

## Report back to The Funding Network

### 1. Name of your organisation and date funded by TFN:

The Centre for Criminal Appeals, funded following presentation on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014

### 2. What was the project you sought funding for from TFN?

What are its aims and objectives? Have these changed since receiving TFN funding?

The Centre for Criminal Appeals is a start-up legal charity that investigates and overturns miscarriage of justice cases. Our cases tell troubling stories about the state of the criminal justice system and the clear link between the cuts in legal aid and the risk of injustice.

We are seeing cases where the trial lawyers working on a legal aid set fee ignored their client's instructions and failed to follow-up on information that would have required them to leave their desks and go out into the community, for example to follow up with a potential witness or review a crime scene. On top of this, further cuts to legal aid have reduced the availability of criminal appeals lawyers as many firms have stopped doing that work. In the meantime, well documented under-resourcing of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) is leading to longer waiting times, and less effective reviewing, unless there is a lawyer, like those at the CCA, who are prepared to go the extra mile to fight for the innocence of our clients.

The Centre for Criminal Appeals fights systematic problems with the justice system - from poor police or agency practice, to questionable forensic science, to bias and discrimination - through strategic casework. We represent individuals with convincing evidence to support their innocence claim, and whose cases challenge current practice or law in a way that has the potential to improve the way the justice systems operates and reduce the likelihood of miscarriages of justice occurring in the first place.

Our objective for the fundraising achieved through the Funding Network was to recruit a resource development and communications person to enable the CCA to pursue its objectives through their contribution and by freeing Sophie and Emily, the lawyers, up to focus their attention on the legal work.

This was successfully achieved.

### 3. Were you able to do this work as you described it in your application and presentation?

Yes

What evidence do you have for the success or failure of the funded project?

The evidence is as follows:

- following an open recruitment process in mid October 2014, Rachael Marsh joined the CCA in the role of Charity Manager.
- In the period since, she has, among other things:
  - o Led the successful application to the Solicitors Regulation Authority for authorisation as the UK's first charitable criminal appeals law firm
  - o Successfully submitted a bid to the Legal Aid Agency for a legal aid contract, the outcome of which we now eagerly await
  - o Written, with the help of the wider team, the organisation's strategic plan for 2015-18
  - o Led the UK's first [criminal appeals crowdfunding campaign](#)
  - o Submitted, or contributed to at least 7 funding applications
  - o Supported the development of the CCA's new education initiative, the Criminal Justice Initiative – working with 6 universities around England & Wales to develop student clinics to support the CCA's work
  - o Worked alongside colleagues to engage 6 corporate law firms in the nascent pro bono programme
  - o Initiated a new stream of work for the organisation focusing on challenging unnecessary incarceration of women for petty, non-violent crimes
  - o Organised an event to celebrate the CCA's new status as a non-profit law firm - a collaboration with the [Secret Theatre Company](#), performed in a disused police station, which will be an immersive theatre experience to introduce people to the CCA's work.
  - o Worked with a volunteer graphic designer to create a new brand for CCA, including a new website.

As mentioned above, this has also achieved the goal of freeing up Sophie and Emily to focus on their legal work. As a result, the caseload has doubled in size and 10 applications have been made to the CCRC, with a further 3 in the pipeline for submission in the coming months.

**4. If you were not able, please explain what happened and why?**

Can you quantify any changes? Eg ...expanding number of employees, number of projects, geographical scope.

n/a

**5. Can you measure, assess or describe the change that happened as a result of this work?**

What actual change did the funded project generate? What proportion of the project/work did TFN fund (eg all/x%)?

Prior to receiving TFN funding, Sophie and Emily were stretched thin across litigation, fundraising and operations. The TFN fund meant we could take on Rachael, who now works 3 days a week on operations, fundraising and communications.

Rachael has transformed CCA in the nine short months she has worked here. CCA has gone from being a charity to a not-for-profit law firm, and is on track to be awarded a legal aid contract. Our profile has grown within the prison population, amongst legal professions, amongst funders and

beyond, in light of her communication strategy. Rachael has designed and implemented new streams of work, including a pro bono project with corporate law firms.

The number of prisoners that Sophie represents has doubled since Rachael joined CCA. Emily too has been able to turn around more applications to the CCRC at a quicker rate, thus reducing the amount of time prisoners have to wait to have their case re-heard at the Court of Appeal.

**6. As a result of presenting at TFN, did you experience any of the following;**

- new subscribers to your mailing list
- new volunteers to your organisation
- further funding from individual donors
- further funding from institutional funders
- an introduction that benefited your organisation (e.g. to an individual, business or other organisation)
- other benefit (please describe)

We believe that being able to cite TFN as one of our supporters and funders at such a key time in our development has given us essential credibility, which has contributed to our subsequent fundraising and volunteer recruitment.

**7. Could you give us an estimate of how many people have been reached by the TFN funded project/work and by how much?**

The work done for the Centre for Criminal Appeals by Rachael in the time since she has worked at the organisation has reached:

- at least 6 corporate law firms through the pro bono programme
- at least 8 universities currently or potentially involved in the new Criminal Justice Initiative
- 50 individual donors to the Crowdfunding campaign
- the 310 followers of the new [CCA twitter account](#)
- 71 subscribers to the CCA newsletter
- 2 followers and 19 readers of the [CCA Medium collection](#)
- 68 people invited to the CCA's event in September 2015
- 60,000 prisoners reached through [an article](#) published in the prison newspaper, Inside Time

**8. Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of funding from TFN?**

An example of the value of the Funding Network funding is our recent crowd-funding campaign.

The new [CrowdJustice](#) platform offers a unique opportunity to raise money through crowdfunding for specific legal cases. Rachael learned about this as a result of coverage of the platform's recent launch.

She identified this as being a great solution to a fundraising challenge faced by the organisation – to raise a substantial sum (£4,500) in a short timescale towards the case of Jamie Green. Jamie is Skipper of a crab fishing boat, based on the Isle of Wight. He and his 4 crew members were unwittingly caught up in Operation Disorient, a Serious Organised Crime Agency project to interrupt a huge international drug smuggling deal. Jamie is now serving 24 years in prison. He and his crew are collectively serving 104 years for a crime they did not commit.

Rachael persisted in advocating for trying this new method for funding legal activities, despite the concerns that her colleagues and other criminal appeals specialists had about navigating professional obligations and Legal Aid Agency requirements. She managed to find ways to accommodate these without compromising the campaign.

She worked closely with CrowdJustice and the families of Jamie and his crew to develop and promote [the campaign](#), which succeeded in hitting its target in just 8 days.

Not only did this make possible some vital work on the case that would otherwise have been unachievable, it also offered the men's family and friends a concrete way to do something to help them. This has given them a huge boost. Even more than that, it has given Jamie and the other men hope, knowing that so many people believe and support them.

If it weren't for TFN, we would not have had the capacity within the organisation to take on such a project.

**9. Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any significant change(s) which our donors would be interested to know about (these changes do not need to be related to the experience of presenting at TFN).**

Yes, as referred to above, we have successfully been granted authorisation by the Solicitors Regulation Authority to become the UK's first criminal appeals not-for-profit law firm. Having done so, we have forged a route for others to follow, opening up another option in the pursuit of access to justice, at a time when so many are being closed off.

As a law firm, we can now take on clients in our own right. We are starting by taking on pro bono clients, until we secure the legal aid contract, which would start in January 2016. The process of securing authorisation was long and complex, as the unusual structure proved challenging to translate into the SRA's requirements. Working with one of our Board members, who has compliance expertise, and a very co-operative caseworker at the SRA, we were able to get through the process.

**10. Do you have any other comments regarding TFN funding?**

The opportunity provided by the TFN was rare and treasured. An increasing number of funders are reluctant to put money towards paying for people. This is frustrating. In the charity sector, as in many others, the people are the main asset and producers of the organisation. In giving us the opportunity to take on a new resource to take over the resource development and communications work, our legal experts are now able to deploy their expertise where it is most needed. Showing such deep understanding, and long-term thinking is a hugely appreciated trait in a funder.

Moreover the process of presenting our work to the organisation offered us an invaluable opportunity to reflect and review. When working on a new project, it is easy to get caught up in it. Having the chance to present to an independent audience, and get real time feedback, is a hugely important sense check, and a way to keep things on track.

**11. Can you please include any relevant photos or clips that may relate to the project.**



Rachael Marsh (centre) speaking at the [Law Society Gazette's 'Access to Justice' round table](#), with Law Society President Andrew Kaplan (right) and CCA's Director Sophie Walker (left).