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Government reforms to probation offer voluntary sector opportunity to play its full role in supporting people away from crime

Clinks welcomes the government's announcement today that the National Probation Service will assume responsibility for all offender management when the current contracts with private providers come to an end in 2021. These reforms respond to wide ranging criticism – from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Probation, the Justice Select Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office – of the current contracting model. They provide a much greater opportunity for voluntary organisations to work with statutory probation services to provide effective support to those who need it, according to the charity.

Clinks, Chief Executive Officer Anne Fox said,

“In April Clinks called on the government to simplify the probation system, and reconsider its commitment to contracting out, in order to ensure the voluntary sector's future role in probation. It is therefore extremely welcome that the Ministry of Justice has today announced it will do just that.

“This is a real opportunity to ensure that the enormous resources which have been committed, over the last four years, to delivering competition and procurement processes and managing contracts, are now used to get people the support they need to stop offending and move on to more fulfilling lives. We want to see well-funded services with voluntary sector organisations delivering vital support alongside them.”

Clinks [TrackTR research](#), conducted in partnership with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Third Sector Research Centre, highlighted the negative impact that the current probation model has had on voluntary sector organisations. The policy intention to involve the voluntary sector at the core of services for people under probation supervision has been widely criticised as not having been achieved. This has created real challenges for people in accessing the types of support they need when leaving prison or serving community sentences.

Anne Fox continued,

“This announcement is an example of government listening to the real concerns of stakeholders and civil society organisations and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that the future National Probation Service is able to build strong relationships with the voluntary sector into the future.”

Clinks believes that if implemented well these reforms can enable the involvement of the full range of voluntary sector organisations needed to work alongside and in support of probation services. The charity says this will require a commitment to work with the sector to meet the needs of the many people under probation supervision who are marginalised and have complex and specific needs. Funding mechanisms will need to allow for local flexibility and be suitable for both the largest providers in the voluntary sector and small specialist ones. But a direct and streamlined relationship between the probation service and the voluntary sector is an important starting point to achieving this.

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Notes to Editors

Interviews and more information

Anne Fox, Chief Executive Officer and Jessica Mullen, Head of Policy and Communications are available for interview on 07494 174 581 jessica.mullen@clinks.org

trackTR research

Since 2015 Clinks have led the trackTR partnership to research the voluntary sector's experience of the changes to probation services brought about by the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms. *Under represented, under pressure, under resourced* is the third and final report published as part of this work.

Publication: <https://www.clinks.org/resources-reports/under-represented-under-pressure-under-resourced>

The trackTR project is led by Clinks in partnership with National Council for Voluntary Service, the Third Sector Research Centre, the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University and the Centre for voluntary Sector Leadership at the Open University Business School.

About Clinks

Clinks supports, promotes and represents the voluntary sector working with people in the criminal justice system and their families. Our vision is of a vibrant, independent and resilient voluntary sector that enables people to transform their lives. www.clinks.org | [@Clinks Tweets](https://twitter.com/Clinks)