

TFN Impact Report

Name of your Organisation:	Working Chance Limited
Name of the project TFN funded:	Employability Workshops
Date Funded by TFN:	30/01/2017
Were you able to undertake your project as planned?	Yes
Can you describe and/or demonstrate the specific impact that TFN funding has had against your initial objectives?	<p>Working Chance's Employability series of workshops brings a group of women together on a weekly basis over the course of 12 weeks. During this time, as well as learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge, Working Chance facilitates opportunities for the women to form a supportive network, or peer support group, among themselves. Staff had observed that the creation of this network is an important part of candidates' journey, providing a safe environment for them to develop social connections, and to feel more confident by knowing that they are not alone in the experience that they are going through.</p> <p>We carry out evaluations of our work through peer groups on an annual basis and the feedback we received with regards to the workshops is detailed below</p> <p>Candidates described turning to the group to ask for advice and share tips on wide-ranging topics including job seeking, interview techniques, disclosure of a conviction, finances, children, make-up and clothes.</p> <p>I've been in a group of women where they're all trying to fight to get their children back and they're able to give each other advice. (Staff member)</p> <p>Further to this, candidates suggested a number of positive emotional impacts that peer support can foster. As mentioned, peer support can help candidates feel less alone, isolated and fearful.</p> <p>Being part of a group is a way of being 'seen' or validated. Candidates described feeling acknowledged and cared for, which was certainly born out in the behaviour at the focus group, where participants seemed to genuinely care about each other, enquiring about wellbeing, remembering birthdays, offering drinks and sharing food. For women who have felt that their identity has been erased while within the criminal justice system, being 'seen' by their peers as themselves is profoundly important.</p> <p>It's just knowing that there's people there. If I'm feeling really low I know there's people there I can say hi to. We can ask questions, like when Easter is or what time to get here today, we send good quotes</p>

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	<p>and that, we exchange pictures, some are funny [laughs]. (Candidate, focus group)</p> <p>Candidates described feeling motivated by their peers. Discussions before and after the focus group suggested that candidates knew about and were interested in each other's progress towards finding work. They talked about being able to motivate each other, and draw on the group's encouragement, kindness and energy if they are ever feeling low.</p> <p>If one of us is having a bad day, we all support each other. (Candidate, focus group)</p> <p>There was this lady in the group and she was really upset and had nothing, no bag, and the following week we all came in and brought her in some bits to help her. (Candidate, focus group)</p> <p>Trust also appears to evolve through involvement in a peer group over time. Staff suggested that the shorter prison workshop groups do not tend to develop the same level of peer support, as women in the system are likely to feel vulnerable and may be unwilling to trust others.</p> <p>People are very wary, very wary about opening up. When you're in the prison culture you've got to be very wary about disclosing, about what you say. It's a fear, you're protecting yourself. (Staff member)</p> <p>Once out of prison, when they are ready, the peer support group potentially provides an opportunity to develop an ability to trust people within a safe environment. Being able to form and maintain relationships with other people is a skill that is clearly useful within the workplace too, as discussed earlier in the report. Focus group participants also described the importance of being able to share jokes and generate laughter within the group, the value of light relief was clear, particularly for those experiencing challenges in other areas of their life.</p> <p>Simply put, it seems that peer support can make people happy. It cheers people up, it gives them hope, it provides practical and emotional support, as well as humour and light relief.</p> <p>We made a WhatsApp group on our phones, so when I check my phone and I see the texts and messages they text each other and they say what's happening at the moment, what they are doing, and it feels good, it makes me laugh or can make me happy. I like it. (Candidate, focus group)</p>
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	<p>Being in this group makes me happy. (Candidate, focus group)</p> <p>An effective peer support group also has an important impact on Working Chance: enabling the candidates to support each other, self-managed and sustainably, is likely to reduce the burden of support on Working Chance itself.</p> <p>One of our key KPIs is to track the number of placements each year and in our latest financial year, we made 194 placements into paid work, and 62 voluntary work placements, which are an important stepping stone to paid roles.</p>
What portion of the project did TFN fund?	100%
How many direct beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	12
How many indirect beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	20
Were you able to leverage further funding as a result of TFN support?	No
Did you receive any pro-bono support, volunteer offers or introductions as a result of the event?	Yes
If yes, please can you provide details of the support you received?	Corporate partners/ volunteers attended our employability workshops for the practice interview sessions
How important was TFN funding in helping you achieve your objectives?	We would have found it difficult to achieve our objectives without TFN funding
Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any other significant changes?	In the financial year 2016-17, we lost our Big Lottery funding so we had to reassess our business needs and made some redundancies and refocused on our core business - recruitment.
Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of the project?	<p>Please see below some feedback that we have had on our employability sessions</p> <p>As Working Chance has employed a number of candidates, it was powerful to hear the feedback from those who have both participated in and delivered the course.</p> <p>They give people hope when they're in a situation where they feel they haven't got any hope. And from a confidence perspective, at the</p>

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	<p>end of the three days once they've had the employability session and they've met employers, all of a sudden their self worth and their self-esteem just shoot through the roof. When I've run the courses, on the first day I'm saying 'this is what's going to happen, I promise you' and they look at me as if I'm an alien. By the third day when they've had the employer interviews, they're euphoric. It's massive. I was one of those candidates at a prison, being on that course. So I know exactly how that feels. (Staff member)</p>
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