



Supporting the voluntary sector
working in the criminal justice system

Member advisory forum meeting notes

Tuesday 25 April 2023, 10:00-12:00 via video call

Attendees

Chris Stacey	Clinks (Chair)
Bex Roberts	Junction 42
Dawn Harrison	Changing Lives
Josh Stunell	bthechange CIC
Laura Munt	Depaul UK
Lucy Ball	New Bridge Foundation
Emma Kidger	Clinks
Paul Bernard	Clinks

Apologies

Lynn Kelly	POPS
Maisie Hulbert	Clinks Trustee
Janine Alcantara	Employment 4 All
Riana Taylor	Circles UK
Khatuna Tsintsadze	Zahid Mubarek Trust
Peter Merrifield	Support When It Matters (SWIM)
Matina Marougka	Together for Mental Wellbeing
Christopher Leslie	Inside Out Support Wales
John Speyer	Hear Me Out

1. Welcome and introductions

- CS welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Government branding requirements for grants by UK government

The UK government has introduced new branding requirements for grants funding. The extent to which the government contributes to a project will dictate the use of branding as per the 'Funded by UK Government' Branding Manual. HMPPS has approached us to seek feedback on how these new requirements might be perceived by their voluntary sector partners, particularly where projects are fully

funded by the government and whether this would pose any operational challenges or limit their capacity to execute.

- The sparseness of the document is welcomed, it can be challenging to navigate large documents, and concise instructions can help to streamline the process.
- It is beneficial that the logos are all black, as it will be versatile and compatible with many organisations' branding colours.
- There is some uncertainty about the intended use of the logo though. It is possible that it should be used in external reports, but further clarification is needed to confirm this. The specific guidelines around the use of the logo, such as where it must be displayed (e.g. website, social media, documents) and in what format, also requires clarification. Additionally, it is unclear whether organisations have the discretion to decide which materials to include the logo on. Consideration needs to be given to time-frames of changing branding if this is to be a mandatory expectation.
- It is unclear whether this guidance is retrospective and applies to existing funding. However, if it does, it could have cost implications for organisations that have already produced printed materials, without complying with the new brand requirements. This would need to be considered in future grant offers and costed for accordingly.
- There is a concern that the branding may give the impression that everything is fully funded by government when it is not e.g. when UK government's monetary contribution is 10-49% of the total costs of the project, the branding and logo is expected to be used and it states 'funded by UK government' - this could be misleading where projects may receive the majority of their funding from other sources.
- It would be good to know how this branding will be expected to be used alongside HMPPS/Prison service/Probation service/CFO logos – is this to be used instead of or as well as? If as well as, it could feel like the importance of organisations being voluntary services could get lost within the use of multiple government logos.
- While the manual provides practical instructions on the use of branding, there is a need for additional guidance or communications to specify when and in what manner the branding must be used.
- There is a risk that incorporating government branding into an organisation's materials could create the impression that the organisation is fully funded by the government and therefore reduce its attractiveness to other funders.
- The criminal justice sector may have unique considerations when it comes to the use of government branding, particularly from a service user perspective. Service users who have a negative relationship with the state may view government branding as a potential barrier to engagement with organisations that use it prominently.
- There is a concern that this branding distracts from the value of the voluntary services using the branding, with the focus being on what government money is being spent on.
- Consideration needs to be given to the risks associated with this branding – to service user engagement, to partner organisations and to potential non-statutory funders.
- Clinks will pull together some reflections on the new branding requirements and share them back to HMPPS and keep the forum in the loop with any feedback or responses received.

3. Commissioning and grant funding delays from HMPPS and wider government

Considering the challenges faced by voluntary organisations in recent times, we want to create an open forum for discussion to share experiences and insights and find effective ways to address the challenges faced by the sector.

- Many organisations are feeling disappointed and frustrated because, despite experiencing significant delays on outstanding funding applications, they are being presented with market warming events for new opportunities. This approach makes it seem like promoting new opportunities is a priority over addressing existing ones, leaving organisations feeling that their current needs are being ignored. Consequently, these organisations are losing faith in the process. It's essential to sort out the backlog of existing opportunities before promoting new ones to restore confidence in the system.
- The initial bids that went in for the funding opportunities which have been delayed will look different now for many reasons, particularly in relation to the financial information within them.
- The feedback provided by HMPPS on unsuccessful bids is often unclear and inadequate. There is limited opportunity to ask questions or appeal decisions, which makes the process challenging. Additionally, the feedback does not always accurately reflect the information provided in the bid, and there is no clear and consistent mechanism for challenging such discrepancies.
- The significant delays in the process can have a direct impact on staff retention and the delivery of key services. Smaller community services require better support in navigating this complex process.

4. What issues / opportunities are we seeing facing the sector at the moment?

- There are a number of Clinks members who work in youth accommodation who may or may not be aware of new national standards and Ofsted requirements for such accommodation for those under 18. Forum members not aware of this, LM will provide information to EK to share with accommodation thematic lead within Clinks.
- Ongoing challenges related to recruitment and workforce resilience. It was noted that this is an issue that extends beyond the forum and is prevalent in the wider sector.
- Concerns around the anticipated increase in the prison population in the coming years, and how this may affect certain individuals who require support, particularly older men with sexual offences.
- The shortage of available accommodation for individuals leaving prison is a persisting problem that has a direct impact on the rate of reoffending and recalls. CS suggested that Clinks' accommodation thematic lead should attend a future forum meeting to hear from the group on this issue.

4. Plans for sub-groups

- In our January meeting, we reached a consensus on priorities for supporting the sector in the upcoming year. We agreed that to make significant progress, we needed to focus on a couple of priority areas. The two priority areas we identified were:
 - **Capacity building for small and specialist organisations** (Commissioning processes, evidencing impact and outcomes, organisational governance, strategy development, fundraising)

- **Voluntary sector workforce** (Staff retention and wellbeing, building a resilient workforce, diversity of the workforce, employing staff with lived experience of the criminal justice system)

We shared these priority areas with the wider sector through Light Lunch, and while we did not receive much feedback, the feedback we did receive was positive. We are now ready to form subgroups and determine what we want to achieve and commit to in terms of resources and delivery. Our objective is to organise two sector events later this year that encompass these themes and can be recorded for use as a resource by both Clinks members and the wider sector.

5. AOB

- CS provided an update on the work that he and JS have been doing, looking at the needs and challenges of organisations that cross over immigration detention and the criminal justice system.
- This meeting marks Chris' last as the forum's chair since he is leaving Clinks. Chris took a moment to reflect on his time on the forum and expressed gratitude to everyone who has participated, emphasising that this space is vital in providing Clinks members with a sense of ownership over the works Clinks does.
- A decision will be made soon regarding the new Chair of the forum.

6. Meeting admin

- Next meeting: 25 July 2023 (10:00-12:00).

Action points from today

- BR to forward email to EK highlighting specific issues around commissioning and grant funding
- LM to share information on new national standards for under 18s accommodation
- EK to discuss attendance at future forum with Clinks accommodation thematic lead to hear feedback on what is going on in the sector
- EK to send out potential dates for the sub-groups to all forum members