

# Best CSR strategy

## Winner

### RAPt

**I**t costs around £40,000 per year to keep someone in prison. More come out of the system addicted to drugs and alcohol than go in. So RAPt has committed to trying to break this cycle, with apprenticeships.

Having a job is key to keeping people in recovery and reducing the likelihood of reoffending. RAPt has developed its apprenticeship scheme to demonstrate its organisational commitment to the charity's cause (rehabilitating addicted prisoners). The year-long apprenticeship includes 35 working hours per week, 25 days' paid leave, a £15,300 salary, access to training, and funding towards an NVQ Level 3 course in counselling skills or similar.

Support is present at all levels; from the management board and trustees through to RAPt's frontline staff, 34% of whom are recovering from addictions or are ex-offenders themselves. The charity certainly can't be accused of not practising what it preaches.

This scheme is so powerful because it benefits wider society as well as individuals. The average age of a RAPt apprentice is 35. Many of them have little to no employment experience, with the majority having left school young. However, with the support the charity provides, 80% complete the scheme and 75% gain employment on completion. For every 100 people who finish the

programme an estimated £6.3 billion is saved on reducing crime and resentencing. The apprenticeship's benefits to society are near-instantaneous: before starting 71% of the apprentices claimed some form of government benefit. This dropped by 45% once recruited.

And the social benefits are not just financial. Of the 37 people so far who have finished the apprenticeship, 30 have gained permanent employment. Twenty-four now work at RAPt, and can use the counselling skills learned and their personal experiences to help RAPt's other service users. Former apprentice Antonia, who now works for RAPt, says the apprenticeship gave her "routine, respect for myself and financial security", which enables her to give her daughter a better life. Ronald, also a RAPt apprentice-turned-employee, explains that "the ability to embody the values of my recovery through my work gives me the sense of wholeness I've yearned for my whole life".

RAPt is reviewing its scheme in light of the government's apprenticeship levy, and hopes to offer new qualifications soon. It is exploring creating a dedicated substance misuse apprenticeship as part of the national Trailblazers initiative.



Our judges were very impressed with RAPt's efforts, describing them as "well thought-through" and "practical and pragmatic". They were all interested to see how the charity will scale things up. If past performance is anything to go by, these apprenticeships will continue to resonate far beyond the individuals they help.

### Highly commended

#### London Midland

It's been a difficult year for rail. Between the ongoing public rows involving operators, unions, and the government and extreme disruption for travellers, public opinion of the railways has taken a bashing.

This makes it more important than ever that train companies try to be more socially conscious. London Midland is one of the UK's busiest companies; providing more than 200,000 journeys every day. In 2016 it was awarded a £15 million contract to make travel better for everyone. This enabled the organisation to launch projects that strengthen links with the 150 local communities it serves.

It hired a dedicated head of community rail, and undertook several projects. These include improving the appearance of stations with local artists and residents, empowering people to create and maintain a seasonal garden, funding three community rail partnerships, 'Adopt a Station' schemes, and providing sports equipment for clubs and teams nominated by employees.

These initiatives aim to bring local people together and support them to improve the areas in which they live and Midland operates. This can only be done by everyone working co-operatively, often learning new skills along the way!

#### Shortlisted

#### Canary Wharf Management

DP World