

**Launch of the Prison Volunteer Programme
House of Lords, 13 December 2012
Speech by Paul Woodward, CEO Sue Ryder**

Thank you Baroness Masham, and thank you for stepping in to host this event today. I hope we can continue to work with you in the future. I'd also like to thank, in his absence, Lord Patel, who sponsored today's event and sadly cannot be here with us. He has shown the charity a great deal of support and we're very grateful to him for all that he does for Sue Ryder.

I would also like to welcome all of our attendees today, and thank you for the support you give to the charity.

The relationships that we've built in Parliament enable us to make the voices of the people using our services heard at the highest level. And today they will hear from some of those who've worked for Sue Ryder and benefitted from the Prison Volunteer Programme – something I'm sure you'll find interesting.

Since we started running the programme in 2006 our small volunteering team has taken the Programme from strength to strength. It's a great testament to them that we have grown the scheme significantly in such a short time. We've now worked with over 800 prison volunteers in our shops, warehouses and central offices. About 40 of those volunteers have gone on to paid employment with us, and many more have found paid employment elsewhere.

I am sure that everyone here today wants to see the reoffending rate reduced, and at Sue Ryder we're proud to be able to play our part to make that wish a reality.

We're also delighted that yesterday we were one of 60 charities to be awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Volunteering Award in recognition of the Prison Volunteer Programme's commitment to making volunteering accessible to all and for our good practice in volunteering.

As Baroness Masham said, Sue Ryder is a health and social care charity and so our primary focus is on delivering incredible care to people with incurable illnesses in our hospices, our neurological care centres and the community. We couldn't do the work that we do without the funds that we receive from our 400 charity shops, and we couldn't keep our shops open without our volunteers, some of whom are here with us today. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of them for the contribution they make.

We believe there is a lot of potential in the scheme we've developed and want to continue to work with prisons and prisoners to make that happen. We also want to develop our relationships with community service volunteers to see how we can get them working in a health and social care setting so they can learn new skills.

Before we move on, I'd like to thank the Bromley Trust who provided the funding for the first phase of the Programme and who have funded the evaluation that you've all been given copies of today. In particular I'd like to thank Teresa from the Bromley Trust who is here today. I hope you'll agree that the success of the Programme means it was money well spent!

Internally, we always knew the scheme was fantastic, but it was so good to read this independent evaluation of it which now means we can shout from the rooftops with real credibility about the difference we're making.

We believe that charities on the high street help to create a community and a focal point for volunteers. One prisoner said of his time volunteering with us 'I can't directly say sorry to the people I've hurt, but now I'm putting something back into the community.'

Another said 'I had been in and out of prison for ten years; a lack of motivation made me reoffend...but having a placement like this has put me on the right path.' These are just two of many examples. I'd encourage you to read the report.

We want to help more people, and what we really need in order to do this is as much support as we can get. I hope by the end of the day, we will have a room full of advocates for the scheme to go out and spread the word.

I have two remaining messages; the first is for the other organisations like ours in the room; if you don't have a scheme like this already you should consider the benefit it could bring you. And for the Minister, MPs and peers, I would encourage you to support the funding that is required for resettlement and rehabilitation programmes, as it's clear it makes economic sense.

Thank you.