



Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3)

Via videocall

Thursday 10th September 2020

RR3 members present:

Martin Blakebrough, Kaleidoscope
Dez Brown, Spark2life
Rod Clark, Prisoners Education Trust
Helen Dyson, Nacro
Nicky Park, St Giles Trust
Chris Stacey, Unlock
Emma Wells, Community Chaplaincy Association
Dee Anand, Together for Wellbeing
Paul Grainge, Recoop
Peter Atherton, Community Led Initiatives
Tina Parker, PACT
Richy Cunningham, Recovery Connections
Peter Dawson, Prison Reform Trust
Laura Seebohm, Changing Lives
Jess Mullen, Clinks
Anne Fox, Clinks (chair)
Will Downs, Clinks (notes)

Officials present:

Bettina Crossick, HM Prison and Probation Service
George Barrow, Ministry of Justice
Simon Marshall, HM Prison and Probation Service
Jerome Glass, Ministry of Justice
Lauren Withall, Ministry of Justice

Apologies:

Khatuna Tsintsadze, Zahid Mubarak Trust
Tracy Wild, Langley House Trust
Lisa Dando, Brighton Women's Centre

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1. Anne Fox welcomed Laura Seebohm, Executive Director of External Affairs at Changing Lives to her first quarterly RR3 meeting since being appointed to the large provider seat. Laura replaces Mike Pattinson, who stepped down from the RR3 after leaving Change Grow Live.
- 1.2. Minutes from the last RR3 quarterly meeting on June 2020 were approved. Anne Fox and Jess Mullen provided an update on the following outstanding actions:
- 1.3. Outstanding action: *Chris Taylor to share with RR3 prior to call-off the questions, criteria and evaluation that HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) will use to ensure bidders meet the needs of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in the criminal justice system.*
 - 1.3.1. Providers under the Dynamic Framework will be required to demonstrate cultural competence, that they recognise inequality and that services must be delivered free from stereotype and discrimination. A meeting has been held with Jess Mullen, Dez Brown, Khatuna Tsintsadze and the probation review team to discuss how the probation team assesses this criteria and use contracting processes to ensure

providers adhere to their commitments. Jess Mullen has received an acknowledgment from the probation review team of their feedback, and is waiting for a more detailed response on how it will be taken on board.

1.3.2. Conversations have also been held with the probation review team to discuss the BAME contract lot. There is not yet a service specification, and conversations are being held about what that will look like, given that the contract lot will have to meet the needs of a men and women from different communities. Further discussion will likely take place next year.

1.4. Outstanding action: *Chair, secretariat and BAME specialists on RR3 to discuss how to best centre race disproportionality in the upcoming work of the group.*

1.4.1. Discussions on HMPPS' strategic approach to race have taken place in light of the Covid-19 Special Interest Group (SIG), and the letter we sent to Dr Jo Farrar in support of the paper BAME-led members wrote. Anne has spoken to Jo Farrar, and Jess, Dez and Khatuna have met with relevant officials. Follow up actions are taking place. Race will also continue to be a priority for the group in relation to their work on probation reform and Covid-19.

1.5. Anne Fox summarised the RR3 work plan that has been revised in light of Covid-19. The work plan runs between March 2020 – 2021, and the areas of focus will be Covid-19, probation reform, and sentencing policy. Race disparity is both a standalone priority, and one that threads through all aspects of the group's work, and will be a particular focus in our probation and Covid-19 work.

2. Update on the probation special interest group

2.1. [The probation special interest group \(SIG\) met in August to discuss contract values and volumes](#). The meeting brought up some significant issues around indicative annual spend, how contracts are structured to 'ramp up', and on the eligibility criteria volumes have been projected on.

2.2. Helen Dyson said the conversations were constructive but there were still a number of unresolved issues that were highly concerning considering the advanced stage of the Dynamic Framework. In particular, there are still significant concerns around the values and volumes of accommodation contracts. A further meeting between members of the probation SIG and the probation review team specifically on accommodation was planned.

2.3. A separate meeting was also planned with SIG sponsors and women's specialist organisations to discuss volumes and values of women's contracts with the probation team.

3. Update on the Covid-19 special interest group

3.1. The Covid-19 SIG recently met to gather experiences of voluntary sector providers in delivering services under the prisons framework and the probation roadmap, and how lessons could be learned for the next stage of recovery. Organisations described finding information flow, communication and consistency from HMPPS and individual prisons challenging. Future meetings were planned with operational leads at HMPPS for prisons and probation recovery respectively to respond to the groups concerns.

3.2. Russell Webster has been commissioned to gather information from the RR3 on the way in which HMPPS has operated during the pandemic, to feed into evidence being gathered by the HMPPS insights team.

4. Update on engagement with the reducing reoffending strategy team

- 4.1. Three meetings were convened with the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ's) reducing reoffending strategy team on employment, substance misuse and accommodation. These meetings were set up to feed into the team's submission to the Criminal Justice Taskforce, chaired by the Prime Minister and their bid to the comprehensive spending review. The meetings were attended by RR3 members and co-optees. Anne Fox thanked Richy Cunningham, Tracy Wild and Chris Stacey for leading those meetings.
- 4.2. Chris Stacey said the session on employment was positive, particularly discussions around the importance of changing perceptions. He said [the work of the RR3 employment SIG](#) still stands as a useful resource to steer discussions with officials. He said he would welcome further engagement with the team.
- 4.3. Richy Cunningham said the meeting on substance misuse involved a wide-ranging discussion on how a new model of substance misuse provision could look. He said the MoJ was proposing an inclusive model, with a systems-wide approach to substance misuse that looks at the root causes of addiction. Richy welcomed such an approach, though warned that would only work with a change in culture, to ensure people accessing services are dealt with in an empathetic way, free of judgement, by statutory services. Laura Seeböhm agreed that it was a positive discussion, though the team would need to consider how the outcome of the Dame Carole Black Review would fit into their plans.
- 4.4. Helen Dyson said the accommodation meeting was productive. The reducing reoffending strategy team gave a high-level summary of their proposals for establishing a three-tiered model for accommodation. People leaving prison in the first tier of need, would be provided accommodation and high-intensity support (such as approved premises); people in the second tier would be provided accommodation with floating support (such as Bail Accommodation and Support Service (BASS) accommodation); and the majority of service users needing accommodation would fall into the third tier, where accommodation would be provided on release, with some limited, flexible support. The team are seeking additional funding through the Spending Review to realise these aims.
- 4.5. Clinks staff are meeting with the reducing reoffending strategy team in the next week to follow up on these discussions.
- 4.6. *Action: secretariat to meet with the reducing reoffending strategy team and feed back to the relevant RR3 leads on next steps.*

5. Sentencing white paper

- 5.1. Anne Fox expressed disappointment about the process for the development of the sentencing white paper. An invitation was made by a senior civil servant for the RR3 to feed into the white paper process, but despite repeated offers from the RR3 to engage with the sentencing team, this has not transpired. The group would have been well-placed to inform the proposals around community sentences and the role of the voluntary sector in the white paper.
- 5.2. George Barrow said there was limited opportunity for dialogue before the publication of the white paper. He said that the white paper offered an opening for dialogue and discussion, and the start of a number of stages before legislation. He confirmed the white paper would be published week commencing 14th September ([white paper subsequently published here](#)).
- 5.3. Jess Mullen said that there had been assurances from officials at MoJ that the white paper would include a range of proposals, including open-ended ideas for consultation. She asked whether this white paper will offer an open consultation process.

- 5.4. Anne Fox said the Secretary of State has previously expressed interest in using the white paper as an opportunity to do some positive work around community sentences and alternative options for custody. As providers of these services, voluntary organisations are well placed to advise on what might be possible and effective. Senior officials also expressed their desire for the voluntary sector to feed into these proposals via the RR3. Chris Stacey said that he had also been encouraged that there was possible engagement in the weeks prior to the white paper being published, but in practice that engagement has been very limited.
 - 5.5. George Barrow said that the opportunity for dialogue has not ended. The provision for community sentences is very prominent and the RR3 have not missed the boat to influence the proposals. He said he would talk with relevant colleagues so that the RR3 could give their feedback after the publication of the white paper.
 - 5.6. *Action: George Barrow, chair and secretariat to arrange meeting of the RR3 after publication of the sentencing white paper.*
- 6. Update from HMPPS (Bettina Crossick)**
- 6.1. All the funds available from the HMPPS £300k grant programme have been distributed. 58 small voluntary organisations have been awarded grants, from 205 applications in total of which 180 were eligible. Many more grants could have been awarded had there been more money to distribute. The interim feedback HMPPS has received on the grant programme suggests the grants are working well, and some organisations were able to secure match funding.
 - 6.2. Nicky Park asked if there was an update on the outcome of the £2.5 grant programme for the women’s sector distributed by the vulnerable offenders team. Bettina Crossick said that not all funding was awarded through grants and no decision had been made on how to allocate the left over funding. She said there were less applications from the sector than they had anticipated. Jess Mullen said that Clinks have provided significant feedback on the barriers for organisations to apply for the fund, and that a lack of applications shouldn’t therefore be interpreted as a lack of demand for funding.
 - 6.3. Bettina Crossick and colleagues are thinking how best to take forward [the Third Sector Task Force](#), to ensure there are effective structures after Covid-19 to support engagement between the MoJ/ HMPPS and the voluntary sector. As part of this, HMPPS wants to work more closely with philanthropic funders, and are thinking of how to organise with Clinks regular roundtables with funders. She invited RR3 members to contact her with ideas of how MoJ/HMPPS can work better with the sector to inform an internal paper that will set out these aims and seek buy-in from senior leadership. Anne Fox welcomed the focus on longevity and legacy from Third Sector Taskforce, and said it would be good to have an honest look at that relationship and how it has worked.
- 7. Update from the MoJ (George Barrow)**
- 7.1. The major issue the MoJ is now dealing with is the large backlog of court cases.
 - 7.2. George Barrow said he welcomed the RR3 having a priority focus on race. [Anne Fox said Clinks have recently published their commitment to become an anti-racist organisation.](#) Moving forward, Clinks intend to establish a BAME specialist network and are talking to Dez Brown and Khatuna Tsintsadze and other sector leaders on how to best take this forward. The model will be along the lines of Clinks’ women’s network.
 - 7.3. *Action: George Barrow and Anne Fox to have a follow-up discussion on how to collaborate on Clinks’ work to set up a BAME specialist network.*

7.4. Peter Dawson raised concerns about the language being used by the government in relation to criminal justice. [He referred specifically to the press release that accompanied the recent announcement to extend custody limits](#), which glorified the fact that many people who haven't been tried and convicted will be forced to remain in prison. He said the MoJ would struggle to implement its rehabilitation agenda if messages are coming out from government that further stigmatises people with convictions.

8. Prison leavers project (Jerome Glass)

8.1. Jerome Glass and Lauren Withall were welcomed to the meeting and there was a round of introductions. Jerome is Director of Prison Policy. He is the cross-government lead on reoffending. Lauren Withall works in the prison leavers project team and is the lead for the national, cross-sector pilots. Anne Fox thanked them for attending, and thanked them for their previous positive engagement with the group.

8.2. Jerome provided context on the development of the prison leavers project:

8.2.1. Last year the cabinet secretary launched a set of projects across government, focussed on getting different parts of government working better together. The prison leaver's project was announced as part of this work. The aim is to improve the social inclusion of people leaving prison, taking a whole-system approach in order to address what goes wrong for people at transition points between services, improve join-up and ensure the state supports people through their journey as they leave prison. They believe that the best way to reduce reoffending is to ensure people have somewhere to live on release, have positive relationships with people in the community and can find work.

8.2.2. With some notable exceptions, the MoJ and HMPPS do not do enough to ensure service users are able to input into policy making, and so this project would also aim to better engage service users in the design and delivery.

8.2.3. The project will be based around three areas:

- Creating cross-system teams to develop, prototype and scale ideas to improve outcomes for prison leavers. Teams will include representation from different departments, agencies, local government, the voluntary sector and people with lived experience working across four pillars of focus (day of release, health and wellbeing, employability and skills, community and relationships). They will pilot ideas and evaluate over a three year programme.
- A grant fund (approximately £7m) is being set up for local leaders and agencies, including the voluntary sector and local authorities. It will enable locally-led pilots of new and innovative ideas to help improve join-up of services, and to deliver better outcomes for prison leavers. This is a work in progress, and MoJ wants to talk to the sector about how that fund can be set up in a way in which is accessible for the sector.
- A fund (approximately £1m) is being set aside for a private sector innovation challenge, to start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises to develop and prototype technological solutions to help improve outcomes for prison leavers.

8.3. Jerome Glass said voluntary sector experts would be seconded into these teams for two years. The MoJ will pay the full time salary for those secondments and they would be expected to work four days a week at MoJ and one day in their home organisation.

8.3.1. Nicky Park warned that many voluntary organisations were currently consumed with the Dynamic Framework, and this would affect people's ability to apply for and start secondments in the coming months. Peter Atherton said there are many smaller

organisations rooted in communities that will have wisdom to share and contribute to this work, but they could really struggle with capacity. MoJ should consider timelines, to maximise lead-in time to ensure organisations are able back-fill.

8.3.2. Jerome Glass said if the right people are tied up before the desired start date, the MoJ can be flexible.

8.3.3. *Action: Prison leavers project team to engage with Dee Anand, to share Together's experience of secondments to MoJ.*

8.4. The group agreed the MoJ should consider employing prison leavers to work in the prison leavers project and gave advice on how best to do so. Dez Brown said that when looking to employ prison leavers or people with lived experience, there were a range of considerations the MoJ must take when looking at start time, the size of the teams and line management support, the hours of work etc. These opportunities should also aim to skill-up people to help them into a career. It was suggested that people who have been released from prison and who are now established in a work environment could provide really valuable insight from both sides of the journey.

8.5. Richy Cunningham welcomed the intention to bring the system together, to address the contributing factors towards people's reoffending. He and many others in the sector have advocated for such principles for some time. To best engage with the sector, the MoJ should communicate, listen and visit existing voluntary sector services that are trying to put some of this into practice already. He said service user involvement should be embedded throughout, and that the voluntary sector have a wealth of expertise in involving service users.

8.6. Emma Wells said she was concerned that they would only look for genuinely new ideas. The sector are asked this quite a bit, but there are many effective initiatives that are already happening that would benefit from funding to make sustainable. Jerome Glass said ideas don't need to be new or different, they can be existing ideas that can be scaled, or run in a different way.

8.7. RR3 members warned that new commercial processes often repeat the mistakes of prior ones. If the prison leaver's project is to engage small and specialist organisations, commissioning needs to be as flexible and light touch as possible, and be delivered through grants not contracts.

8.7.1. *Action: secretariat to follow up with the prison leaver's project team to share learning on commissioning voluntary organisations.*

8.8. Jerome invited members to contact him and leads in his team if they had further feedback. Anne Fox suggested once teams are set up the RR3 could engage directly with them to inform their work.

8.8.1. *Action: secretariat to share contact details of the prison leavers project team with the RR3.*

ENDS.