



**Notes from the Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) Special Interest Group on Covid-19
Wednesday 24th March 2021 via Zoom**

Attendees:

Anne Fox, Clinks (chair)
Will Downs, Clinks (notes)
Khatuna Tsintsadze, Zahid Mubarak Trust
Helen Dyson, Nacro
Francesca Cooney, Prisoners Education Trust
Alasdair Jackson, Recycling Lives
Paul Grainge, Recoop
Andy Keen-Downs, Pact (co-opted)
Phil Maguire, Prison Radio Association (co-opted)
Simon Ruding, TiPP (co-opted)

Neil Grutchfield, Synergy Theatre (co-opted)
Mellissa Berry, Include (co-opted)
Pippa Goodfellow, Alliance for Youth Justice (co-opted)
Vicki Cardwell, Spark Inside (co-opted)
Stephen O'Connell, HMPPS Deputy Director Prisons Recovery
Chris Gunderson, HMPPS gold command
Sarah Watkins, HMPPS Regime Policy Team Lead
Nicola McChlery, HMPPS Regime Policy Team Lead

Apologies:

Martin Blakebrough, Kaleidoscope
Tracy Wild, Langley House Trust
Peter Dawson, Prison Reform Trust
Lisa Dando, Brighton Women's Centre
Laura Seebohm, Changing Lives
Emma Wells, Community Chaplaincy Association
Alice Dawnay, Switchback (co-opted)
Nina Champion, Criminal Justice Alliance (co-opted)

Update from HMPPS on recovery in prisons

Stephen O'Connell, HMPPS's Deputy Director of Prisons Recovery gave an update on the progress of recovery work (as of 24th March) noting that approaches and policies are evolving so this is a snapshot of a point in time. He said the work is overseen by Michelle Jarman-Howe, Chief Operating Officer, HMPPS who chairs the Prison Recovery Board. HMPPS's work on recovery in prisons is closely aligned with the Youth Custody Service and probation recovery.

- There are 55 prisons currently facing an outbreak of Covid-19. This is a significant reduction in live outbreaks from recent weeks. HMPPS has approved around 11 prisons to start moving from stage 4 and into stage 3, in line with the [National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services](#).
- HMPPS recognises that it will take some time to get all prisons into stage 3 and even at stage 3 there will be limited regime provision. Progress won't necessarily be linear if local outbreaks occur. They expect the recovery programme to be necessary for the coming year.

- As prisons recover, central HMPPS have set four clear priorities:
 - Staff confidence, capability and wellbeing: HMPPS recognise the toll of the past year on staff. Staff are fatigued and many have managed traumatic experiences. Adequate staffing levels will be essential to deliver regimes.
 - Prisoner and child wellbeing: HMPPS will prioritise family contact.
 - Sentence progression: Access to offender behaviour programmes, rehabilitative activities and education will be prioritised. The Offender Management in Custody model (OMiC) will be reintroduced across the estate, including rolling out to the women's estate and open estate.
 - Building the 'pathway to reform': HMPPS will work to ensure that short term recovery links into a programme of long-term reform.
- HMPPS will continue to focus on racism, discrimination and disproportionate outcomes for people with protected characteristics. They recognise that people in their care are disproportionately likely to be from communities most affected by Covid-19.
- In terms of resilience and risk management, HMPPS recognises progression of each prison may not be linear, as local outbreaks may force individual prisons to go into lockdown again. Last year, all prisons that had progressed through the national framework had to return to stage 4 lockdown due to a national outbreak of Covid-19. There are now a series of things in place which should reduce the likelihood of that happening again, including the continuing programme of vaccinations and the roll-out of testing to support regime delivery. A successful recovery must build resilience and prepare the prison system for potential future restrictions.

HMPPS update on future reform

- Chris Gunderson gave an update on the future regime work that will follow recovery and echoed Stephen's point that the update is based on what we know today (24th March 2021).
- HMPPS will seek to ensure that recovery lays the foundation for future reform. [National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services](#) will guide the progression of prisons over the coming months to stage 2. HMPPS however wants to design a reformed regime to implement as a new stage 1. Over the next six months, HMPPS will conduct a programme of work to define what an improved regime can look like and build a framework which will set the basis for a three year programme of regime reform.
- The longer-term scope of this work will explore how HMPPS can measure delivery of regimes, how they define purposeful activity, how they tailor services to the individual, how they can embed greater use of technology and enhance in-cell activity.

- HMPPS said that the work has only recently started and they would welcome further engagement on the programme. Anne Fox welcomed this initiative and suggested that the RR3 meet again with officials to discuss the reform programme further, including with Helga Swidenbank, Executive Director, Youth Custody Service.

Discussion and questions

- An attendee asked what mechanisms would be put in place by HMPPS that both allows for local decision making but guards against inconsistency across the estate?
 - HMPPS said that the Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs) set out the scope of what is possible at stage 3 and the recovery priorities set by the central HMPPS team will be the same across the estate to ensure that everyone is working to a common purpose. Within that, local governors will take different approaches and there will be some local variation. Governors have further local discretion on the design of the regime at stage 2.
- An attendee asked how prison staff are being supported and encouraged to engage with voluntary organisations and to be aware of what voluntary sector services are available to make referrals to?
 - HMPPS said through their messaging they can nudge and prompt prison staff to engage with voluntary sector providers. HMPPS is happy to receive input from the sector on how to design those messages.
- An attendee said that equalities work should be at the heart of everything HMPPS do. As well as recovering and delivering services, it is essential that access to services is monitored. During Covid-19 however equalities work and the work of equalities leads stopped in many prisons as it was not seen as an essential part of service delivery. How will HMPPS operationalise equalities work during recovery? Will all prisons at stage 3 be expected to resume equalities work? Will local plans have Equality Impact Assessments conducted? Will HMPPS monitor discrepancies of equalities work between prisons?
 - HMPPS said equalities work is a priority and the central team will encourage prisons to resume their work. In stage 3 many activities will be resumed that haven't taken place during lockdown. The expectation as prisons move into stage 3 would be for equalities work to resume, including monitoring of services, though there will be local variation. Equalities will form an important part of the reform work and HMPPS offered to discuss those plans at a further meeting.
- An attendee said that HMPPS centrally have announced that social visits will not automatically be part of stage 3 regimes. This is a different position from when prisons were in stage 3 last year and families have reacted strongly against this decision, especially given the reintroduction of some visits in care homes and other settings. Families and organisations would therefore find it useful to receive clarification on the reintroduction of

visits and asking for a route map for social visits to be re-established and what local conditions need to be in place to restart.

- HMPPS is due to share a gold brief with the voluntary sector w/c 29th March in response to the relevant milestone in the Prime Minister's roadmap that changes guidance on staying indoors. This will enable some more provision at stage 3 but this will continue to be a stepped and gradual approach with significant local variation. Progress won't be linear, and it is possible some prisons will have to re-implement more restrictive regimes based on local outbreaks.
- An attendee said that governors have taken an inconsistent approach to the status of family case workers and whether they should be able to operate in prisons at this time. While organisations understand the need for local autonomy, an inconsistent approach to this has made it very challenging for national providers to plan their service delivery.
 - HMPPS said that the central gold command team try to manage the amount of communications sent to prisons, as they have had feedback from individual prisons that they both send too much guidance to the front line and not enough.
- An attendee said that families contracted services run till September and no decision has been made about whether competitions will be run for these contracts. Organisations have raised concerns about capacity within prisons, agencies and charities to run major competitions at this time and whether a fixed-term contract extension would be preferable. In addition, since the last contracts were awarded, two Farmer reviews have now been published, and HMPPS should ensure these inform future families support services, rather than conduct a hasty competition.
- An attendee asked how the Youth Secure Estate fit into the timescales outlined by Chris Gunderson for a 6 month project to lead into a 3 year reform programme?
 - HMPPS said there is a parallel programme of reform for the youth estate running to the same timescales.
- An attendee asked how the 6 month project would feed into the spending review to ensure that the three year programme was sufficiently resourced to ensure it had the best possible outcomes?
 - HMPPS said proposals will be developed into a white paper which will feed in to the spending review process.
- An attendee said some voluntary organisations have been providing coaching for prison leaders around self-efficacy and control, and that this could play an important role on considerations for staff wellbeing as part of the recovery.
 - Chris Jennings, Director of Prisons in Wales is the lead on staff wellbeing. The recovery team are meeting with Chris to discuss what that should look like.

- An attendee said clear local communication is crucial to address inconsistencies in approaches across prisons. Different governors tell organisations and employers different things with regards to what should be possible, and some hide behind gold command. Clarity at a local level is needed for employers who need to know when they can for example re-open workshops or receive people on ROTL.
 - HMPPS said the approach to ROTL is set out in relevant EDMs. Additional guidance is to be issued to prisons will set out how that should apply that in a current context with testing and vaccinations.
- An attendee said there was strong innovation within the voluntary sector with regards to peer-led models of support that can help to support welfare, wellbeing and resilience for people in prisons. The encouraged HMPPS to tap into this innovation.
- An attendee said it would be helpful to have something that can go out to the voluntary sector that is publically available and they can find themselves. Voluntary organisations are struggling with communication with prisons, especially as people physically aren't there. Clinks can support getting the information out but would also support making it more widely available.

ENDS.