Diversion from Re-offending

1. Attached as Appendix A to this report are notes of a visit to Hull on 5 July to discuss their award-winning Minerva Project.

2. Members of the Partnership are asked to consider the project outline, and whether they would support attempts to adopt a similar approach in Stockton. If there is support for this, then the next stage would be to prepare a Business Plan with outline costings.

3. Further thinking since the visit has involved the following suggestions:-

    (a) a partnership with an existing charity may avoid the need to establish a CIC;

    (b) given that any Stockton scheme would be a much smaller scale than the Minerva Project in Hull, and that the initial funding would be much less generous, two areas of work which may commend themselves are painting and decorating, and woodwork. The IOM scheme already has some experience of the latter, in partnership with the Shaw Trust, producing wooden benches, bird tables etc, and there has been some interest expressed in buying these.

    (c) there may be some role for local prisons i.e. HMP Holme House and/or HMP Kirklevington; and

    (d) there may be some mileage in seeking interest from the Further Education sector.

4. A 'guesstimate' is that we would need to raise at least £100k as the initial working capital to run the project, and preferably more like £200k. This would be in the form of non-recurrent funding contributions.

5. It is arguable that this is the opportunity for a 'win/win' approach. At worst, the scheme will fail to achieve financially self-sustaining status, and will close at the end of 1-2 years, in which case it will have done some good as a time limited project. At best, it will 'take off' and have the potential to expand and become an important part of our range of interventions to reduce re-offending and thereby continue to reduce crime.

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6. Since drafting the text above, on 20 July the Big Lottery Fund made a directly relevant announcement about a new funding programme for people with multiple and complex needs. Details are attached as Appendix B. Members of the Partnership will see that Stockton, together with Middlesbrough and Darlington, is potentially in line to receive a sum of about £7 million over a 5 to 8 year period, and that the profile for

this funding closely matches the short term prisoners group. The link to reoffending is obvious, there is a high proportion of substance misuse issues among this group, many short term prisoners are precariously housed, and there is also a strong correlation with mental health issues. Similar considerations apply to the women in the pilot work with sex workers.

7. Members of the Partnership will note that these programmes are to be led by the Voluntary and Community Sector, with support from the statutory sector. The Big Lottery organisation has confirmed that 16 and 17 year olds are also eligible for this programme provided that they are experiencing at least two of the four issues on which the programme is targeted.

8. I have been asked to co-ordinate Stockton Council's input into this programme and have been liaising with colleagues across a range of organisations, including the Five Lamps Organisation, who in turn are working with the Cyrenians (who have a fairly strong presence in Middlesbrough), DISC (who are well established in Darlington) and the Wise Group, who are one of the prime contractors for the Department of Work & Pensions ESR programme, with Five Lamps as one of their sub-contractors.

9. At the time of writing a meeting of interested parties is scheduled to take place on 9 August. I will attend this and give an oral update at the Partnership meeting on 14 August.

10. It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the Partnership

   (a) supports the principle of attempting to replicate the Minerva Project approach in Stockton; and
   (b) agrees to use its influence to seek funding for this approach and for continuing work with sex workers via the Big Lottery Fund's multiple and complex needs programme.

Mike Batty

Head of Community Protection.