

Creative Commissioning for Better Outcomes

West Mercia Probation Trust and Willowdene Farm

West Mercia Probation Trust (WMPT) worked with Willowdene Farm to set up an innovative partnership that has delivered life changing results for offenders.

Willowdene was experienced in providing long-term residential work with serious drug users but had been unable to work with offenders until the National Offender Management Service decided to commission services it traditionally delivered in-house.

Three pilot schemes with Willowdene showed 75% clients completed and 75% not re-offending afterwards.

Willowdene created a new social enterprise - RITE (Relational, Inspiring, Trusting, Engaging) to develop the care farm's day service work. This business has created three full time jobs and provides income from trading activities, such as the sale of farm products, thus ensuring its long term sustainability and subsidising the true cost of delivery.

Offenders also know the work they do - which includes animal husbandry, agriculture, forestry operations, woodwork, vehicle mechanics, welding and IT - will subsidise the next group.



Matt Home, of Willowdene Farm, said: *"The focus is on skills enhancement, training and preparing offenders for employment. Offenders will gain a minimum of two nationally recognised qualifications, with the potential to achieve up to six more and a further five centre-approved qualifications."*

"The work we do also has a much wider social value, as it significantly reduces re-offending, inspires individuals to become active and it addresses health issues. It also enables individuals to become an active part of their community, entering into employment and positively contributing to society."

WMPT has also jointly commissioned with YSS, an independent charity that works with disadvantaged children, families and adults.

Through the Drugs Action Teams (police/probation/health/local authority partnerships) in three of their local authorities WMPT have established "respite beds" for those on the day programme in danger of breakdown. They are also looking to establish a residential programme for women who would otherwise receive custodial sentences.

David Chantler, chief executive of West Mercia Probation Trust, said: *"By working with our partners in the social enterprise sector we can increase services, achieve better results and at the same time create additional social value. By working with local communities we can best reduce crime and rehabilitate offenders."*

