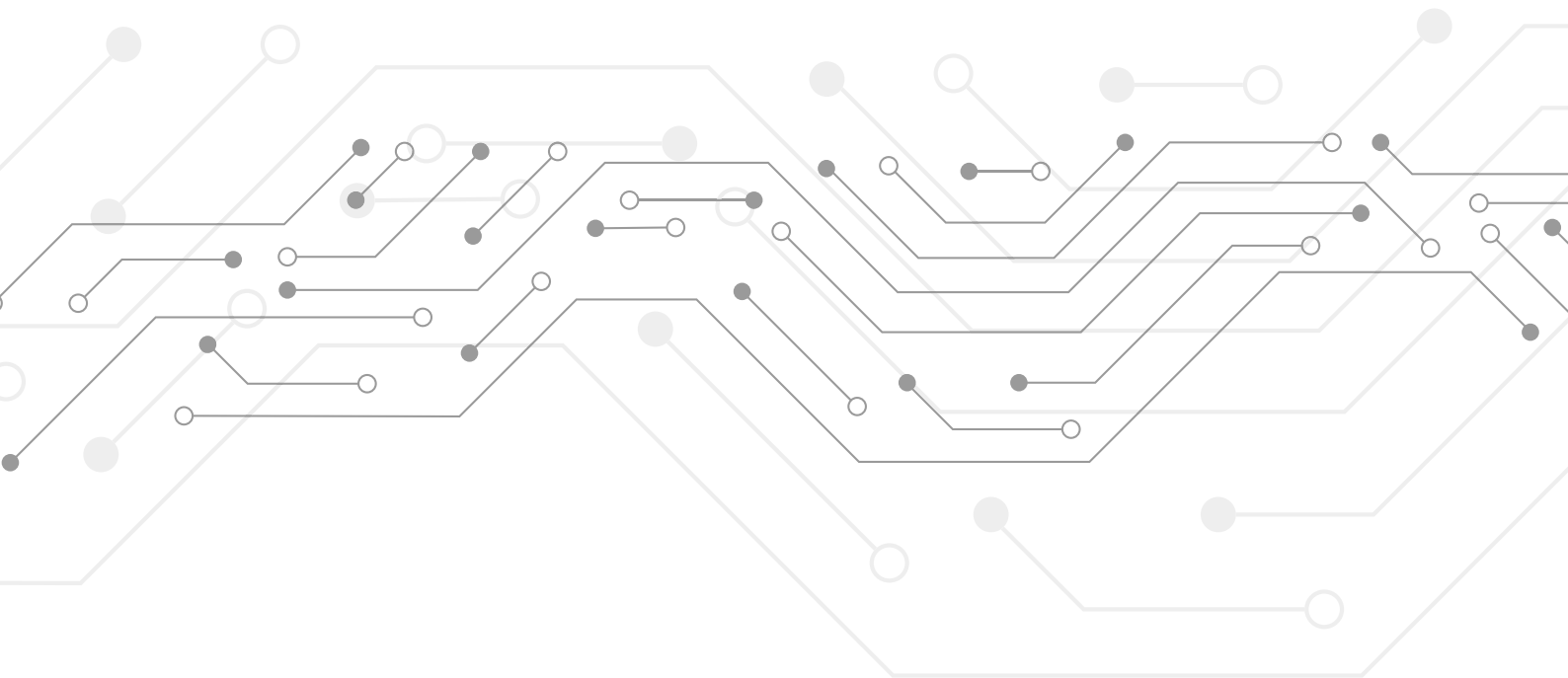


Golden Threads

Community Rehabilitation
Company Evaluation Series



November 2021

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Introduction

Ingeus commissioned an independent, external consultant, Russell Webster, to undertake a series of evaluations on a range of interventions which Ingeus delivered as the lead organisation in the Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP), alongside Change, Grow, Live, and the St Giles Trust, which operated the Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland (DLNR) and Staffordshire & West Midlands (SWM) Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) between 2015 and 2021. The purpose of these evaluations was to capture the best practice that Ingeus and its partners developed throughout the CRC years and demonstrate how the organisation has consolidated this learning and is applying it in the range of new services it is delivering.

A series of ten evaluations were undertaken, focusing on the following areas:

1. **Through-The-Gate services**
2. **Finance, Benefit and Debt**
3. **Approaches to working with Young Adults**
4. **Employment, Training and Education**
5. **Arts interventions with young adults**
6. **Trauma informed practice**
7. **The Health Trainers project**
8. **Domestic Abuse interventions**
9. **The STAR Project (supported accommodation)**
10. **Volunteering and Mentoring (Lived Experience)**

During these individual evaluations, it was clear that there were a number of recurrent qualities inherent in the working culture at Ingeus, which were responsible for the positive outcomes across all the different operational areas. These critical success factors, or “golden threads” are the focus of this article and are discussed in turn below.

Commitment and a focus on the service user

A common thread from my interviews with over 50 Ingeus staff during these evaluations was the sense of vocation and a passion for the work that they were doing. Staff were encouraged to focus on the needs of the people they were working with, rather than being asked to concentrate on contract targets. There were numerous examples of staff going the extra mile to ensure that an individual got the service they needed. Here is just one example from the Through-The-Gate evaluation:

Safeguarding Carl

Carl received his first prison sentence in September 2019 when he was 20 years old although the offence had taken place three years earlier. This was Carl's first involvement with the criminal justice system, and he was traumatised and frightened by the experience. On arrival at the prison following sentencing, Carl was extremely distressed. An Ingeus resettlement worker was on her way home when she observed that he was having a nosebleed and immediately arranged to see him away from the other service users who had also arrived at the prison.

The worker calmed Carl down and explained the process of prison induction and what to expect. Carl was concerned about his parents and especially his mother who had severe mental health problems. As it would be a few days before he would be allowed to call his parents the worker agreed to call them to inform that he was okay.

With permission from the prison and Carl, the case worker called his parents that evening to let them know that he was alright. The worker kept in touch with the parents until Carl was allocated his telephone pin number and was able to make contact directly himself (in this case it was several days before Carl got his telephone pin).

The worker also contacted the prison Chaplaincy service before leaving the prison and arranged for a Chaplain to visit Carl to check on his wellbeing and offer support.

Rather than setting prescribed reporting patterns, staff were willing to see people with the most pressing or more complex needs more often and, indeed, often beyond the point at which their formal supervision requirement had expired.

Flexibility and creativity

Another common theme throughout the evaluations was that Ingeus and its staff were willing to do things differently. One example was the Through-The-Gate service where the organisation adopted a markedly different approach to most other CRC providers. Rather than contract the service out, Ingeus directly employed all the staff itself. By having all resettlement staff as part of one team, all of whom were radio trained and key-holders, the organisation was able to develop a proactive, “can-do” culture. Resettlement staff generally worked on the prison wings, engaging with prisoners daily and forging positive working relationships with many prison officers. The fact that all staff worked for Ingeus brought several advantages with shared understanding of roles and flexibility in work patterns and allocations with individual workers shifting role to cover vacancies in key areas such as housing advice.

Another example was the appointment of a dedicated arts specialist worker within the resettlement team at HMP Leicester despite the lack of a funding stream for this post. The result of this appointment was that many local arts charities started work engaging people in prison in a wide range of creative arts, which then spun off into work with people on probation in the community. In addition to a wide range of one-off events, Ingeus, in partnership with De Montfort University and HMP Leicester, developed probably the world’s first prison arts festival. “Talent Unlocked” ran successfully over three years before being converted into an eight-week programme of arts-based broadcasts reaching 50 different prisons.

Valuing lived experience

Another defining characteristic of Ingeus' work across different areas of operation was the focus on valuing lived experience. This applied both to involving people on probation in designing services and in integrating peer support throughout interventions for both people in prison and in the community.

People with lived experience were equal members of the Ingeus team who jointly developed a new intervention for perpetrators of domestic abuse (Spectrum), developing digital complementary media to more effectively engage service users in interventions by making material which reflected real life experiences.

Ingeus invested substantially in training large numbers of peer mentors across both CRC areas. The organisation also formed a close partnership with St Giles to develop a large-scale workforce of serving prisoners who operated as Peer Advisors supporting their fellow prisoners.

The effectiveness of these different approaches utilising the skills and experiences of people who had been on probation and in prison was only possible because it was clear to participants that Ingeus was sincere in the way it valued lived experience. This was evidenced by the fact that the organisation launched the Ingeus Academy to implement a clear progression strategy for its service users and peer mentors who wanted to work in the social justice sector. Clear evidence of the effectiveness of the Academy is that Ingeus Justice employed a total of 92 people with lived experience in a variety of roles including as community support workers, health trainers, sessional community payback supervisors and site hosts (reception staff).

Equal partnerships

Another feature of the Ingeus approach was its desire to create strong and equal partnerships with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations in order to deliver a better quality of service overall. Rather than manage supply chains, the organisation worked to build ongoing relationships. Ingeus' employment, training and employment work was predicated on dozens of partnerships with a very wide range of organisations as well as working relationships with many employers and education and training providers.

In designing its services, Ingeus focuses on the best provider to do the job. In establishing its finance, benefit, and debt services for people in prison, the organisation knew that it had in-house expertise to deliver those services in the East Midlands but took a different approach in the West Midlands, building on local expertise within Birmingham Settlement, one of the city's oldest charities, which had been a long-term partner of previous iterations of the probation service.

The organisation was careful to always put service delivery first. One example of this was the work done in partnership with HMP Stafford which had very limited resettlement services. An interview conducted by the evaluator with the governor at HMP Stafford revealed that Ingeus was happy to develop a different model to meet the prison's resettlement needs, seconding existing specialist accommodation staff into Ingeus to ensure continued funding and investing in a range of services which fitted the specialist needs of the prisoners served by that establishment.

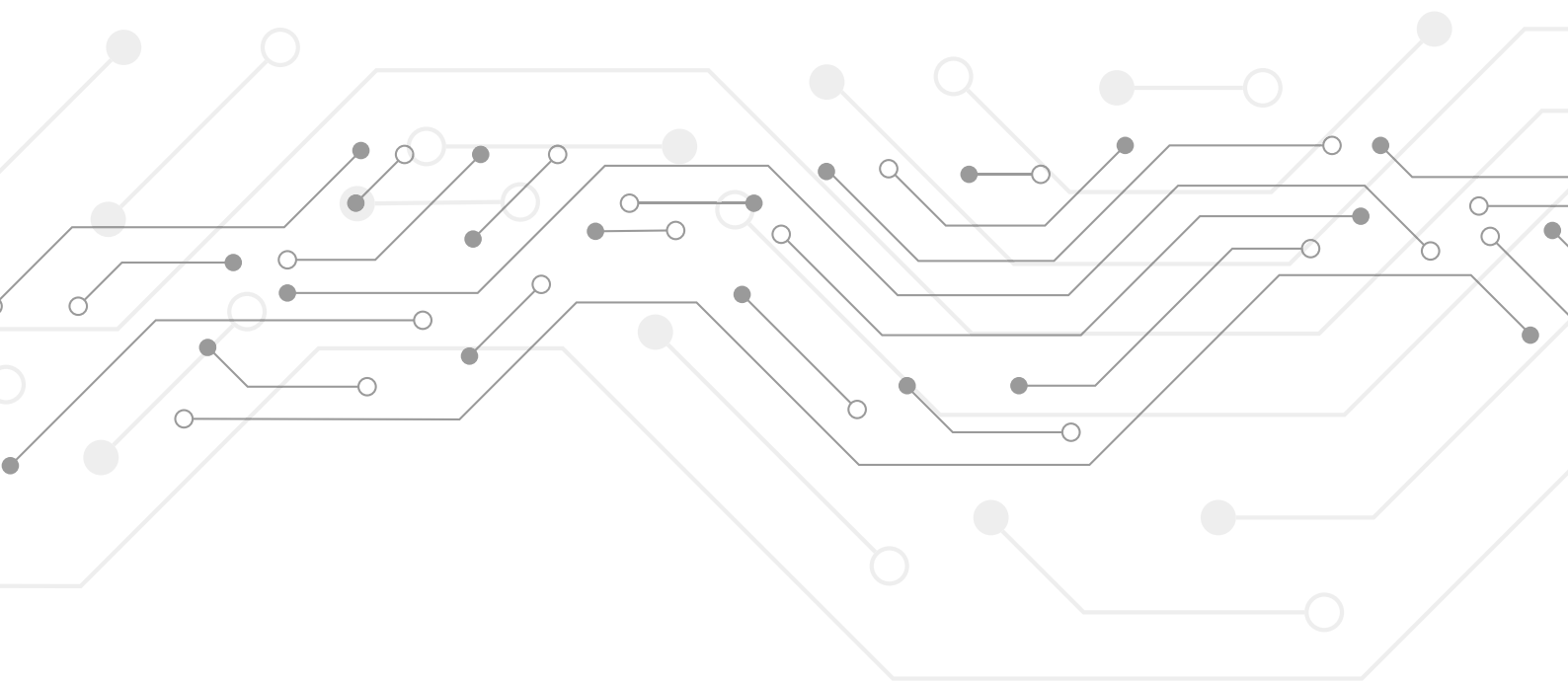
Investment

Another key indicator of Ingeus' commitment to deliver a high-quality service was the organisation's willingness to make substantial long-term financial investments to support service delivery. Examples of this willingness to invest include:

- Ingeus investing much more of its own revenues in providing housing options to the people supervised by the DLNR and SWM CRCs than most other CRC owners. The organisation established a dedicated Accommodation Fund and commissioned beds from a wide range of housing providers across the Midlands to meet the accommodation needs of people on probation.
- The development of a strategic approach to promoting Trauma-Informed Practice which involved investing in training for every staff member.
- The development of a Young Adult strategy which again involved training for all front-line practitioners and specialist training for young adult champions in every team.
- The investment in personnel by making trauma-informed clinical support available to all staff, providing them with support and equipping them with the skills to support the people they work with.

Conclusion

Ingeus has developed a principled approach to its work in the justice arena which has generated a positive attitude within its staff group and a wide range of partner organisations. Ingeus has normalised the involvement of experts by experience in the design and continuous improvements of its services and has become an increasingly important contributor to the development of effective approaches to reducing reoffending.



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