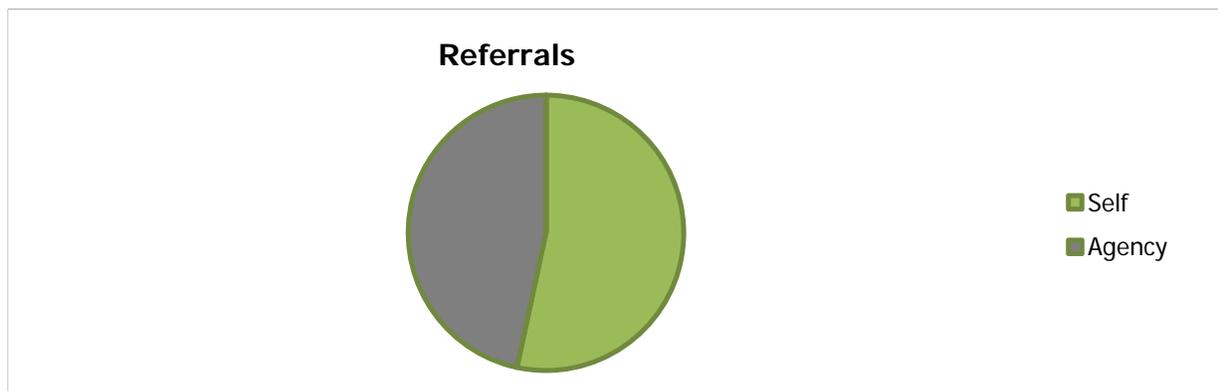
<sup>26</sup> [www.thewisegroup.co.uk/content/default.asp?page=s5\\_2\\_1](http://www.thewisegroup.co.uk/content/default.asp?page=s5_2_1)



The age profile of ex-prisoner service users ranged from late teens to sixties, with the majority being in the 18-28 age bracket.

All but five service users <sup>27</sup> were Irish nationals. Three members of the Traveller community were assisted.

Seventy-one service users referred themselves; the remainder was referrals from other agencies <sup>28</sup>. Key referrers to date, amongst many others, have been the CDYMCA, prison staff and Probation Officers.



*"Good insight and a push in the right direction. Options and information given were made clear."*

CAP service user, June 2012

*"Very helpful at attaining goals and very supportive; very approachable."*

CAP service user, June 2012

<sup>27</sup> 2 Spanish males, 1 Polish male, 1 French Guianan male and 1 Brazilian female.

<sup>28</sup> If someone is referred from another agency, CAP operates in tandem with that agency and does not interrupt any pre-existing arrangements.

### 3.5.2 Pre-prison activities

To date, CAP has provided supports to five men whilst they were awaiting sentencing/committal. It also supported six family members during that time. This work consisted of providing information about prison regimes/rules, addressing safety concerns, arrangements for keeping in touch with loved ones, etc.

### 3.5.3 Pre-release activities

The vital role of engaging with prisoners while they are still in custody is recognised. To this end, CAP is gradually developing its prison in-reach service. Much pre-release work requires prison clearance for CAP staff and volunteers. Three staff members have prison clearance at present. In-depth tours for CAP workers hosted by ISM staff in Mountjoy Prison and St. Patrick's Institution in November 2011 were very positive and CAP continues to work with relevant prisons as the ISM system is being rolled out. To date, CAP has worked with 11 prisoners prior to their release. These received support by letter and through prison visits. Six are no longer in custody, all of whom continued to engage with CAP after their release.

### 3.5.4 Post-release activities

Post-release activities form the mainstay of CAP's work and comprise a number of functions.

A basic open information service is offered over the telephone, by email or face-to-face. An average of 20 queries are received and dealt with weekly.

For those who desire it, more in-depth support is provided using an approach that is user-centred and that is based on best practice from homeless services<sup>29 30</sup>. Each service user is assigned a key worker who draws up, collaboratively with him/her, an individualised care plan on the basis of his/her expressed needs. The key worker maintains detailed case management notes. The focus is on promoting dignity and autonomy at the same time as providing practical and emotional support. Where necessary, the keyworker may advocate on behalf of the service user with relevant agencies. Seventy-two service users have engaged in a key working relationship with CAP to date.

There is a very strong demand for CAP's counselling service, which is offered to over-18s and delivered by volunteer counsellors, who are supervised by qualified professionals. The Senior Clinical Psychologist who is on the Board of Directors is available to counsellors and their supervisors if needed. Forty-nine people have availed of this service to date (both ex-prisoners and family members).

A recent development is the setting up of facilitated peer support sessions for groups of ex-prisoners, held weekly.

CAP does not seek not to duplicate services offered by other providers and refers service users as necessary. Examples of organisations it refers people to include: local authorities<sup>31</sup>, City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee's Pathways Project<sup>32</sup>, Crosscare<sup>33</sup>, etc. Unsurprisingly,

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<sup>29</sup> For example: [www.casemanagementguide](http://www.casemanagementguide).

<sup>30</sup> As the service is centred on the self-identified needs of individuals at any one time, people can engage, disengage and re-engage with CAP as they see fit.

<sup>31</sup> To date: Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council and South Dublin County Council.

<sup>32</sup> [www.cdvec.ie/Targeted-Programmes/Pathways-Project.aspx](http://www.cdvec.ie/Targeted-Programmes/Pathways-Project.aspx)

<sup>33</sup> [www.crosscare.ie](http://www.crosscare.ie)

particularly effective referral arrangements exist between CAP and the programmes offered by CDYMCA and the CCC.

### 3.5.5 Other activities

CAP has engaged in number of further activities in pursuit of its goals. Some of these are in relation to organisational development, such as marketing, fundraising, policy development (including policies on confidentiality and on complaints), joining and attending events organised by The Wheel<sup>34</sup>, etc.

Although first and foremost an organisation that provides direct services to ex-prisoners and their families, CAP has been involved in a number of awareness-raising activities. In November 2011, it persuaded Eoghan Murphy TD to ask a Parliamentary Question on the topic of aftercare programmes for those released from prison and it made a submission to the Subcommittee on Penal Reform. In February 2012, it attended a meeting of this Subcommittee, at which it indicated its willingness to be involved in discussions about acting as a supervisory body for prisoners serving short-term sentences in the community. CAP also contributed to a leaflet on prisoners' rights developed by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and Irish Penal Reform Trust<sup>35</sup> and assisted with its launch in May 2012.

## 3.6 Outcomes and impact

*" ... I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all you have done for me and my family over the past couple of months. It means a lot to me that you took the time to help me when other people would have given up on me. Thanks really pal. Well I've taken your advice on how to make the best of my time in here ... I plan to do my Leaving Cert and use this time to turn my life around. It has been a hard lesson but I really believe I can benefit from this time in prison ... Also would you thank XXX for me for turning up in court on both dates. It meant a lot to me to see how many people really cared about me and put the time in guiding me in the right direction ... "*

CAP service user, November 2011

CAP's desired outcome is that ex-prisoners are reintegrated into society and are leading crime-free lives. The length of that journey of resettlement coupled with the early stage of CAP's life cycle, makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the nature of outcomes for those who use CAP. It is even less possible to assert at this point in time that CAP is contributing to safer communities and a smaller prison population.

However, early signs are very encouraging. The high rate of initial engagement and retention of a group of people that is generally viewed as difficult to engage and retain in aftercare services is promising and, hopefully, a good predictor of positive long-term outcomes. To date, the reconviction rate for CAP service users is 0%<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> A support and representative body connecting community and voluntary organisations and charities across Ireland [www.wheel.ie](http://www.wheel.ie)

<sup>35</sup> [www.iprt.ie/files/ICCL\\_IPRT\\_Prisoners\\_rights1.pdf](http://www.iprt.ie/files/ICCL_IPRT_Prisoners_rights1.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> One service user was returned to prison for breaching the conditions of his release.

*“Service users explain that our style of engagement with them is one of the main reasons for high participation and positive results. The fact that we are a service that advocates on behalf of the ex-prisoner (individual) and not ex-prisoners issues as a group makes us more appealing [compared] to other agencies and [we are] not seen as confrontational.”<sup>37</sup>*

There is anecdotal evidence of progress. For example, one service user has secured employment and nine have begun education. Many service users and their families report positive change in their lives as a direct result of using the services of CAP (see appendices 5.2 and 5.3 for case studies).

## **4 The next steps**

### **4.1 Financial sustainability**

CAP has achieved much in a very short period of time and with very few financial resources. It has thus far relied on the passion and commitment of its founders and a fledgling team of workers, most of whom give their time on a voluntary basis. This situation is not sustainable, however, and it is imperative that more and longer-term resources are secured in order to build on the organisation's successes to date. CAP has applied for a charitable tax exemption (CHY) number from the Revenue Commissioners. Receiving this will enable it to raise funds from the public and from certain grant schemes. A significant commitment from one or more statutory, corporate or philanthropic funders would provide a solid foundation from which CAP could grow.

### **4.2 Growth**

Organisational growth is dependent on securing more resources, both financial and human. The need for the range of services provided by CAP is self-evident and the fact that more ex-prisoners could benefit from these services is undisputed. Accessing potential CAP clients in a timely manner before they are released from prison and then meeting them at the prison gates are likely to be particularly useful.

### **4.3 Professionalism**

CAP will meet all of its legal and regulatory requirements and implement accepted good practice in all that it does. One example of this is that it is currently preparing to sign up to the newly launched Governance Code<sup>38</sup> and once it has done so, will begin the process of signing up to the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising<sup>39</sup>. Another example is that CAP accepts that its marketing strategy up until now (word of mouth, basic leaflet, Facebook and Twitter) was inadequate. It has just launched a new website, which it will continue to build upon and improve (signposting to relevant information sources, an associated email account, etc). CAP will also continue to keep up-to-date with sector best practices in keyworking and apply these in the day-to-day running of the service.

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<sup>37</sup> CAP, *Committee Report*, 30 November 2011.

<sup>38</sup> [www.governancecode.ie](http://www.governancecode.ie)

<sup>39</sup> [www.ictf.ie/content/fundraising-codes-practice](http://www.ictf.ie/content/fundraising-codes-practice)

#### 4.4 Inter-agency working

Although CAP believes that it is an important piece in the jigsaw of prisoner resettlement, it acknowledges that it cannot achieve social impact on its own. It will therefore continue to collaborate with partners as necessary, strengthening those relationships it has already established (for example, with the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas<sup>40</sup> and the Peter McVerry Trust<sup>41</sup>) and forging new relationships with others (for example with the Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders<sup>42</sup> and Focus Ireland<sup>43</sup>). CAP is a recent member of the Network of Ex-Prisoner Voluntary Agencies, within which it intends to play an active role.

CAP recognises that ex-prisoners would be best served by bringing together on a regular basis all those agencies involved in their care as they re-enter the community. To date, such multi-agency meetings in respect of individual service users have not happened, but CAP will continue to promote the usefulness of such a model<sup>44</sup>.

#### 4.5 Outcomes focus

Most significantly, CAP intends to become driven by results. It recognises that simply providing a service is not enough; that service must lead to better outcomes for service users.

CAP will continue to evolve and test its theory of change to learn what is (and what is not) working, taking corrective action as evidence becomes available. This may involve adding new services or amending, even stopping, services it is currently offering.

CAP will place a particular focus on intermediate outcomes: that is, the steps that service users take as they transition from life in prison to full societal reintegration. Specifically, CAP will make contact with Triangle Consulting in England, which has developed the Outcomes Star<sup>45</sup>: a tool for supporting and measuring change when working with vulnerable individuals. Originally designed for homeless services, with 14 current versions and eight more in development, an Offenders Star is also under discussion. CAP staff members undertook Outcomes Star training in September 2012.

The organisation is fully aware that it needs to become much clearer about measurement. It acknowledges that it must streamline its present data collection systems and find manageable and ethical ways of tracking service users over longer periods of time and of comparing the journeys of those who engaged with its services and those who did not (a control group).

Finally, CAP intends to watch closely the results of the ONE service for resettling short sentenced male prisoners financed through England's first Social Impact Bond<sup>46</sup> and a similar initiative recently announced for New York City<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> [www.catholicbishops.ie/prisoner](http://www.catholicbishops.ie/prisoner)

<sup>41</sup> [www.pmvtrust.ie](http://www.pmvtrust.ie)

<sup>42</sup> [www.iasio.ie](http://www.iasio.ie)

<sup>43</sup> [www.focusireland.ie](http://www.focusireland.ie)

<sup>44</sup> The Maryland Re-entry Partnership Initiative provides an interesting and useful overseas example: [www.urban.org/publications/311421.html](http://www.urban.org/publications/311421.html).

<sup>45</sup> [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)

<sup>46</sup> [www.onesib.org](http://www.onesib.org). There is ongoing communication between the CDYMC and the YMCA Cambridge & Peterborough, which is a partner in ONE.

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.mdrc.org/announcement\\_hp\\_341.html](http://www.mdrc.org/announcement_hp_341.html)

## 5 Appendices

### 5.1 Board profile

**Mr. Paul Mackay**                      **Chairperson**

Chartered Accountant, former member of the Visiting Committee in Mountjoy Prison, former member of the Parole Board, current board member of the Irish Penal Reform Trust

**Dr. Anne O'Rourke**                      **Secretary**

Senior Clinical Psychologist in Mountjoy Prison

**Ms. Josephine Rice**                      **Treasurer**

Teacher in Mountjoy Prison

**Fr. Charlie Hoey O.Carm**                      **Director**

Parish priest in the CCC and former Chaplain in Mountjoy Prison

**Mr. Paul McDonald**                      **Director**

Chief Executive Officer of the CDYMCA

### 5.2 Lived experiences: John<sup>48</sup>

John is a 25-year old male who left school at 14 and who, over a ten-year period, spent much time in and out of prison. Reflecting on his experience within the education system, John felt that he was "dismissed" quite early on. He was placed in remedial classes that did little to adequately educate him or prepare him for secondary school. As a result, he did not cope well with the transition to secondary school and dropped out in his second year.

John's frequent engagement with the criminal justice system was mainly due to his drug addiction. On his last entry into the prison system he sought to be transferred to a Drug Free Unit. After some time, he was transferred to Wheatfield Prison and became drug free. While there, he also completed FETAC Level 3 modules in English, Maths, Computers and Soft Skills.

On release from prison, John was accommodated in a supported homeless service, from where he was referred to CAP. John noted that his experience on his last release differed greatly from his past experiences. He found the support, guidance and information from CAP an enormous boost in getting him back on his feet. His keyworker liaised with Dublin City Council to arrange accommodation for him and his partner. Following the death of his mother and the suicide of a close friend, his key-worker also organised bereavement counselling. John praised highly the work of CAP and the support he received there. Of major importance to him was the knowledge that someone in society had hope for his future and faith in him. He believes that it is crucial that individuals being released from prison are aware of this programme as he feels "it saves people's lives".

John is currently attending a part-time course in Social Studies at Liberties College and hopes to attend full-time in the coming year. He reported that the future looks bright and very positive for him, and is a far cry from the previous life he knew of drug addiction, crime and prison.

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<sup>48</sup> Name has been changed to protect service user's privacy.

### **5.3 Lived experiences: Michael** <sup>49</sup>

Michael is a 31-year male, recently released from prison after serving a seven-year sentence. He has been in and out of prison since the age of 15. Michael had a very difficult childhood; he was born dependent on drugs and grew up in an environment where drugs, violence, prison and police visits were very much the norm. During Michael's years of involvement with the criminal justice system, he was arrested for car theft, fighting and being in possession of dangerous instruments. Although never charged with any drugs offences, addiction was the underlying reason for his offending, and drug dealing was a means of securing funds to maintain his heroin habit.

During Michael's last term of incarceration, the reality of his situation hit him and he envisioned himself in prison as an old man. He applied for a transfer to the Drug Free Unit and, with great difficulty, made the first step in transforming his life. By the time he was released from prison, he had been drug free for one year. He entered a drug treatment programme on release, and whilst he found it challenging, he acknowledged that it was his choice to be there and was determined to be an active participant in his own recovery. It was during this period that he finally began to face the demons of his own past and his subsequent behaviour.

When CAP was first established, Michael presented himself to it, hoping to volunteer there. Instead he was offered a service. He had been on the housing list with Dublin City Council for many years and on the homeless list for quite some time and was assisted in accessing accommodation. Counselling options were discussed with him and although he was initially ambivalent about these, he now attends weekly sessions. He reports that he feels very comfortable there, finds his counsellor very approachable, and feels that counselling is a useful tool for helping him to tackle the many issues that arise in his daily life.

Michael maintains regular contact with CAP and hopes to volunteer there in the future. He believes that it is important that those leaving prison are aware of the service to aid them in their reintegration.

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<sup>49</sup> Name has been changed to protect service user's privacy.

# Care After Prison

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