

THE CRANFIELD TRUST BRINGS A STEADYING HAND TO AN OVERSTRETCHED CHARITY WORKING TO ALLEVIATE VIOLENCE



A clear business strategy and mentoring support proved invaluable for the Founder of Chaos Theory, as the charity's rapid growth brought new challenges for the small staff team.

Chaos Theory began in 2010, exploring new ways to address rising levels of serious violent crime amongst young people in the UK following a visit to Ceasefire Chicago (now known as Cure Violence) in the USA, that had demonstrated incredible success in reducing the number of gun/gang related fatalities in that area. Purbinder Hothi (Pam) was to replicate this success in Britain and set about creating a bespoke programme, based on the Chicago Violence Interruption model, to tackle the serious levels of violent crime in Waltham Forest. Working with 16-30 year olds involved in serious street violence, clients are typically high-risk individuals who are incarcerated, recently released from prison, have a history of violent behaviour or street violence and/or who have been the victim of a stabbing or shooting.

In its first two years, Chaos Theory engaged with 81 high risk and hard to reach clients, providing 1:1 outreach, welfare and prison support, and violence interruption intervention. The model relies on both paid and voluntary Violence Interrupters: respected, trained community members who engage in high-risk conflict mediation to prevent the escalation of violent episodes. The charity also mobilises local communities so that they are empowered to challenge the view that violence is an acceptable way of life.



As the charity's Founder and Manager, Pam recognised that as Chaos Theory grew, it required more operational oversight, leaving her to focus on her work building trust and engagement in the community. Following a referral from The Porticus Trust, Pam therefore approached The Cranfield Trust for support in writing a business plan prior to the appointment of a CEO to lead the campaigning, fundraising and administration of the charity.

Cranfield Trust Project Manager, Roger Watkins, put Pam in touch with volunteer Sue Davidson, who has over 40 years' strategic and operational experience in international corporations and UK SME companies, from first-line management to Board level.

Sue and Pam worked together over a period of several months, preparing to run a slightly larger and more formal organisation. They were able to achieve a range of key deliverables, including:

- Discussions, documents and diagrams using client and stakeholder feedback, to show how the business plan, aligned functional action plans and individual objectives could be produced and monitored, with a timeline plan for the proposed changes
- Advice on various challenges, issues and approaches to stakeholder relationships
- Job descriptions and person specifications for both the CEO and Chair of Trustees

Sue was extremely pleased with the success of the project, which was a reflection of Pam's commitment to the charity:

"I was hugely impressed with Chaos Theory's work and Pam's dedication and determination in leading and managing the organisation in very challenging circumstances."

From the 81 clients with whom the charity worked over the first two years, Pam reports that this year has seen a significant increase in numbers. She has been able to focus more on engaging with local neighbourhoods:

"We organised community fun days on the two main estates where we operate, where levels of violence are high, aiming to bring young people and families together, unite communities and spread the violence prevention message. As a grassroots organisation, the key to affecting change within communities is to involve the community itself. We empower mums to be involved and have young men, their girlfriends and children attend. This year, 164 People attended in Leytonstone and 131 People attended in Chingford."



This clearly demonstrates the increasing impact of the organisation and its success in supporting those high risk and hard-to-reach individuals who can benefit the most from the Chaos Theory's support. The plan for future development, written with Sue Davidson's help, has enabled Pam to ensure the charity can continue to operate successfully, adapting to growing demand. Pam explains:

"As a founder of a Charity, I found myself sinking with work that I could not understand and with limited access to professionals /networks for assistance. As a Woman from the BME community running a grass roots organisation, this was very difficult. When Sue came along from the Cranfield Trust, everything changed. She was amazing, strong support for me and the perfect Mentor. I have learned so much, but more importantly have more business understanding and have become increasingly confident as a leader. I cannot thank Sue enough for her support, guidance and time."

