



## Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3)

The Ministry of Justice, Petty France

London SW1H 9AJ

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018

### Present:

- Anne Fox – Clinks (chair)
- Martin Blakebrough – Kaleidoscope
- Linda Bryant– Together for Mental Wellbeing
- Rod Clarke- Prisoners Education trust
- Richy Cunningham- Recovery Connections
- Diane Curry – Partners of Prisoners
- Peter Dawson – Prison Reform Trust
- Mohammad Hanif – Arooj
- Nicky Park – St Giles Trust
- Chris Stacey– Unlock
- Riana Taylor – Circles UK
- Khatuna Tsintsadze- Zahid Mubarek Trust
- Emma Wells– Community Chaplaincy Association
- Tracy Wild- Langley House Trust
- Bettina Crossick – HMPPS
- George Barrow- Ministry of Justice
- Becky Wyse- Ministry of Justice
- Rhian Williams- Ministry of Justice
- Nathan Dick- Ministry of Justice
- Duncan O’Leary- New Futures Network
- Adebola Fabunmi- Ministry of Justice
- Dan Mills- Ministry of Justice
- Paula Williams- Youth Justice Board
- Will Downs – Clinks (secretariat)

### 1. Introductions, minutes and actions

- 1.1. Apologies were received from Laura Seebohm, *Changing Lives* and Jacob Tas, *Nacro*.
- 1.2. **RR3 membership updates:** Two new members were introduced- Khatuna Tsintsadze (KT), *Zahid Mubarek Trust* and Tracy Wild (TW), *Langley House Trust*.
  - 1.2.1. KT was appointed for her specialism in providing specific support to black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in contact with the criminal justice system. She has been co-opted onto the group take over from Jeremy Crook until May 2019.
  - 1.2.2. TW takes up the housing specialist position from Beverly Williams, who has moved to a role outside of the housing sector. TW was appointed after an open competitive recruitment process.
  - 1.2.3. Richy Cunningham (RC) has moved to a new role at Recovery Connections, but it has been agreed that he retains his seat on the board as he remains within an organisation working within his specialism of drug and alcohol services.
  - 1.2.4. Jacob Tas will be vacating his position on the RR3 in May 2019 when he leaves Nacro. The Chair and secretariat will recruit to fill his role as a priority, with the aim of having someone in place for the next meeting to ensure expertise of a large service provider is retained with no gap.

ACTION 1: Secretariat to share updated contact list with the group.

ACTION 2: Chair and secretariat to recruit for the large provider specialist role as soon as possible, with the expectation of successful applicant attending the next meeting and overlapping tenure with Jacob Tas.

- 1.3. **Actions and minutes from last meeting:** Minutes from the last meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> September were approved. Anne Fox (AF) reviewed actions from that meeting, which were all on track or had been completed.

ACTION 3: AF to share notes from her discussion with George Barrow and Linda Bryant on the learning from an RR3 secondment to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (this meeting was a follow-up action from September meeting)

ACTION 4: George Barrow to speak to Catherine Pearson regarding Nicky Park's offer of support to run focus groups to inform the development of women's residential centres (follow-up action from September meeting).

ACTION 5: Anne Fox to speak to Richy Cunningham about examples of residential rehabs working well, to support Catherine Pearson with working through the women's residential centre model (follow-up action from September meeting).

## 2. HMPPS and MoJ update

- 2.1. **Mental Health Act Review:** George Barrow (GB) said the final report from the independent Mental Health Act review was due imminently. The department were preparing their response. Government are expected to make positive commitments, extending to legislation.
- 2.2. **Staff changes at MoJ:** GB said two Director General positions were merging into one, with Mark Sweeney taking overall control and Justin Russell leaving. Rod Clarke (RC) highlighted that this was a very large policy brief (covering probation, prison, courts, data), and that there may be challenges in maintaining focus on so many policy areas.
- 2.2.1. GB also said Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are recruiting for a new CEO following Michel Spurr stepping down. Bettina Crossick (BC) said that Michael Spurr had been a strong advocate for the voluntary sector, and that she wanted to retain that support going forward.
- 2.2.2. GB said Phil Copple has been appointed the Director General, Prisons and Amy Rees the Director General, Probation (in addition to her current role as director of HMPPS in Wales).

## 3. New Futures Network

- 3.1. **Context to the New Futures Network:** Duncan O'Leary (DO), *New Futures Network* explained the New Futures Network, announced in the [education and employment strategy](#), was a part of the prison service which brokered partnerships between prisons and employers to replace skills gaps for employers, provide work for people during custody and employment on release. It replaces ONE3ONE solutions.
- 3.2. **ROTL:** DO said they want to use release on temporary licence (ROTL) to build work experience towards the end of people's sentence. He said that there are people already working in prisons, and they wanted to link such people up to relevant jobs on the outside.
- 3.3. **Structure:** DO said the New Futures Network has a hub and spoke structure. The hub is a central team largely based in London who engage with large national employers. The

spokes are individuals tasked with creating partnerships with small and medium-sized businesses, based in each geographical prison group ([see breakdown of prison groups here](#)). The three early adopter areas are in Yorkshire, Tees and Wear and Wales. He said recruitment for all roles will be completed in the new year.

- 3.4. **Priority sectors:** Five sectors have been identified as priorities: catering; retail; construction; manufacturing; and agriculture/ horticulture. The decision to choose these as priority sectors was based on building upon existing activity in prisons, identifying sectors where there was demand for employees, and sectors with limited practical barriers to employment for people with convictions. They will appoint pro-bono business ambassadors for each sector.
- 3.5. **Working with the voluntary sector:** DO said they wanted to complement, add volume and quality to existing provision. They know that voluntary organisations already do great work in that area, and rely on funding for that work, and they do not wish to compete directly.
  - 3.5.1. AF thanked DO and welcomed this approach. She said however that the value of voluntary sector services is that they are not statutory, and they broker on behalf of the individual (instead of the employer), provide wraparound support and walk alongside people through their journey. She said these organisations are typically very small and were concerned about the impact the New Futures Network could have on their work.
  - 3.5.2. CS suggested that there is a risk that the programme is seen as more ambitious than resources allow and there is a risk that charitable funders will not fund organisations to work with employers as they believe that is covered by New Futures Network.
- 3.6. **Capacity of employers and quality of work placements:** RC suggested employers lacked experience of how to support people with lived experience in employment and make appropriate adjustments (i.e. to enable them to attend meetings related to their conviction in work hours). Diane Curry (DC) and Nicky Park (NP) echoed this, asking who would do the work around confidence, understanding the workplace environment and ensuring wraparound support, as this is necessary to ensure people who are able to enter work can sustain it. DO accepted building capacity of employers was difficult, given their limited staff, and over 100 prisons to work with.

ACTION 6: RR3 group members to engage in further conversation with Duncan O’Leary about the quality of work placements.

- 3.7. **Capacity of prisons:** KT raised concerns that good initiatives don’t always get taken up in understaffed, chaotic prisons. DO was asked whether they planned to make qualifications and training relevant to the priority sectors available within prisons. DO said they were trying to build capacity in the system- for example through developing simple materials to help both people in prison and employers understand ROTL.
- 3.8. **Measurements of success:** A number of questions were raised on how the New Futures Network planned to measure success. DO said they will track progress made on a number of measures, including participation in workshops, use of ROTL and employment on release. DO said you can also measure the number of P45s issued, though this had issues, including missing self-employed people. He suggested some evidence could be collected through internal quarterly statistics, but that they might not be able to publish these. Peter Dawson (PD) advised it is not useful collecting data that couldn’t be published.
  - 3.8.1. The group agreed that measuring employment on release was not sufficient, and that it was more important to measure who had sustained employment over a period of

time. PD said that an employment on release sends the wrong message that getting someone into work is the only priority. NP stated that voluntary organisations often have to report whether they had sustained employment after six months. PD suggested that employment after three months should be considered a minimum standard.

3.8.2. DO recognised a sustained employment measure was also needed. He said that 14 days after employment had originally been suggested, but he is pushing for longer. DO invited comments from the group on how to measure success.

3.8.3. The group asked whether they planned to rely on data provided by Community Rehabilitation Company's (CRCs). DO said he was wary of relying on such info, and suggested they can cross-reference data with the number of P45s issued in a given area.

**ACTION 7:** secretariat to circulate contact details for Duncan O'Leary to the RR3 group, and individual members to advise Duncan on appropriate measurements of success for the New Futures Network.

3.9. **Reputation:** AF highlighted that the perception of the New Futures Network was not positive and Chris Stacey (CS) asked DO how they planned to communicate to the sector. DO said that they would soon have their own website, with clear statements on their way of working, and potentially a voluntary sector section on the website. DO also offered to communicate through individual organisations' platforms. AF suggested he could write a blog on the Clinks website.

**ACTION 8:** Anne Fox to discuss with Duncan O'Leary about writing a blog on the Clinks website explaining the New Futures Network.

3.10. **Wales:** Martin Blakebrough (MB) suggested that DO connect with the European-funded Out of Work Service in Wales and the Dyfodol project in Wales.

**ACTION 9:** Martin Blakeborough to put Duncan O'Leary in contact with agencies in Wales relevant to the work of the New Futures Network.

3.11. **Small businesses:** Mohammed Hanif (MH) asked about the emphasis of larger organisations, given that from his experience, its small organisations that employ more people who have convictions and are more dedicated to them.

#### **4. Youth Justice**

4.1. **Update on secure schools:** Dan Mills (DM), *MoJ*, said that government made a commitment to build two secure schools following the Taylor Review in 2016. They believed that expertise of alternative school provision was to some extent transferable to the custodial estate. MoJ have recently published the how-to apply guidance for interested providers, which mirrors the Department for Education's free schools framework. March is the deadline for applications and MoJ have received three expressions of interest to date. Once application process is completed, they will work closely with the chosen applicant to develop their plans for delivery.

4.2. **Commissioning models:** DM said their commissioning approach for secure schools will avoid rewarding/ punishing providers against contracted performance metrics. Instead, the commissioning approach resembles a partnership between the MoJ and the provider built around shared values.

4.2.1. NP asked whether the secure schools delivery models would be trauma informed. DM said they recognised that the MoJ doesn't fully understand the complexity of young people in custody- but that organisations who work with them every day do. He therefore said MoJ weren't being too prescriptive, but were principally focussed on a clear alignment of values.

4.3. **Measuring success:** PD welcomed the change in approach but said the only way to see if it works is to ask people on the receiving end of it. He asked DM how they planned to measure this. DM said Ofsted and Care Quality Commission would carry out inspections and that appropriate performance management would be developed with the provider. PD recommended that independent from performance management or inspections, young people had to be asked whether they felt treated like an individual. DM said they welcomed engagement on performance management and how to measure success.

**ACTION 10:** Secretariat to circulate Dan Mills' contact details to the RR3 group so they can advise him on performance management measures for secure schools.

4.4. **Site:** Emma Wells (EW) asked whether the MoJ would be using the same model and awarding contracts for both sites to the same organisation. DM said different organisations could be awarded contracts but the core model would be the same. DC asked whether the second secure school site would be in the north. DM said there were resource challenges and no solid commitments had been made beyond the first secure school.

4.5. **Resettlement:** Paula Williams (PW), Youth Justice Board (YJB) said resettlement is one of the YJB's seven priorities. In September they published [How to Make Resettlement Constructive](#), which aimed to provide an overarching theory of change to resettlement. PW offered to share a slide deck on resettlement.

**ACTION 11:** Secretariat to share the Youth Justice Board slide deck on resettlement from Paula Williams.

4.6. **Families:** DC questioned why the *How to Make Resettlement Constructive* document did not discuss the importance of families. PW said that was an oversight and they recognised that family was of immediate importance.

4.7. **BAME:** KT praised the document, though questioned why there was only one sentence about ethnicity given the disproportionate number of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in the youth justice system. PW said BAME disproportionality is one of the YJB's other priorities, with its own work stream taking forward recommendations from [the Lammy Review](#). She suggested the lead for this work, Adam Mooney, would be willing to come to a future meeting.

4.8. **Cross-government working:** A question was asked about how YJB linked their work to other networks. PW said their priorities were ambitious and that for resettlement and transitions, a cross-governmental approach was needed. PW said the YJB have held a number of roundtables with the Youth Justice System Oversight Group. PW said transitions to adulthood was a difficult area for them because they lacked influence in the adult criminal justice system. GB said he would discuss with PW what links could be made with the probation review work that is currently considering young adult provision.

**ACTION 12:** George Barrow to discuss with Paula Williams about linking the Youth Justice Board to relevant work in adult criminal justice system, in particular the probation review.

- 4.9. **Cultural shift required:** LB said a cultural shift was necessary when working with children and young people. She expressed concern that the paper didn't recognise children and young people are very often not responsible for where they've ended up. AF emphasised the importance of 'child first' principles, which required cross-departmental understanding. PW said it was intended to be a brief document and agreed a cultural shift was needed. PD also said the trauma of entering prison was under-acknowledged by some in the system and that the YJB were working with the MOJ on sentence planning process and induction processes. DC criticised the fact induction processes for children were still not up to standard.
- 4.10. **Employment and education:** CS suggested that there was a connection between the YJB work and that of the New Futures Network, and work with YOTs getting young people into further education. CS suggested work was needed to ensure YOTs don't only provide colleges and universities only with negative information about a young person. PW acknowledged there was a lot of work around employment, citing [the Corbett Network](#) and said she was already talking to DO about the New Futures Network. She accepted that YJB had been partially responsible for the prevalence of a 'risk narrative', suggesting some Youth Teams too often allowed risk to guide their thinking.

ACTION 13: Chris Stacey to follow up with Paula Williams about how youth teams can work better with colleges and universities.

- 4.11. **Infrastructure:** TW praised *How to Make Resettlement Constructive* but raised concerns that it would not succeed if the infrastructure is not there to support it, as suggested in inspection reports which highlights boys eating meals on their own in their cells. PW agreed and said there were opportunities to move the narrative to constructive resettlement.

## 5. Probation

- 5.1. **Update on probation reform:** Nathan Dick (ND), *MoJ* said the aim of probation reform was for stability, simplification and steady improvement- not revolution. He said the MoJ had provided an additional £22m to fund enhanced Through the Gate services before new contracts commence in 2020.
- 5.2. **Minimum standards:** ND said they were considering minimum standards on monthly contact, including the kind of contact that would be (e.g. face-to-face or telephone). They are also considering minimum standards on training requirements of the workforce. He said it was difficult to strike a balance between innovation and stability, with the reforms leaning towards stability.
- 5.3. **Voluntary sector involvement:** ND said they are keeping mixed-market delivery. He said they were developing a voluntary sector strategy for the procurement process, which they are working with Clinks on. They are looking at how voluntary organisations could become strategic delivery partners (e.g. Tier 1 partners), and also how they could protect voluntary organisations in supply chains. He said that where voluntary organisations were involved in supply chains, there would be mechanisms to ensure providers were specific about how they intend to involve organisations and ensure contracts are in place early. He said the MoJ are exploring other means to encourage voluntary sector involvement, including parent company guarantees, pre-qualifying criteria and how to encourage consortia to apply. Market engagement events hosted by Clinks are being held in February in York, London and Bristol.

- 5.4. **Personnel:** ND said Jim Barton, Deputy Director, is the senior responsible officer for the programme and Luke Taylor, Deputy Director, has responsibility for policy and informing Ministers. There are design leads for a number of areas including workforce, vulnerable cohorts, IT requirements, unpaid work, estates, transition and mobilisation, devolution and regional structures (including Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) working groups). There is also a team shaping the HMPPS regional director role and a whole team focused on Wales, who are pursuing a different model with a separate process and timescale.
- 5.5. **Future engagement:** ND said they recently held a meeting, including with people outside of the programme, to run through their initial design ideas and were pleased with how it went. AF explained that Clinks were involved in this meeting, following the signing of a non-disclosure agreement Clinks has signed in order to support the programme from the experience of the voluntary sector, meaning that Clinks couldn't share details. AF said that it was a positive experience and she felt the concerns and points raised on behalf of the sector were listened to. ND said future market engagement dates were planned in December, which are detailed on their website. He also said the MoJ will be holding market warming events prior to ministerial sign-off in the New Year. Events are also planned with PCCs in every new contract package area.
- 5.6. **Communications:** Communication of the review's progress will continue via a new website, through various forums and, specifically with the voluntary sector, through Clinks. ND also said they were putting final touches on a communication strategy. The MoJ are planning a "you said, we did" response to the consultation exercise.
- 5.7. **Service user involvement:** CS asked about service user involvement in the consultation. ND said they created guidance for organisations to consult with service users and heard from 180 service users in total. ND said they would consult a service user advisory group for specification/ procurement, particularly around types, modes and frequency of contact. ND accepted that service user involvement could have been better.
- 5.8. **Workload projections:** PD asked what the MoJ were doing to better project how many people will come out of prison, and therefore predict the workload of those contracted to provide probation services. ND said data was improving, and that they would also use more flexible payment models, based on actual caseloads which should ensure people get the resource for the whole volume.
- 5.9. **Smaller organisations:** DC asked whether provisions were being made for smaller organisations in the voluntary sector strategy. ND said they were considering if there were particular areas where they would like to see specialist service delivery by smaller voluntary organisations, but the commercial team were concerned that prioritising one sector over others could contravene procurement law. He said they would weight bids favourably towards quality over cost, which would benefit voluntary organisations with strong track records.
- 5.10. **Bypassing the rate card:** NP asked whether there was any desire to support those in regional roles to fund voluntary sector services directly, rather than everything going through CRCs. ND said consideration was being given to mechanisms for commissioning services for people who have common needs but across different risk categories, outside of the rate card system. It was suggested the HMPPS regional role could play a role in that.
- 5.11. AF thanked Nathan and said that probation was a priority for the group that they would like to revisit.

## 6. Reducing Reoffending Board

- 6.1. **Last meeting update:** Becky Wyse (BW) and Rhian Williams (RW) provided an update on the reducing reoffending board (RRB). The last RRB meeting took place on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November. BW said David Lidington MP (Minister for the Cabinet Office) and a good cohort of ministers attended, including Amber Rudd MP (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions). At the meeting, the RRB discussed a paper from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), focussed on ensuring people have housing on release from prison.
- 6.2. **Actions from the last meeting:** BW said she had not seen the actions yet from the latest meeting. BW said that the RRB were continuing to follow up actions from their previous meeting in June, including actions around Universal Credit (UC) and bank accounts. She said these issues remained a priority of the board and that they were monitoring work taking place in Norwich and Wayland and exploring whether they could involve challenger banks.
  - 6.2.1. CS said he recently met with Rory Stewart MP (Minister of State for Prisons), and was planning a briefing to the minister on bank accounts.

ACTION 14: Becky Wyse to share what information she can with Chris Stacey on RRB work on bank accounts.

- 6.3. **Holding ministers to account:** PD asked how many of the actions from the June meeting were completed and AF said she hoped that people were being held to account against actions that were realistic and at the right level. BW said she thought at least half had been completed, and those that couldn't be solved in the short term were underway or on track, such as long term actions around Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and MoJ working together to ensure everyone leaving prison has access to UC.
  - 6.3.1. PD said government should already be working together. He said there needed to be uncomfortable conversations at these meetings. BW agreed with the challenge but said that ministers did come under scrutiny at the November meeting.
- 6.4. **Treasury paper:** BW said the RRB discussed a paper from the treasury at the November meeting, which looked at the impact of direct public spend on preventing reoffending. This paper is to help the board identify areas where there is a good return on investment and putting more money into such areas. BW said that this might inform joint submissions to the spending review.
  - 6.4.1. AF and DC questioned the treasury's narrow focus on costs related to reoffending. DC said the impact on families of reoffending must be seen as a primary cost. AF said that a previous paper on costs of female offending didn't include the costs of looked after children, which she saw as an omission. BW said the same team responsible for costing the report AF mentioned were responsible for the treasury report presented to the RRB, so they could draw lessons. She said they were not looking at looked after children as they decided to draw the line specifically at direct spend related to offending rather than cost to the public purse.
    - 6.4.2. RC said it was great to hear of potential joint submissions to the spending review however, the government inadvertently spends a lot of money increasing reoffending, including through the inappropriate use of short term custody, and he asked whether it was in the scope of the spending review to look at those costs as part of the equation.
- 6.5. **Next meeting:** BW said the next meeting will take place at the end of February/ early March with a focus on health- with the NHS long term funding plan being a consideration. RC asked whether the Mental Health Act review- and the drug and alcohol link to that would be considered. BW said she anticipated it would.



## **7. Discussion on Reducing Reoffending Board (closed session without officials)**

- 7.1. **Draft agreement:** AF said she and PD met with MoJ officials with two officials from the Economic and Domestic Secretariat, who provide the secretariat for the RRB. They agreed an initial proposal for how the two groups might work together, a draft copy of which was been shared with the RR3 group. On the morning of the meeting, AF received an updated version and shared this with the group at the meeting. This is subject to ministerial sign-off, from David Lidington who chairs the RRB.
- 7.2. **How RR3 can best provide its advice:** CS asked for clarity on how the RRB would commission the RR3 to produce evidence on certain issues, as set out in the draft agreement. PD said he favoured an approach of presumption (i.e. you set out an agreement and the RRB must give reasonable explanation as to why they do not want to follow that agreement in specific cases) rather than the approach set out in this draft, that suggests they would take evidence on their terms, on a case-by-case basis. CS said that in order to give proactive advice they needed regular information on the RRB's activities.
- 7.3. **Minimum expectations:** PD suggested we should go back to set out our minimum expectations, that the RRB are expected to follow unless there's good reason not to. Jess Mullen (JM) suggested an agreement which set out minimum expectations and additional opportunities.
- 7.4. **RR3 attendance at RRB:** There was some discussion over RR3 members' attendance at the RRB meetings. MB and NP suggested there should be a standard item for an RR3 member to attend their meeting. RC said that for the RRB to work, they need to scrutinise colleagues, and they won't be able to do that in front of external people. RC stressed that transparency of the RRB was the priority, so that the RR3 could contribute effectively, but that they should refrain from writing into the agreement about attending every meeting.
- 7.5. **Feedback from RRB to RR3:** PD highlighted that the draft agreement promises a verbal readout from the RRB to the RR3 on relevant matters, but that the verbal readout given at this meeting was not sufficient to enable the RR3 to make a useful input in RRB's work in the future. AF agreed the verbal readout was not sufficient in detail, the RR3 need to know whether their advice was considered, adhered to, taken on board and what happened. JM raised the point that the sequencing of RR3 and RRB meetings may not match, and therefore a formalised process outside of receiving verbal readouts at RR3 meetings was necessary.

ACTION 15: Chair to consult with the RRB secretariat about formalising processes for feedback outside of verbal readouts at RR3 meetings.

- 7.6. **Feedback to the sector:** Linda Bryant (LB) questioned mechanisms for how the RR3 group could feed back to the sector what they have heard from the RRB. MB said they would have to accept some level of Chatham House rule system, but that they needed a process to agree what things they could take back to the sector. AF suggested we should publish the advice the RR3 gives the RRB and say publicly whether our advice was taken.
  - 7.6.1. PD said he would feel compromised knowing things he can't tell people, considering the RR3 should act as representatives of the sector. AF reflected on the experience of having signed a non-disclosure agreement in order to receive information on the probation review programme and engaging with members, and reiterated this must not compromise the position of RR3 members.
- 7.7. **Reciprocity:** LB suggested the first sentence of the agreement should set out the reciprocal nature of the relationship. RC suggested the preamble should say we are on the same side

and have the same aims. AF suggested the word trust needs to be included in the preamble to the agreement.

**ACTION 16:** Chair to amend draft of the RRB/ RR3 agreement to emphasise reciprocity and trust in the opening lines.

- 7.8. **Transparency:** TW suggested it was useful to know where the advice the RRB had received had come from. NP agreed, saying they need to know what angle they were approaching from in order to give effective advice. CS pointed out that he went into meetings with civil servants and ministers without knowing that the RRB had received a paper on bank accounts. He was now writing a briefing for a Minister on the same subject but with no information on what the RRB were told. This lack of knowledge can affect the reputation and credibility of individuals and the group.

**ACTION 17:** RR3 group to contact Chris Stacey if they have any useful information to support a briefing on bank accounts for Rory Stewart MP.

- 7.9. **The changing role of the RR3:** The group recognised the importance of getting the agreement right. It's a good opportunity, but if it is to change the way in which the RR3 functions and concentrate its work over the next two years on influencing the RRB, it must be worthwhile. AF said they had asked to provide advice because they see this as a good opportunity to improve the government's work. AF also said they need to get an agreement in place so they can communicate their work to the wider sector.

**ACTION 18:** Chair to take amended draft agreement to the RRB secretariat for approval.

## **8. Letter exchange between Peter Dawson and David Gauke**

- 8.1. PD brought a letter exchange he had with David Gauke to the group. His letter outlined four policy ideas. He received a reply five months later, which failed to meaningfully address any of his points. He brought this to the group because the reply to his letter was so poor and sought advice on how they should approach this and which tone to strike.
- 8.2. LB asked whether they considered sharing it publicly. PD said they had considered but it was a dilemma.
- 8.3. RT shared that she had written to Rory Stewart on an urgent matter and after chasing, received a reply three months later. JM said that these were not the only examples of late replies that Clinks were aware of. AF said that departments publish their response times to letters and that the responses being received were outside of these times
- 8.4. DC said it was the perfect example of saying nothing. RC suggested it was embarrassing for the minister to have his name to such a reply and suggested writing back again. AF suggested copying in members of the Justice committee to the reply, such as Bob Neil and Victoria Prentiss.
- 8.5. AF suggested as RR3 had not had a meeting with a minister for some time, and considering all the changes that had been taking place, it would be good to invite a minister to a future meeting.

**ACTION 19:** Peter Dawson to coordinate with Anne Fox on a group reply to the letter Peter shared with the group, requesting a meeting with the minister.