



Minutes from Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) Special Interest Group on Commissioning Family Services

27 April 2016

Attending:

Patrice Lawrence	Clinks (Secretariat)
Richard Nicholls	Clinks (Chair)
Gabrielle Lee	NOMS
Richard Booty	NOMS
David Reeve	Addaction
Jill Greenfield	Barnardo's
Joanna McIntosh	HACRO (Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders)
Susan Cooke	i-Hop
Lee Stephenson	Jigsaw Visitors Centre
Alison Goddard	Lincolnshire Action Trust
Helen Attewell	NEPACS
Mark Proctor	Ormiston
Tina Parker	Pact
Diane Curry	POPS
Charlotte Weinberg	Safe Ground
Nicola Didlock	Spurgeons
Sarah Hillier	Spurgeons
Becki Navarro	St Giles Trust

Apologies:

Emma Wells	Futures Unlocked
Evan Jones	St Giles Trust

1. Introductions and welcomes

The members of the Special Interest Group introduced themselves. Becki Navarro of St Giles Trust and Alison Goddard of Lincolnshire Action Trust joined the Group. Gabrielle Lee and Richard Booty joined the meeting for the main item.

2. Reviewing the notes of the previous meeting

Richard Nicholls introduced the purpose of the meeting. The RR3 Special Interest Group on Commissioning Family Services will meet at least four times before September 2016 while NOMS is reviewing its commissioning processes. If the commissioning process is not finalised by that time, the Special Interest Group may opt to meet beyond that period. Diane Curry is a member of the RR3 and will feedback to it from this Special Interest Group.

The meeting discussed the role of this Special Interest Group, and the RR3 in general, in delivering a strategic response to the commissioning process. The Group was concerned that the delay in finalising the process for commissioning is having a detrimental impact on the delivery of services. Experienced staff, worried about job security, are likely to leave. A member reported that some governors believed that autonomy had already been developed and were trying to renegotiate terms of the current visitor centre contracts that have been extended.

The Group also discussed standards for visitor centre services. The Visitor Centre Standards referred to in the previous meeting could not be found. However, while the Group agreed that standards are important, there was concern that some prisons might provide the most basic service recommended by the standards. For instance, a standard about providing refreshments could, in one prison, mean a vending machine, while in another it is a café selling healthy food and snacks.

3. Commissioning update from Gabrielle Lee and Richard Booty

Richard and Gabrielle are the new points of contact for the work on commissioning services; the Commissioning Strategies project has been handed over to the Prison Reform Group, which is why Chantel King, who attended the previous meeting, is no longer the contact for the Group.

Both Gabrielle and Richard come from operational backgrounds. Gabrielle has worked in the Probation Service in Yorkshire and the prison service at governor level in the north east of England. Richard has an exclusively prison background, including recently governor of HMP Cardiff.

Gabrielle and Richard updated the Group on both the prison reform programme and the procurement process.

The prison reform programme will be unfolding over the next twelve months and is currently in the process of scoping information, including a prison population review, an exploration of prison categorisation and a review of all aspects of offender management including IT, staffing and partnership with CRCs and the NPS.

The process of enabling governors' autonomy also has to be agreed; the current system has a legislative base and is shaped by national PSIs and union agreements about employment terms and conditions.

The aim is for the commissioning tender specifications to be ready by summer so that services can be delivered from March/April 2017.

The budget is in place for the delivery of services from 2017, but the procurement process is at the stage of collecting information to determine the scope of the tender. There is considerable interest about families of prisoners at NOMS and the MoJ. There has been a coordination of internal knowledge regarding work with families from across the department incorporating areas such as offender behaviour, outcome measures, relationship education and psychological services. There is also consultation with governors and DCCs.

ACTION: Richard/Gabriel to send the Group information about the different areas in NOMS/MoJ influenced by work with the families of prisoners – by end May 2016

NOMS has a list of all institutions where family services have been procured. However some services, especially those not be receiving money from the MoJ, may not be on the list. Procurement protocols mean that the MoJ list cannot be shared.

The key outcomes focus is on reducing reoffending and reducing intergenerational offending. It is important that there are links with other government departments, for instance, the Troubled Families agenda requires effective cross-sector working. Group members' experiences of working with Troubled Families agencies locally is varied.

ACTION: Gabrielle Lee asked members to contact her with information, ideas and experience of working with Troubled Families.

There were two key discussion points.

Governors' autonomy. The contract for services may have to be negotiated separately with every individual prison. Organisations that have been commissioned regionally will lose out on economies of scale, spend considerable time bidding for different contracts several times over while negotiating relationships with several contract managers. In addition, there will be the loss of strategic overview that enables organisations and the families they work with to contribute to regional policy and service development.

The continuation of three-year contracts were also questioned; Transforming Rehabilitation contracts are five years long and substance abuse service contracts can be awarded for between five and ten years.

Budget reallocation. One of the key principles for the reallocation of the budget for services for prisoners' families is 'fairness'. The ideal is that every prison offers services for families. At the moment, the standard and availability of services is widely variable, with a significant number of prisons offering no services at all. The Group rejected the idea that existing funding could be reallocated, reducing funding in some areas and funding new services in prisons that are without anything. This would mean that some well-regarded services would be cut, both by the reduction in MoJ grant and any match funding it currently attracts. New services would also need a period of development and capacity-building requiring additional funding.

It was suggested that the MoJ approach should be reversed – rather than trying to fit services to money, commissioners should find out what services families need and then fit money around that.

4. AOB

There was no other business.

The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday 12th July from 2pm to 5pm.**