

THE HANDSWORTH ALTERNATIVE SCHEME

1. The Handsworth Alternative Scheme (HAS) has been set up for three years with the aid of a Home Office grant to assist the Probation Service to provide the courts with a wider range of facilities for dealing with young black offenders from the Handsworth district of Birmingham.

The scheme is exploring the extent to which community-based resources can be harnessed to the task of providing young black offenders in the 17-25 age range with a stronger and more acceptable support service.

HAS hopes that by working in partnership with Probation Officers it will be able to assist the courts in providing alternatives for some offenders who are at risk of attracting custodial sentences. The hope is that many will be placed on probation.

2. HAS is sponsored by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO). The day to day supervision of the project is delegated to a local management committee which reflects the care and concern for the problems presented by young black offenders. The members are:-

Chairman: Mr. Pat Whitehouse, Senior Probation Officer
Members: Mr. Mike O'Connor, Senior Probation Officer
Mrs. H.L. Stokes J.P., West Midlands Probation & After Care Committee
Mr. Joe Pratt, Probation Officer
Mr. Nigel Whiskin, NACRO Assistant Director
Mrs. Sybil Morgan, Marcus Garvey Nursery
Ms. Vilma Dillion, Probation Officer

3. The HAS staff team are in post.

Development Officer: Merrise Crooks

Merrise Crooks has lived in Birmingham for 20 years and got her degree in Social Science from the Open University. Has a special interest in basic education work.

Development Officer: Errol Whitter

Born and brought up in Wolverhampton, Errol Whitter has previously worked for NACRO on the Youth Opportunity Programme in Willenhall.

Development Officer: Ifemu Omari

Degree in Politics

Clerical Officer: Carlene Rafferty

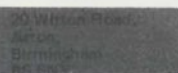
The HAS team is based in offices at: 328 Hamstead Road, Birmingham B. 20
(021-523 4181)

4. HAS is accepting referrals from Probation Officers, Prison Department staff, the Courts, social workers, youth and community workers, teachers, solicitors, parents, friends and from individual offenders themselves.

HAS has the remit to offer help, advice and support to young blacks in the 17-25 age range who have been, or are, in trouble with the law and who live in the Handsworth, Aston or Lozells area. The staff will also offer its services to people thought to be at risk.



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Tel. 021-523 4181

HAS will offer help to find and hold accommodation, employment, education, recreation, social support.

The service will be offered either to the young people concerned directly or to those responsible for them. In particular HAS hopes to assist Probation Officers in the preparation of social inquiry reports where there is a risk of the offender attracting a custodial sentence.

To this end the HAS management committee and staff sincerely hope the Courts will feel able when dealing with young black offenders from the Handsworth area to bear this service in mind and respond to this invitation to refer those cases where the scheme might be able to help.

HAS is currently working with a number of people. It will obviously take time to build up resources. HAS hopes eventually to provide support for 200 people annually.

5. The HAS staff also have a development function. Many of the support facilities referred to above either do not exist or are not readily accessible or acceptable to the group in question.

The HAS staff and management committee are working with statutory and voluntary agencies to smooth the problems of access to existing facilities and where there are gaps in the provision to work to set up new facilities.

ACCOMMODATION to provide a range of accommodation facilities for 50 people annually from local authority and housing association resources.

EMPLOYMENT to generate work preparation and job opportunities from the Careers Service and Manpower Services Commission resources; improve access to YOP and STEP schemes.

EDUCATION to develop a range of educational opportunities in the local authority network, the WEA and other bodies. HAS has appointed a Robert Kennedy Fellow to specialise in remedial education.

RECREATION to develop with other groups a range of sporting, musical and adventure facilities.

SOCIAL SUPPORT aiming to involve black people as volunteer associates with the programme.

6. HAS will be monitored and evaluated and the results will be published by NACRO at the end of the project.
7. SUMMARY: HAS is operating to provide a service through Probation Officers to the Courts in Birmingham to assist with the treatment of young black offenders in the 17-25 age range. The offenders come from the Aston, Lozells and Handsworth districts. The scheme is particularly concerned to provide credible alternatives for those offenders at risk of attracting custodial sentences.

HAS will provide advice and practical help with accommodation, employment, education, recreation, backed by a high level of social support.

The scheme is also concerned to assist with the resettlement of young people returning to the area from penal establishments and young people considered to be at risk.

HAS hopes to win the confidence of the Courts and invites referrals from the Courts where it is felt the scheme can help in finding alternatives to custodial sentences.

For further information, please contact

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