

The Befriender



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Research highlights potential of befriending in cutting crime

At New Bridge we never forget that one of the reasons for our work is to help offenders find a new, crime free path in life.

New research, highlighted in a Ministry of Justice bulletin says that prisoners who receive visits are far less likely to re-offend on release.

The findings were published in a recent MoJ Research Summary:

“One measure of family ties is whether a prisoner was visited in prison by a partner or family member. Those who were visited by one or the other had a significantly lower reoffending rate (52%, n=3,281) than those who were not visited (70%, n=1,617). **The odds of reoffending were 39% higher for prisoners who had not received visits compared to those who had**”

Befriending is very important to prisoners with no partner or family. We play a vital role in their resettlement and prospects for a crime free future.

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New Bridge Project news:

Working with younger offenders at HMYOI Thorn Cross

I am pleased to announce that New Bridge was awarded a Ministry of Justice contract to provide mentors at HMYOI Thorn Cross, near Warrington.

The programme was operated by SOVA and New Bridge took the reins in November. There are two members of staff; Lynda Salt and Melanie Richards. The key role of the project is to support the young men on employment and training placements in the community, prior to release. To find out more about volunteering for the project, contact Lynda on 01925 805039

Mentoring in Liverpool

 Lloyds TSB | Foundation for England and Wales

New Bridge has just started its latest mentoring project, this time in Liverpool. The scheme, funded by Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales for three years, follows on from a one year pilot in 2007.

The project co-ordinator is Lee Jackson, who has experience of working in prisons and is an active volunteer on a number of projects in his community.

The mentoring project will look to support prisoners returning to Liverpool after a period in custody. Lee will be recruiting volunteers and working with prisons in the north west of England.

Lee told us, “I am very excited about this project and I hope to get to meet befrienders as I learn more about New Bridge and the difference our volunteers can make”

The project is based in our Liverpool office.

E-mail a prisoner

A new way to keep in touch

New Bridge befrienders have for over 50 years been writing to prisoners. Let us hope this continues. In this technological age, there is still nothing quite like writing or receiving a letter. Prison authorities have been very concerned about giving inmates access to the internet and e-mails but what about e-mailing a prisoner with a short note, when you need to get a message across? What if for example, you have booked a visit but can't make it at short notice? An e-mail could be sent, printed off in the prison and delivered to the prisoner in hours.

'E-mail a Prisoner' offers a service that enables you to send messages to prisoners in the UK from any computer. You don't have the (albeit minor) hassles of writing and posting a letter. Each message costs less than a first class stamp.

What's more, your message is delivered to the prison within seconds so that it can be delivered to the prisoner by the prison staff as soon as possible.

It is free to sign up to E-mail a Prisoner and only takes a few seconds - all you need is an e-mail address.

Once a member you will be able to send a message to any prisoner in one of the UK registered prisons, provided you know their prisoner number **for just 30 pence per message**.

You can send messages to a prisoner via the E-mail a Prisoner website; www.emailaprisoner.com, it takes only a few minutes to sign up and the message gets delivered to the prison rapidly.

With their sophisticated software it allows you to write an e-mail, press 'send' and sit back in the knowledge the e-mail will be delivered safely, securely and instantly to, the prison of your choice. The number of prisons operating the service is expanding all the time. At the time of writing, the following prisons were able to receive e-mails to prisoners:

Ashfield, Askham Grange, Blantyre House, Bronzefield, Canterbury, Channings Wood, Chelmsford, Dovegate, East Sutton Park, Eastwood Park, Edmunds Hill, Elmley, Erlestoke, Feltham, Full Sutton, Guys Marsh, Holloway, Kirkham, Leeds, Leyhill, Liverpool, Maidstone, Morton Hall, New Hall, Parc, Portland, Reading, Rochester, Shepton Mallet, The Verne, Wealstun, Winchester, Wolds, Woodhill.

Further prisons are coming on line soon. Check the website for details, where you can also find a more detailed FAQ section.

For befrienders, e-mails cannot replace letters; not least because prisoners can't e mail in reply. However, if you need to get a quick message across – maybe for a change of plan on a visit, a quick 'hello' or 'how are you' or to say a letter is coming if you've struggled to find the time to get one written – this service could be very helpful.

Tony Slater MBE 1922-2008

New Bridge was saddened by the death of Tony Slater at the end of September. Tony had 25 years of service as a befriender. His commitment to prisoners was an example to all New Bridge volunteers; he was still in touch with a lifer at the time of his death, a prisoner he was first in contact with over 20 years ago. At volunteer meetings he had a reputation not only for meticulous time keeping and sticking to protocols but as a constantly upbeat and positive member of the team.

Tony was rightly awarded New Bridge's Longford Award as Volunteer Of The Year for 2007, which he found a very moving tribute. Tony joined New Bridge in 1983 after a long career as a teacher of history and mathematics. He was fondly remembered by ex-pupils and many attended his funeral. Tony was also a hero of the D Day Landings in 1944. A radio operator in the RAF, his task was to help set up a transmitter a mile inland. He was given a revolver, which he never used.

His infectious enthusiasm for all things New Bridge will be very fondly remembered. October's New Bridge Volunteer Seminar in Manchester was dedicated to Tony's memory.

Sir Peter Lloyd steps down as Chairman of Trustees

It is no secret that New Bridge has been through some tough times in recent years. The fact that we are still here and thriving is due in no small part to Sir Peter's hard work as Chairman.

Having taken on the New Bridge Chairmanship in 1994, Sir Peter stepped down as Chairman at the end of December. Amongst other achievements, he has overseen the change from a Friendly Society to the current charity and spearheaded the successful creation of an independent *Inside Time*, whose profits make such a valuable contribution to our funds.

Trustees and staff will be planning events to celebrate Sir Peter's contribution and details will be circulated as soon as possible. In the meantime, I am sure that all volunteers will wish to join us in thanking Sir Peter for his dedication to the cause.

Student Befrienders at Birmingham City University

New Bridge Vice President, Professor David Wilson invited us to set up a befriending group at his University. David is involved in teaching a number of graduate and undergraduate criminology and criminal justice policy students and has long been an advocate of the importance of befriending to prisoners.

Some current volunteers from the Wolverhampton Group, based in Birmingham, will be joining the group to provide some experience and back up to the students. Heidi has been busy interviewing students and will be running a training weekend at the University shortly.

This is an exciting development for the befriending service; students will gain useful experience and will be encouraged to join groups near to their home area when they leave University.

Heidi set to move on

After a year as Befriending Supervisor, Heidi Allemeersch will be leaving Medway Street in early March. When Heidi took up the job early in 2008, she moved from Liverpool. For personal reasons, Heidi wishes to move back to the North West.

Heidi will not be leaving New Bridge entirely and will remain as a member of the Liverpool group and continue to befriend prisoners. We will be sad to see her go, after a year of hard work and many miles of travelling to volunteer groups! We wish her every success for the future and we're pleased she won't be disappearing completely!

I am currently planning how to replace Heidi. Recruitment will soon be underway for a new post to take the befriending service forward. Details will be sent to Group Chairs and will appear on the website. Applications from current volunteers will be very welcome.

New Chairman of Trustees David Graham MBE

We are delighted to announce that David Graham is the new Chairman of New Bridge. David has been a trustee since 2006 and takes a keen interest in befriending. He has completed the training course and attended the seminar in Manchester. David is keen to see more Trustee involvement in the befriending service. Since joining the Board, David has also helped me with support for The Learning Shop at HMP Low Newton.

After a career in engineering and Human Resources, David's prison background is with the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HMP The Mount, Hertfordshire. He was a member of the IMB National Council and was the IMB lead on Safer Custody until July 2008.

The role of Vice Chairman has now been taken on by Roger Daw, a nominated volunteer Trustee and member of London Group 8.

HELPING NEW BRIDGE

Everyclick.com is a fundraising tool that enables any charity to raise additional funds. Every month 'everyclick' gives 50% of its gross revenue to charities listed on their website.

Go to <http://www.everyclick.com/uk/newbridge> and set 'everyclick' as your home page, selecting New Bridge as your charity, every time you search the web New Bridge benefits. There is no cost to us or you.

Bmycharity New Bridge now works in partnership with Bmycharity, which makes raising money very easy by giving supporters the chance to donate on line and set up events to raise money. Call the office for details or click on <http://www.bmycharity.com/new-bridge>

Classic Tours more energetic volunteers can help by taking part in sponsored treks or cycle challenges organised by Classic Tours, the originators of worldwide charity challenges. Call the office for details or log on to www.classictours.co.uk We are specifically looking for people to take part in the London to Paris Cycle Challenge, July 2009

new bridge

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In the next issue...

The amount of news to fit into this issue meant we were unable to publish your stories about visits and the visiting experience. Visits to prisons are an essential part of your role as a volunteer. We have tales of first visits and tales of strange things happening! What has been the best or worst of your experience? There is still chance to send us a letter or e-mail to the usual addresses.

We will also have more news about New Bridge projects around the country.

I look forward to seeing you at group meetings in coming months

Best wishes

Chris



New Bridge was founded in 1956 to create links between the offender and the community. The intention is not to forget the victims of crime but to prevent more people becoming victims.