

# A CELEBRATION OF HOPE

# 5 years of Community Chaplaincy Norfolk



**CCN MENTORING**

Walking with Prison Leavers to Rebuild Their Lives

COMMUNITY CHAPLAINCY NORFOLK

“ Don't let anybody or anything make you hopeless. Hope is the enemy of injustice. ”

– Bryan Stevenson

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# Welcome from CCN's Manager

Coming to CCN in October 2019, I have worked hard to build a team of people dedicated to supporting prison leavers.

The challenges of being part of a small organisation are many, but so are the opportunities. We have learnt a lot about what works and what doesn't, with our clients being the biggest teachers.

We have also been advised and supported by so many others with a desire to see CCN succeed – Board members past and present, members of our Advisory Forum, Friends of CCN, many colleagues from other organisations and members of the public who made donations to our cause.



**“ We have learnt a lot about what works and what doesn't, with our clients being the biggest teachers. ”**

And of course, our amazing volunteer Mentors, the people who give their time and energy to walk alongside people during some of the most vulnerable times; we are immensely grateful and could not do it without them.

**Mel Wheeler**  
Manager



**I joined the Board of CCN 5 years ago when it was a small organisation trying to improve the opportunities for prison leavers. I believed then and I still do today that everyone is loved by God and bears His image, however challenging that may seem, and we all deserve a chance to reset our lives when things have gone wrong.**

Training and support for all our staff and mentors is vital in the work they do helping put lives back together and managing expectations. Change doesn't come easily as old patterns of behaviour are difficult to shrug off, but it is a fact that if a person can be kept from reoffending for the first 40 days after release from prison, they have a very good chance of building a stable life. This has a huge impact on our society with the problem of overcrowded prisons which are expensive to run; everyone who can be kept out of these institutions reduces the costs we all have to bear and creates a community more at peace with itself.

# Welcome from CCN's Chair

CCN mentors are volunteers and give of their time to walk alongside the prison leavers as they settle back into life on the outside. This places our mentors in a different light in the eyes of our clients, as they are doing this role out of love, holding a belief that everyone is of value and deserves a chance. We are held in high regard by the prison authorities and probation service for our work acting as a point of reference in an uncertain world.

Our clients face an uphill challenge to find stability in their lives – things we take for granted, such as a home, paid employment and the support of friends and family. As a Christian charity we are mindful of Jesus's call in Matthew 25 v 36 to look after others: 'I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

We believe we can be agents of hope to these men and women and a beacon to society. Hence, we are calling our 5-year anniversary of the relaunch of CCN a Celebration of Hope.

**Chris Tomlinson**  
Chair of Trustees



# Who are Community Chaplaincy Norfolk?

## Walking with prison leavers to rebuild their lives.

Community Chaplaincy Norfolk (CCN) trains and supports volunteer mentors to walk alongside prison leavers, offering practical, emotional, and spiritual support as they begin to rebuild their lives. CCN is a Christian charity, and at our heart is the principle that everyone has inherent value, regardless of their past, and should be given compassion, forgiveness and hope. We welcome prison leavers and mentors of all faiths and none.

After first meeting in prison in the preceding weeks, mentors meet prison leavers ('clients') at the prison gate on the day of release, providing vital support at what can be an overwhelming and frightening time. Many prison leavers lack a positive support network of friends and family, and a mentor provides a friendly face and a listening ear when they need it the most.

Mentors continue to provide support in the community for as long as needed, accompanying clients to appointments, helping them to apply for housing and benefits, engage with education and volunteering, and set goals and find hope for the future. It is by no means an easy journey, but always a worthwhile one. We hope that you will enjoy hearing more from our mentors and clients over the course of this booklet.

Our team of 3 part-time staff supports around 23 active mentors, and along with our board of trustees and our amazing clients, we think of ourselves as more than just a charity, but as a community – a family.

# The story of CCN

## THE BEGINNING

It all begins with an idea – how to help people leaving prison get the support they need to rebuild their lives?

2008

## THE HOUSE OF GENESIS

Led by Val Dodsworth, a group of Christian volunteers, starts supporting men being released from HMP Norwich. They work under the auspices of the House of Genesis, a charity providing supported accommodation to prison leavers.

2014

## A WELCOMING BASE

CCN becomes an independent registered charity and moves into office space in St Stephen's Church, giving us a welcoming base in the centre of Norwich.

2016

## SECURING FUNDING

Funding is secured to employ Rev Susan Carne and set up Community Chaplaincy Norfolk. CCN's first 8 volunteer mentors complete their training.

2020

## THE PANDEMIC

CCN responds to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, moving mentor training online and meeting clients outside and via phone and email.

2018

2021

## MENTORING GROWTH

CCN secures funding to employ a Mentor Coordinator, allowing us to train and support more volunteer mentors.

2022

## MORE THAN A PROFESSION

CCN holds its first client social – bowling and dinner in Norwich. For some clients, this is the first time they've been out in the evening for a social event since before they went to prison.

2023

## REFLECTION, RECOVERY AND GROWTH

CCN delivers the 'Get Out' project, an outdoor programme of reflection, recovery and new skills for men who have been in prison.

## A CELEBRATION

Today, we celebrate 5 years of the Community Chaplaincy Norfolk – including the amazing commitment of our volunteer mentors, and the hard work done by our clients over the years to change their lives for the better.

# What we've achieved

Since 2018,  
CCN has

Trained  
**42**  
volunteer  
mentors



Supported  
**154**  
prison  
leavers

CCN currently has

clients, both  
in prison  
and the  
community

**28**  
supporting

**23**  
active  
mentors

Clients in  
**3**  
different  
local  
prisons



**700** hours averaged per  
year spent working  
with clients

CCN has supported me in a practical way in living, both before and since my release from HMP Norwich. In a spiritual way, CCN has helped me to have a good connection with God and in bringing Him into my life – heart and mind and soul. I don't know how I would have managed without the support of my mentor.

– Michael, CCN Client



## Justin's story

I heard about Community Chaplaincy Norfolk through attending recovery support meetings when I was in HMP Norwich. When I was released, my mentor met me at the gate. It was a manic day but having her there was a godsend. She made it easy for me to get to know her and was very welcoming.

My mentor has helped me so much just by being there and listening, especially through my bereavement after I lost my mum. I have multiple mental health diagnoses, and without my mentor, I'd probably have ended up in hospital. She helps me to calm down, and when I feel like I haven't got anyone, she's always there for me.

Even though we don't always agree, I can be truthful with her when I make mistakes, and she never judges me, only helps me do better. She's very professional and communicates with my doctor and probation officer, advocating for me.

“**My mentor has helped me so much just by being there and listening .... She helps me to calm me down, and when I feel like I haven't got anyone, she's always there for me.**”

In the future, I'd like to get my own place, and she's been helping me look at accommodation. I can tell she really cares about what she does, and I'd be lost without her.



## Reflections from an inmate

**The following was written by a prisoner during a penpal exchange.**

“We are banged up at the moment because they have a new regime that they're trying to put into place. It will probably mean much more time behind the door in future but, in truth, I don't mind it so much. Once the cell door is closed I usually put the radio on (either Radio 2 or Classic FM) and relax. Being in prison is all about time. One day rolls into a week, and a week into a month... Next thing you know a whole decade has passed, people have moved on, children have grown up, and parents have died. The reflection changes in the mirror but they still won't set me free. I am not complaining though, I thoroughly deserved a long prison sentence.

You might think that prisoners are only concerned by their release date; that they could fall asleep and wake up 5, 10 or 20 years later. The thing is, we only get one life and I wouldn't wish it away even if I could. Every day is precious, even in here.

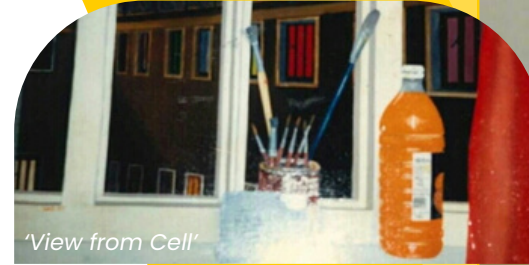
My sentence is what they call an indeterminate sentence. I literally have no release date and as I write there is no light at the end of the tunnel. A small part of me has made my peace with the fact that they may well keep me in here until I am an old man, if they release me at all.

That's why it's so important to live the life I have. I may be in prison, but that doesn't mean I can't educate myself, or write music, or books. I can still contribute to the world we all live in. There are still people to whom I matter and in many ways, I am blessed. If I find myself getting a bit down, I do a gratitude list and I'm soon feeling good again. I never run out of things to feel grateful about.”

# A client's artwork



'Restricted'



'View from Cell'



'Solitary'



'Cell Scene, Albany'

Bill Ross developed a talent for drawing, painting and sculpture during the 33 years he spent in prison. He says that creating art kept him busy, and, more importantly, gave him a sense of meaning and something to live for while he was inside.

Now living in the community, Bill continues to create art when he has the opportunity and enjoys visiting local art galleries with his CCN mentor.



'Hawk carving'



**““** The growth of CCN over the years has been steady and solid, as together we have sought to put prison-leavers ‘on the map’ of needing care and encouragement in their journey back into society and a new life. It’s great to see an increasing number of employers willing to offer them jobs.

Within the County we have seen CCN being recognised among a whole variety of charities as playing its part in helping men and women realise their full potential.

**May God bless the whole CCN family.** **””**

– Rev Matthew Hutton DL,  
former Chair of Trustees and CCN Mentor

**““**  
I am extremely grateful to my mentor. Her positive influence made a great difference to my time inside. Playing the roles of both a friend and a mentor, sometimes even my counsellor talking me through my problems which greatly helped my mental state. She went above and beyond travelling to the several different establishments I ended up in and never complained about the journey.

– Jacob, CCN Client

**””**

**““**  
Slowly, incrementally, and through all the circumstance, systems, bad luck, hurt, eventually some make it to a more satisfactory place, where they can live more fulfilling lives, and make more of the support around them. To witness these movements and shifts is what mentoring is ultimately about.

– Chris, CCN Mentor

**””**

**““**  
One of the best things about being a mentor is meeting clients at the prison gate on the day of their release, being there for them on that day, especially if they have no one else.

– Kathy, CCN Mentor

**””**



# 'A Moment of Clarity' By Chris, CCN Mentor

You take the risk  
Ask the question  
"Can you teach me?"  
Closed eyes  
Breathing is audible  
Visceral  
In the silence  
Skin ticks  
The welter of thoughts  
Settle  
Like feathers on the ground  
The air sits lightly  
In the room  
Envelops, swirls  
Hairs on the neck  
Spring open.  
Taste the moment  
Then let it go.

A clients artwork



For the past two years I have been a CCN mentor, meeting clients, often over a coffee, to befriend them as they befriend me – **it works both ways**. We talk through whatever aspects of their lives are relevant, and I have accompanied them to job centre and probation appointments.

**There have been ups and downs along the way** – I soon realised I had to be realistic. One low point was when I came back from a holiday to find both clients I was supporting back in prison! At other times we have been able to celebrate their finding work or accommodation.

I have learnt a huge amount from the guys I work with, and **I immensely enjoy getting to know them** and working through their issues – listening to their remarkable stories and encouraging them as they adjust to life outside.



– Roger, CCN Mentor

# What challenges do prison leavers face on release?

Re-entering society after serving time can be a daunting experience. From securing stable accommodation to finding employment, or managing their mental and physical health, those leaving prison can face a wide range of challenges.

## Accommodation

After being released from prison, individuals require stability and security to get their lives back on track. However, they are often released without a place to go, putting them at high risk of homelessness.

On release they can struggle to find accommodation with a private landlord or get the housing element of Universal Credit quickly enough. Sometimes they can wait up to nine weeks for payment.

## Employment

Whilst finding employment is often crucial requirement for securing parole, the process isn't always as simple as walking into employment. Prison leavers are often required to explain their work gap by disclosing their past incarceration, with some employers hesitant to hire someone with a criminal record.

**17%** of prison leavers are in employment within 12 months of release

## Mental health

Poor mental health is exceptionally common in prison, with 45% of adults in prison having anxiety or depression. Being imprisoned can exacerbate mental health difficulties, and the anxiety and stress of financial stability on release, having to secure accommodation and employment, can further worsen existing difficulties without any mental health support in place.

# Working in partnership

Working collaboratively with other statutory and charitable organisations is an essential part of supporting our clients to rebuild their lives.

CCN has developed ongoing, positive relationships with HM Prison and Probation Service, including an information sharing agreement which allows us to receive risk assessments and other information relevant to our clients. Many of our mentors are in regular communication with their client's probation officer, working together to help them stay out of prison.

The Caring for Prison Leavers Network was set up by CCN Manager Mel Wheeler in October 2020, and is chaired by former High Sheriff of Norfolk, Charles Watt. This quarterly meeting brings together professionals from organisations supporting prison leavers in Norfolk, including the DWP, local councils, and charities such as St Martin's Housing Trust and The Feed. This helps us share best practice, work collaboratively, and ultimately to improve outcomes for the individuals we support.

Our Advisory Forum brings together representatives from the statutory and charity sector, as well as clients with lived experience of the criminal justice system, to share different points of view and inform the work and development of CCN.

“ My working relationship with CCN has always been very useful and informative. I have witnessed several interactions with Mel and her team and have always found them to be very engaging. They always make the prisoner feel at ease, welcomed and listened to, with a support plan put in place prior to their release. This is a fantastic service that is very much appreciated by me as well as others within the establishment. ”

– Alison Mollicone, Prison Offender Manager, HMP Norwich

## Client story

J began working with Community Chaplaincy Norfolk after leaving prison. Although J had secured work and was receiving positive feedback from their employer, the accommodation they had was only temporary.

Thanks to support from CCN, J was able to find shared accommodation local to the employer and J was able to take on extra hours as they had wanted to do.

Due to the support J received in and out of prison, people who had worked with J noticed a positive change in them, and even asked after them after their release, all keen for them to succeed.

**1 in 3** leaving prison have nowhere to stay

# Our Trustees

Thank you to our amazing Trustees past and present over the last 5 years for their support and commitment.

Chris Tomlinson (Chair)  
Stephen Holt (Vice Chair)  
Paula Callum  
Martin Edwards  
Bryan Hurst  
Paul Mortimer  
Paulo Mussi  
Sarah Watson

A special thank you to our Patron, HM Lord Lieutenant Lady Dannatt MBE, for her support.

**I was instantly taken with CCN, I felt that the organisation filled a huge gap that is not part of the justice provision. The true measurement of our success is achieved every time a mentor meets with their charge.**

- Martin Edwards, CCN Trustee

**Facts and figures cannot really reflect our clients' life journeys - the setbacks, struggles, trials, successes, achievements and, on occasions, tragedies they encounter. Some of our clients have made significant changes in their lives and it is a privilege to celebrate this with them.**

- Paula Callum, CCN Trustee

**The work of CCN bridges the gap between prison and community by offering the valuable service of meeting men at the gate to support them at a very daunting time.**

- Paul Mortimer, CCN Trustee and Head of Reducing Reoffending, HMP Norwich

## How can you get involved?

There are a number of ways you can support our work and ensure we can continue to work with prison leavers to help them rebuild their lives.

1

### Become a mentor

If you're aged 25+, contact us for more information about how to volunteer with CCN or for details of our forthcoming mentor training sessions.

We welcome enquiries from a broad range of backgrounds, including those with lived experience of the Criminal Justice system who have been out of prison for 2 years or more.

2

### Donate today

If you would like to support us financially either with a one-off donation or by a regular gift, please visit our website [norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk](http://norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk) visit us at St Stephen's Church, or scan the QR code below.

Don't forget, UK Tax Payers can add Gift Aid to increase their donation by 25%.



3

### Receive our news

Sign up to our newsletter to hear about our latest work, how we're supporting prison leavers and what opportunities we have for you to get involved and make a difference in your community.

Send us an email at [info@norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk](mailto:info@norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk) to confirm you'd like to be kept up to date with our news.

## The future of CCN

As we look back on the past 5 years, we are so proud of what our mentors and clients have accomplished, and so grateful for the support of all our volunteers, funders, Friends of CCN, and our patron, Lady Dannatt.

The need for support for people leaving prison is even greater than when CCN was founded, so it is vital that we also look to the future, and how we can continue and expand our work in the face of ongoing challenges.

We are currently seeking funding to appoint a second mentor coordinator, enabling us to train and support a larger team of volunteer mentors, as well as meet potential applicants and process referrals in HMP Norwich.

Interested?

If you have been inspired by what you have read about our work, we would be grateful for your support in whatever form you are able to give it, whether making a donation, signing up for our mailing list, following us on social media, or joining us as a volunteer mentor. You can find out about all of these things on our website [norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk](http://norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk)

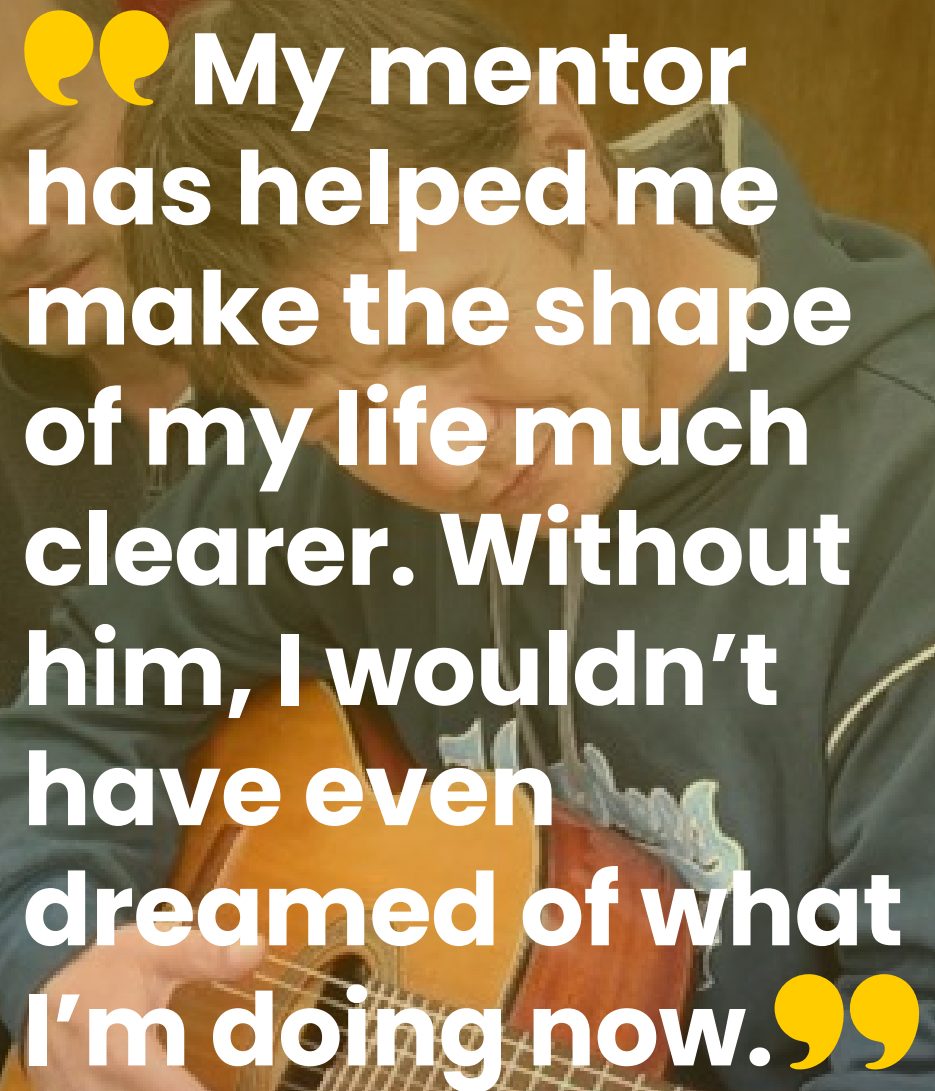
## Thank you to our funders



CCN's work for the last 5 years has been possible thanks to:

Allen Lane Foundation  
Anne French Memorial Fund  
Barratt Family Charitable Trust  
Charles Littlewood Hill  
Charles Littlewood Hill Trust  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Geoffrey Watling Charity  
Good Work  
Hedley Foundation  
Hilden Charitable Trust

Jerusalem Trust  
Lloyds Bank Foundation  
National Lottery Community Fund  
Norfolk Community Foundation  
Police & Crime Commissioner for Norfolk  
Paul Bassham Charitable Trust  
RC Snelling Trust  
Souter Charitable Trust  
Speedo Mick Foundation  
Trusthouse Charitable Foundation



“My mentor has helped me make the shape of my life much clearer. Without him, I wouldn't have even dreamed of what I'm doing now.”

- Ady, Client



# CCN MENTORING

Walking with Prison Leavers to Rebuild Their Lives

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COMMUNITY CHAPLAINCY NORFOLK

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