

**THE  
REHABILITATIVE  
PRISON**  
GOOD  
ENGAGEMENT  
WITH THE  
VOLUNTARY SECTOR

# J DO IT JUSTICE

## THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM EXPLAINED

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### Thanks

Thanks to staff from HM Prison Service, Community Rehabilitation Companies and voluntary sector organisations for their contribution to this publication.

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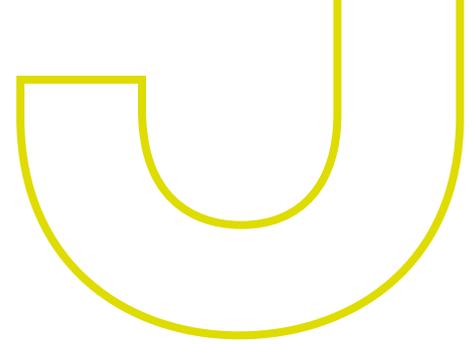
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**CLINKS**

**This resource is one of a series called Do it Justice, designed to provide easily accessible information on key aspects of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). This guide provides practical advice to support prison engagement with the voluntary sector. It forms part of Clinks' ongoing work to support the voluntary sector working in prisons in England and Wales.**

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## INTRODUCTION

This guide provides practical advice to support prison engagement with the voluntary sector.

The voluntary sector offers support to offenders and their families, help in offender rehabilitation, and through interventions contributes to the reduction of reoffending. Government policy emphasises the importance of the voluntary sector role, and recent changes in the commissioning landscape – through Transforming Rehabilitation – has accentuated the need for more joined up working between a whole range of delivery partners.

The voluntary sector continues to be a key service provider in custody, across the full scope of offender needs. New prison policy provides an opportunity to reaffirm the historical relationship between the statutory sector and the voluntary sector. As new partnerships develop and new stakeholders join the criminal justice landscape, the voluntary sector remains a crucial part of delivering a rehabilitative vision for prisons.

The voluntary sector is one of the named delivery partners within the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) *National Framework: Agreement for Services Commissioned from Public Sector Prisons in England from 2015*<sup>1</sup> and this Clinks guide can be used to support the NOMS Commissioning Intentions that form part of the NOMS document, as well as provide practice examples that can underpin the operational approaches

detailed in the NOMS *Rehabilitation Services Specification – Custody* document.<sup>2</sup>

This guide intends to support prisons to retain positive engagement with the voluntary sector in changing times and to make that engagement meaningful, professional and beneficial to all parties. It supports a joined up approach for stakeholders who have shared care of offenders.

### CLINKS' WORK WITH PRISONS

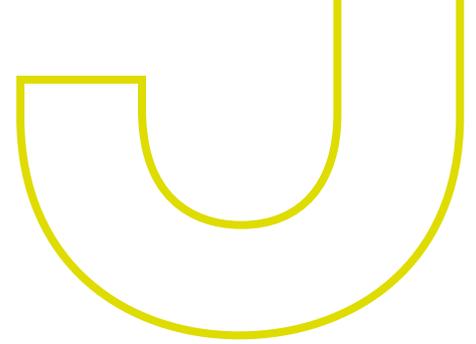
Clinks is the national membership body for voluntary sector organisations working in criminal justice. This enables us to represent the experience of over 600 member organisations working with offenders and their families.

Clinks also manages the National Alliance for Arts in Criminal Justice (NAACJ) which aims to ensure the arts are used within the CJS as a springboard for positive change. Many of NAACJ's member organisations work in prisons and secure settings.

In the last year we have spoken to Prison Service staff, Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and voluntary sector organisations working in prisons to hear what works well for them in terms of prison engagement with the voluntary sector. We have also spoken to the Chief Inspector of Prisons.

This has informed Clinks' guides and training for those in the voluntary sector working and volunteering in prisons, as

1. National Offender Management Services (2015) *National Framework: Agreement for Services Commissioned from Public Sector Prisons in England from 2015* [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/440516/National\\_Framework\\_-\\_England.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/440516/National_Framework_-_England.pdf)
2. National Offender Management Services (2015) *Rehabilitation Services Specification- Custody* [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/427957/2015-05-18\\_Rehab\\_Service\\_CU\\_Spec\\_P3.0.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/427957/2015-05-18_Rehab_Service_CU_Spec_P3.0.pdf)



well as contributing to policy papers and discussion documents aimed at identifying ways in which the relationship between prisons and the voluntary sector can be improved to deliver better outcomes for offenders and their families.

Historically, Clinks were one of the main developers of the original voluntary sector co-ordinator roles in prisons and also helped to shape the Prison Service *Order 4190: Strategy for Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector*. Clinks has published a number of related guides, including support for managing volunteers, evidencing impact and capturing user voice.

Practical support for partnerships between prisons and the voluntary sector has also been provided including events, training and the development of cross-sector criminal justice networks at a local level.

This new guide builds on that experience and the expertise of Clinks members, to support prisons to work effectively in partnership with the voluntary sector.

## THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN PRISON

The voluntary sector has a long history of working in prisons, and whilst there are cultural differences between the Prison Service and the voluntary sector, there is a common ground in the role of enabling offenders to engage in purposeful and rehabilitative activity whilst in custody and to return to the

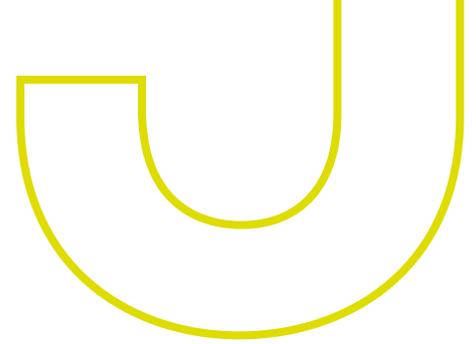
community with the support and skills to stop or reduce their offending behaviour.

The voluntary sector includes charities, but also other non-profit organisations, e.g. community groups, community interest companies (CICs), faith communities, social enterprises; and is sometimes referred to as the VCS or VCSE. People also use the terms the 'third sector' and 'civil society', which are broader terms incorporating all those that are not statutory or private sector.

The voluntary sector working in criminal justice includes small, volunteer-run community groups and large national organisations, which employ hundreds of people. Many use a mix of paid and voluntary staff. Thousands of voluntary sector organisations don't specifically target ex-offenders but include them within their clients because of the nature of their work.

Grants have been a key part of funding for the voluntary sector, but in recent years there has been a reduction in grant income as commissioned services become the norm. As with the public sector, the voluntary sector and its users are also heavily impacted by the challenging economic landscape and social and criminal justice policy changes.

In prisons the support from the voluntary sector covers both practical and emotional support to offenders, and services can also include translation, helplines, advocacy, legal advice, peer mentoring and support to visitors. Charities may also provide grant funding for individuals or activities.



The voluntary sector is particularly well placed to provide specialist interventions that reflect the diversity of the offender population, focusing on areas such as gender, race, disability, faith, age and sexual orientation. There are many niche organisations for groups such as veterans, foreign nationals, mothers and babies in prison; and networks that link common services e.g. around the arts, faith and sport. In addition, the voluntary sector remains a key provider of support for families of offenders.

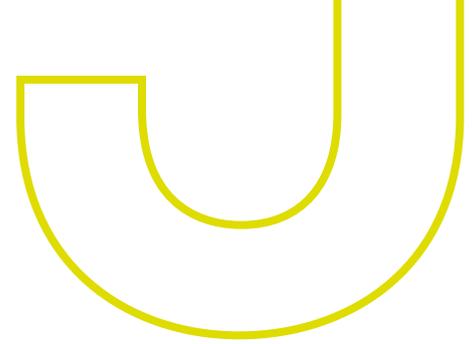
The voluntary sector can also enhance existing provision, e.g. development of prison industries and prison-based social enterprises; and can also be a work or volunteering placement option for release on temporary licence.

The sector plays a unique and valuable role in its work with offenders. It often engages with some of the most excluded communities, and those suffering multiple disadvantages – those who mainstream services fail to reach.

Most voluntary sector organisations in criminal justice are locally run. This local connection can give credibility with offenders and can help the sector to build and maintain trust with a group that can be difficult to engage with. It also helps to connect offenders with through-the-gate support and bridges the prison to the community.

Creativity and innovative approaches are a key trait of the sector and there

is strong evidence that key statutory stakeholders particularly value the ability of the voluntary sector to work flexibly and responsively, and that the voluntary sector can readily collaborate, making a significant contribution in prisons strategically as well as operationally.



# REHABILITATION TOGETHER

Economic constraints and public sector reform can impact heavily on capacity to meet the diverse and complex needs of offenders and their families. Working with a key stakeholder like the voluntary sector brings in additional expertise and specialist support in creating safe and decent environments and to meet the demands of running a rehabilitative regime.

The voluntary sector links into a wide range of other statutory agencies, so can enrich the partnerships prisons have with health, education, childrens' services and employment providers, as well as CRCs and the National Probation Service (NPS).

As an independent sector, the voluntary sector can help build relationships of trust with offenders. The voluntary sector is also a vital resource for retaining and building links back into an offender's local community and networks, and strengthening their family ties. With this prison-community bridging and a focus that often includes post-release, the voluntary sector work contributes to the journey of desistance and sits firmly alongside prison departments and stakeholders providing programmes, classes and workshops within the prison regime.

To build a strong partnership with the voluntary sector at both a strategic and operational level, there are a number of practical steps that prisons can take.

Five good practice points for engagement follow.

## 1 / MAKING LINKS WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Voluntary sector organisations work with prisons in multiple ways, through historical agreements with the prison and via contracts through other stakeholders e.g. health, education, employment/benefit advisors, CRCs and the NPS. Some organisations may come in via visits through previous links with an offender and others will be linked to the chaplaincy or visitor support arrangements. Some work through-the-gate or provide community work/volunteer placements. Knowing who they are, what they do and how and when they link to your prison is vital to prison strategy, offender management, security protocols and communication. You may also want to link with new organisations.

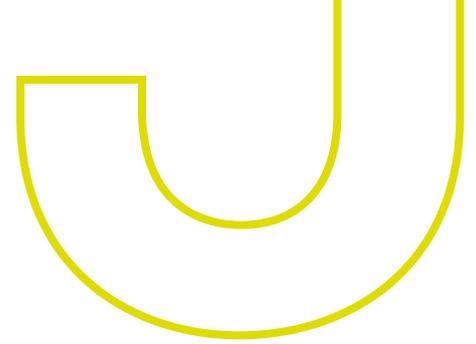
You can:

### MAP CURRENT PROVISION IN YOUR PRISON

Because of the diversity and volume of activity, this requires dedicated time. Remember the definition of who the voluntary sector is (some staff will not know if a service is voluntary sector or not, so it's best to list all organisations coming into the prison initially and then pull out the relevant ones). The mapping will help identify gaps and duplications and where support is restricted to particular geographic areas.

You need to consult:

- Organisations you have regular contact with, as they may know who else links with the prison



- All prison departments including chaplaincy
- CRC and other stakeholders
- Gate and visits staff who may book the organisations into the prison (Offenders may not disclose the name of services they link with via visits, as they may be providing support for abuse, sexual orientation, involvement in sex work, or other areas of sensitivity).

**TIP** | Mapping will also help develop further communication tools, like directories of services; and help prisons manage core day timetables when many different staff and interventions need to link with an offender to meet sentence plans and targets.

### LIAISE WITH YOUR LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANISATIONS

If you want to communicate with the voluntary sector to identify those that work in criminal justice, with a view to develop new partnerships or even just to announce some news to the sector, your local Council for Voluntary Services in England (County Voluntary Councils in Wales) might be able to help through their own networks. There are also regional groups and networks.

You can search the following directories to identify councils near you or in your release area(s):

- England: National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) <http://data.navca.org.uk/members/directory>

or the directory of

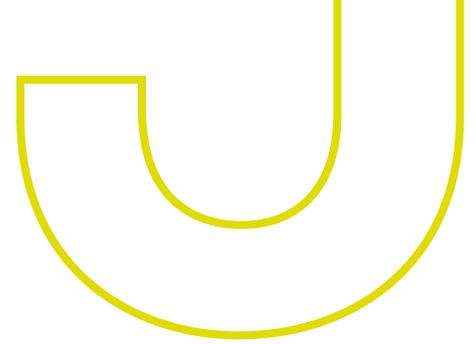
- Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) [www.wcva.org.uk/members-partners/county-voluntary-councils](http://www.wcva.org.uk/members-partners/county-voluntary-councils)
- Regional Voices [www.regionalvoices.org](http://www.regionalvoices.org)

**TIP** | Your existing partners may be members of a local or regional network or other voluntary sector partnerships already and will be able to link you into useful sub-networks like social care and housing providers.

### HOLD A VOLUNTARY SECTOR EVENT

Many prisons invite existing and potential new voluntary sector partners into the prison as part of a market day or resettlement fair. It is a way of linking with them as a group, enables staff and offenders to see what support services exist and it increases access and knowledge of the services. The format usually involves partners having stalls and providing information for offenders and can often be a place where offenders feel more comfortable making first contact with a service.

**TIP** | Work closely with gate staff, security and wing staff to ensure a warm welcome, safe movement of the organisations to the venue, clarify what can be brought into the prison and enable offenders to be moved with adequate time to engage in the event. Advertise the event internally and through the councils as mentioned above.



## 2 / KNOWING HOW THE WORK FITS AND HOW TO GET IT STARTED

To ensure the successful engagement and delivery of voluntary sector services in your prison, there needs to be clarity on a number of points. Some projects will be clear on your objectives and how their work fits in. Others will not have worked in a prison before and will benefit from understanding your rehabilitation strategy. By including information on the prison structures and systems in the discussion, this can help mitigate against any challenges to delivery further down the line.

You can:

### HAVE OPEN DISCUSSIONS WITH VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS AT A SENIOR LEVEL

Some questions to consider:

- What evidence do you and the organisation have that the proposed activity is needed?
- Is there potential for duplication of an existing service?
- Does the service need to meet targets for funders and what targets will they be contributing to in the prison?
- How will the service fit into the existing regime and how will the different prison departments and leads be aware of and support the service?
- What are the processes and agreed timescales for both parties for implementing the service?

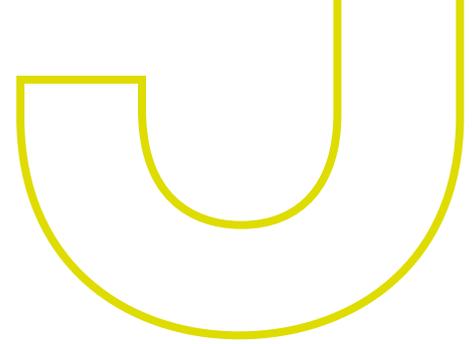
- As experts in their field, how can the organisation also contribute to your strategic plans and policy development?
- Will the interaction with offenders be on a one-to-one basis or as a group?
- Who will be the point of contact for the organisation for the day-to-day delivery (e.g. function head, senior wing staff, partnership co-ordinator)?
- How will the work feed into offender management and sentence plans?
- How can the needs of the diverse prison population be met by the service?
- What are the information sharing and confidentiality protocols that you will both use?
- How will you both ensure monitoring and evaluation of the service, including user feedback?

**TIP** | As frontline workers, the voluntary sector are well placed to identify a need in their client group or in the local community that is an unmet need in your prison population. They could provide you with evidence data and work in partnership with the prison to design a model that fills the gap.

### HELP THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR NAVIGATE THE PRISON SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

It's useful to explain:

- The staff structures
- The strategic leads and related boards/meetings that they may need to link with or attend



- Who your stakeholders and partners are
- How the core day operates
- How offenders access support services in the prison.

 **TIP** | A formal induction that covers systems and structures, security, safe working and a tour of the prison (with a walk through of the offenders' reception and visits process), will help organisations contextualise where their work fits and understand the realities of working in a prison.

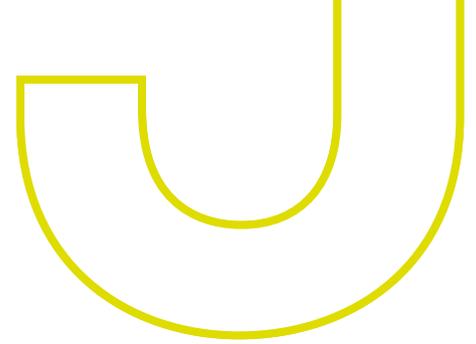
- Enable access for ex-offenders who may be part of the team?
- Add a service helpline to the prison Freephone system?

 **TIP** | The voluntary sector is very flexible in their approach and can be creative in how they deliver their service. Discuss the points above together and solutions could be easily reached, rather than the service stumble in its early days.

## PREDICT POTENTIAL BARRIERS

Can you:

- Mitigate against delays to delivery caused by security vetting backlogs (this can impact heavily on the service's ability to meet funding requirements, retain volunteers/staff and deliver the service/project within the time frame)?
- Provide keys or escorting staff to enable the voluntary sector organisation to move about the prison?
- Move offenders to the location as part of general movement or do you need staff to do that separately?
- Provide staff to be present during the support/activity if needed?
- Provide a space in a suitable location for the support/project to take place and a base for the staff member?
- Security-clear equipment or activities that form the work?
- Enable internet and phone access if required?



### 3 / CO-ORDINATING THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN YOUR PRISON

Developing an infrastructure for the voluntary sector in the prison will sustain the sector's contribution beyond the life of any particular project. Having an overview of all the services and a process to better co-ordinate them will increase the knowledge of services amongst staff and offenders, sustain referrals and develop a positive working relationship with the sector at an operational and strategic level. A co-ordinating role should be seen as integral to the operational and strategic management of reducing reoffending in the prison and supported at senior level.

You can:

#### HAVE A NAMED CO-ORDINATOR FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

They can:

- Support the induction process
- Maintain the directory of services (see below)
- Co-ordinate representation of the voluntary sector on relevant strategic boards/reducing reoffending pathways
- Run the market place events
- Ensure visitors are aware of the services that offenders can access
- Liaise with the Councils for Voluntary Services
- Advertise the services to offenders
- Support referral processes

- Produce a newsletter to promote voluntary sector engagement in the prison and link to information on the intranet system
- Liaise with gate and security staff about new voluntary sector staff.

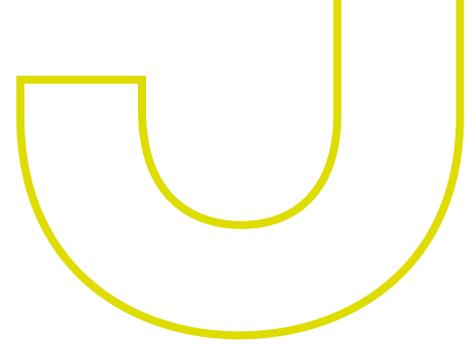
**TIP** | Work with the voluntary sector and prison staff to create an infrastructure that utilises current resource and capacity. Can you involve peer roles in the prison to promote services and operate some non-sensitive referrals via Prisoner Information Desks? Could you contract a voluntary sector organisation to provide a co-ordinator?

#### PRODUCE A DIRECTORY OF SERVICES

This is aimed at offenders but will be useful for staff and other partners too. Ideally this would be available as an electronic version too, published on the Ministry of Justice website. You can keep a separate list with contract dates, funding levels, etc. with the strategic documents.

The directory should contain:

- Alphabetically listed names of organisations (with logos to help identification)
- Simple explanation of the service provided
- Days and times when the organisation is in the prison
- Where the service operates (e.g. induction wing, health unit, education).
- How to access the service/referral routes
- The date of directory production and when a review and update is due



- Contact name for updating the directory detail
- List of directory locations (this will help when you need to recall and update the directory version).

 **TIP** | Think about how the directory information might need to be presented differently:

- Is it accessible for differing literacy levels?
- Do you need an electronic version for staff and offenders to access?
- Do you need it translated into different languages? If so could you use the Google Translate facility on an electronic version?
- Could you also use prison radio or TV systems to promote the services/activities?

## 4 / COMMUNICATING WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Prisons have high operational pressures and within that there is vital information about offenders, internal functions, policy, etc. that staff are dealing with regularly and which can change rapidly. Along with strategic discussions, there is a large amount of day-to-day and developmental information to be shared too.

The voluntary sector needs to be able to operate in an informed and safe way, so the flow of information on all these things need to be managed effectively and consistently. There need to be mechanisms in place so that the voluntary sector can also feed in data, intelligence and expertise.

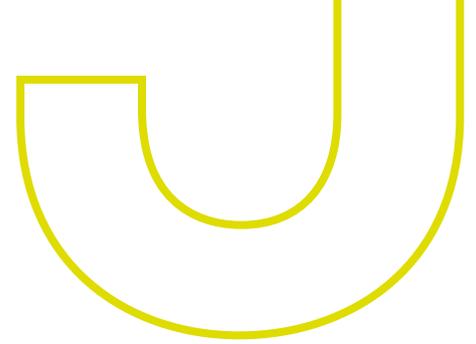
You can:

### INCLUDE THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN YOUR MEETINGS (WHICH MAY VARY FROM PRISON TO PRISON)

Invite voluntary sector representation on:

- Morning operational meetings (for organisations that are in the prison regularly)
- Reducing Reoffending meetings
- Resettlement Pathway meetings
- Departmental meetings.

 **TIP** | If you set up a voluntary sector forum, you can bring the voluntary sector together regularly to update them on key information and give them opportunity



to feedback as a group. This should be chaired by senior prison staff. It should not be instead of voluntary sector engagement at any of the meetings listed above, which will still be of importance.

### DEVELOP SYSTEMS FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR TO FEED INTO OFFENDER MANAGEMENT AND VICE VERSA

Include opportunities for the voluntary sector to:

- Alert wings to their presence and to communicate any issues
- Feed into safer custody policy and practice around self-harm and mental health concerns
- Record activities for sentence plans
- Contribute to resettlement and post-release plans
- Be informed of release dates/prison moves.

**TIP** | If senior staff are regularly articulating the contribution the voluntary sector is making to the regime, it will help to develop productive working relationships between the voluntary sector and frontline prison staff.

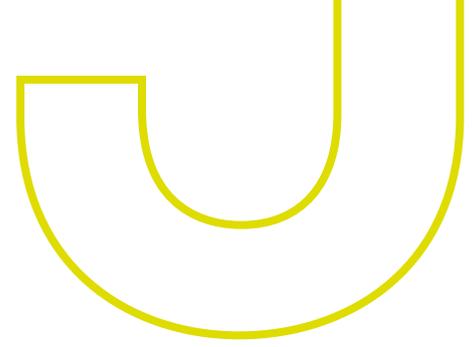
### PRE-EMPT KEY CONCERNS

The voluntary sector will need to know how to:

- Get support related messages and information to the offenders or prison departments
- If they do not have a radio, how to contact prison staff
- Respond to or operate alarms

- Alert prison staff to self-harm/ suicide incidents
- Report incidents that breach equality protocols
- Respond and manage services when there is a security alert/lockdown
- Contact the Independent Monitoring Board.

**TIP** | Provide some direct numbers to the voluntary sector for key prison staff, so that they are able to communicate in a timely manner and get through to the correct staff when needed.



## 5 / SHARING SKILLS

Both sectors have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, which when shared can bring mutual understanding of each other's roles and also develop staff skills. If capacity allows, bringing operational and voluntary sector staff together to share skills and learning is highly beneficial for developing the prison-voluntary sector partnership and can contribute to a joint understanding and approach to rehabilitation.

You can:

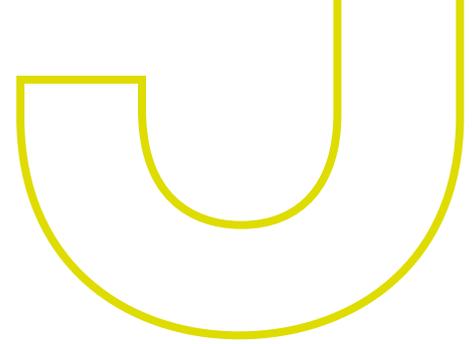
### LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO BRING THE STAFF TOGETHER

Consider:

- Supporting joint working on strategies or in developing new initiatives
- Enabling voluntary sector staff to safely shadow an officer for the day to see their experience
- Prison staff visiting organisations in the community to see the range of work and post-release support
- Staff presenting at each other's team meetings/conferences
- Writing joint articles for publications and annual reviews
- Attending voluntary sector partnership events
- Joint delivery of inductions for new voluntary sector staff using voluntary sector resources (e.g. Clinks' Working in Prison training – see Further information section), alongside a prison tour and security awareness training

- Including awareness of the voluntary sector as part of prison staff development training.

 **TIP** | Provide places at each other's training sessions on areas such as breakaway techniques, health and safety, substance misuse, supporting, mental health issues, and hidden sentence training (the impact of imprisonment on families of offenders).



## FURTHER INFORMATION

This short document is to give some basic guidance to improve engagement with the voluntary sector. You may be doing some of this already, or be looking to introduce a more formal structure. To develop engagement further, talk to Clinks staff about your ideas. Contact: [info@clinks.org](mailto:info@clinks.org) or 0207 383 0966.

Clinks run a training course on working in prison for voluntary sector staff and volunteers who work in prisons. It aims to help develop an understanding of the prison environment, offender population, safe working and support the delivery of an effective service by skilled staff in a secure setting. It can complement prison induction processes and can be jointly delivered as part of that induction.

You may find some of Clinks' other resources helpful:



### DIRECTORY OF OFFENDER SERVICES

The directory contains information about over 900 organisations and projects working with offenders and their families. Enter a place name, organisation, or use the search filters provided to find the service you need.

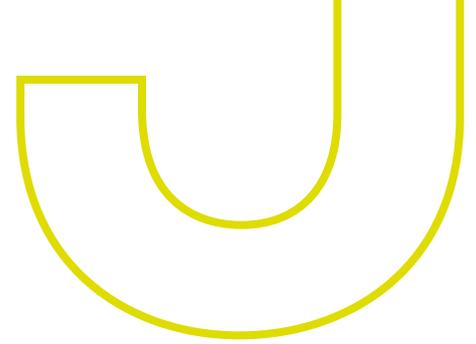
 [www.clinks.org/directory](http://www.clinks.org/directory)



### NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR ARTS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The National Alliance for Arts in Criminal Justice is managed by Clinks and is the leading national network supporting the arts in criminal justice. The alliance aims to ensure the arts are used within the CJS as a springboard for positive change.

 [www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk](http://www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk)



## JUST MENTORING

The directory contains information about over 200 services that provide mentoring support to adults with convictions in England and Wales. The directory is easy to search, and you can request a referral for yourself, a family member, friend or client directly to the relevant contact through the site.

 [www.clinks.org/directories/justmentoring](http://www.clinks.org/directories/justmentoring)



## DO IT JUSTICE

The Do it Justice series of resources is designed to provide easily accessible information on key aspects of the Criminal Justice System to support the development of services that assist people in their desistance from criminal behaviour.

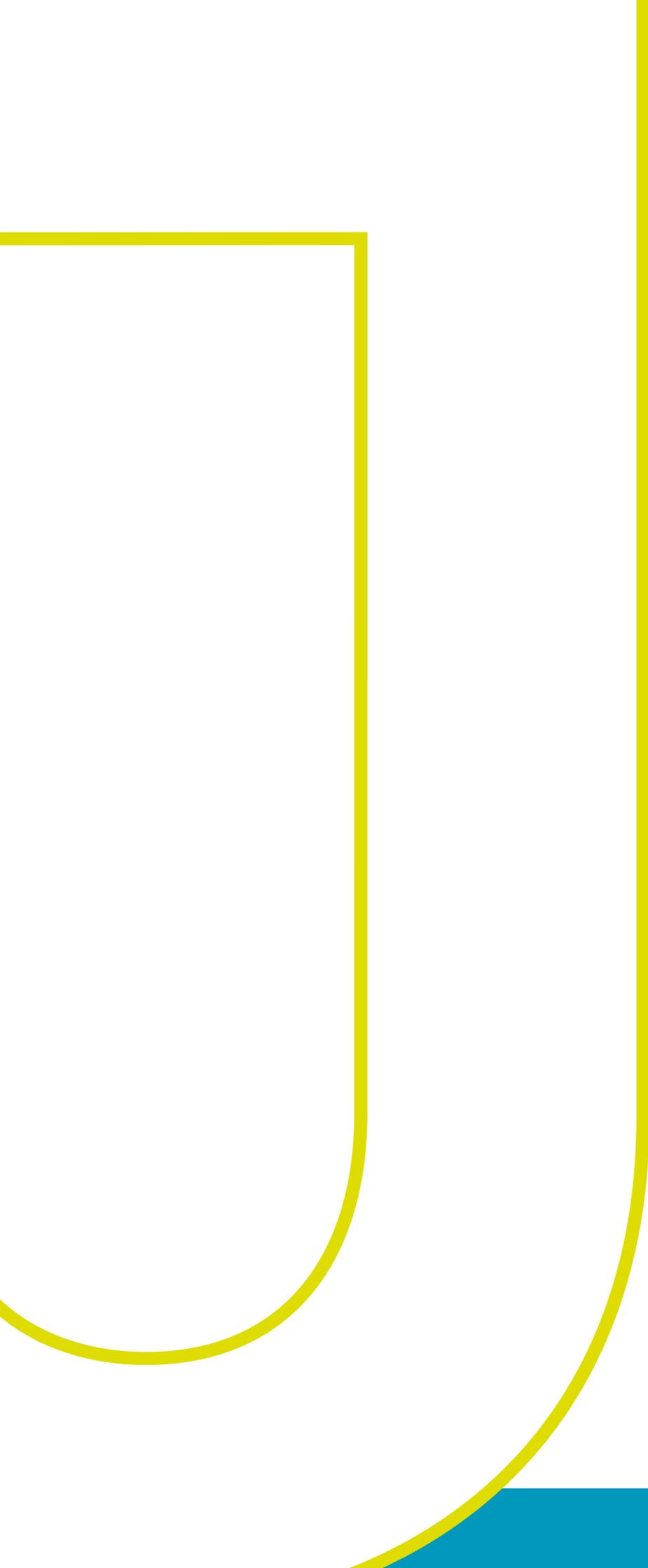
 [www.clinks.org/criminal-justice/do-it-justice](http://www.clinks.org/criminal-justice/do-it-justice)



## GUIDE TO SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION

A guide providing a structured and accessible introduction to involving people with lived experience of criminal justice in your work, including examples of good practice, checklists, top tips and signposting to further information and support.

 [www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement](http://www.clinks.org/serviceuserinvolvement)



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