

October 2015



CLINKS
RESPONSE

Clinks submission to the Justice Select Committee Inquiry into young adult offenders

About Clinks

Clinks is the national infrastructure organisation supporting voluntary sector organisations working with offenders and their families. Our aim is to ensure the sector and those with whom it works, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders and their communities. We do this by providing specialist information and support, with a particular focus on smaller voluntary sector organisations, to inform them about changes in policy and commissioning, to help them build effective partnerships and provide innovative services that respond directly to the needs of their users.

We are a membership organisation with over 600 members including the sector's largest providers as well as its smallest, and our wider national network reaches 4,000 voluntary sector contacts. We also manage the National Alliance for Arts in Criminal Justice, which is a coalition of 370 members who work across art forms in a range of custodial settings and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Justice and Monument Trust. Overall, through our weekly e-bulletin Light Lunch and our social media activity, we are in contact with over 18,000 individuals and agencies with an interest in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and the role of the voluntary sector in the resettlement and rehabilitation of offenders.

About this response

Clinks is a member of the Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance and therefore we have inputted into and fully support their submission to the inquiry. In this response we do not repeat the evidence they have submitted and instead focus on providing some additional and complementary evidence in a number of key areas of importance to our work and our members:

- **The role of the voluntary sector in pioneering specific approaches for young adults**

As a member of T2A Alliance Clinks has worked to support the voluntary sector to drive forward, develop and promote effective approaches to young adult offenders. We have produced two publications *Going for Gold*¹ and *Effective Approaches with Young Adults*² which both build on the learning from voluntary sector projects and interventions to provide guidance to senior managers, local commissioners and probation services on how to develop effective services for young adults in the CJS.

- **The increased vulnerability of young adults with protected characteristics**

Clinks has focussed on highlighting the specific needs and vulnerabilities of equality and minority groups within the CJS. Most recently we published *Tackling Inequalities*

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in the CJS which showcased the work of a range of voluntary sector organisations advocating for equality and minority groups and made recommendations for commissioners.

Between Autumn 2014 and Winter 2015 Clinks worked in partnership with Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) to support the Young Review chaired by Baroness Young of Hornsey, to advise the Ministry of Justice and future providers of probation services on how to improve outcomes for young Black and/or Muslim men in the Criminal Justice System. The Young Review's final report, written and published by Clinks, clearly outlines the specific and increased vulnerabilities faced by young adults in the CJS who are from Black and/or Muslim communities. Clinks are continuing to work closely with BTEG who are leading the second phase of the Young Review aimed at progressing its recommendations.

Clinks has a strong track record working to highlight the distinct set of needs and risk factors experienced by women in the CJS and to support gender specific services led by specialist local voluntary sector organisations.

- **The importance of a young adults' experience of and relationships with their families**

Many of Clinks' members provide interventions that support both offenders and their families and the relationship between them. Positive family relationships are known to support desistance from crime³ and the voluntary sector has played a leading role in this field for many years, for instance in pioneering prison visitor centres, which have now become part of mainstream provision. We have recently begun to provide specific support to a network of voluntary sector organisations working in this area and our response draws on their views, knowledge and experience.

We do not respond to all of the committee's points of inquiry and instead limit our submission to those which these key areas of our work can provide relevant evidence to. We set out each of our responses under the inquiry's relevant question heading, although in some places answer more than one question in combination.

Summary of recommendations and key points

Clinks supports the Harris Review recommendation for a distinct approach to young adults based on learning from a range of local projects and interventions, alongside evidence from the fields of criminology, psychology and neuroscience, as cited in the T2A Alliance submission. We support the T2A Alliance assertion that young adults should be defined as 18-25.

Clinks recommend that any Ministry of Justice (MoJ) strategy for the management of young adults throughout the CJS, as recommended by the T2A Alliance, should take account of existing good practice with regards to this group and consider how to further support such approaches.

There are specific vulnerabilities and outcomes experienced by young adults from equality or minority groups including young Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) adults, young women, young adults with disabilities and care leavers. Clinks recommends that any strategy adopted centrally or locally with regards to young adults takes into account the particular needs of young adults from these groups and links with existing initiatives to address their needs.

Given the links between family relations and vulnerability as well as desistance, any approaches to working with this age group must take into account the needs of young people with regards to relationships with their family members.



Our submission

- **The nature and effectiveness of the Ministry of Justice's strategy and governance structures for dealing with young adult offenders.**

Clinks wishes to reiterate the T2A Alliance's assertion regarding the lack of specific policy and legislation from central government focused on this age group and the consequent inconsistent practice across the country. Local innovation that has developed appropriate interventions for young adults has often been led by the voluntary sector working against the arbitrary divide between youth services who have demonstrated effective approaches leading to improved outcomes.

The T2A pilots which ran from 2009-2013 tested different approaches to improving services for young adults in the Criminal Justice System. Together they worked with more than 1,000 young adults, demonstrating voluntary sector led interventions alongside probation services, management of transition to adulthood from the youth to adult justice system and taking account of developmental maturity. Each project was tailored to the needs of the individual, with the aim of reducing both the risk of reoffending and social exclusion.

These initial pilots showed promising practice and learning from them fed into the development of *Going for Gold*⁴ a guide to developing effective services for young adults. The pilots also directly informed the development of the 2014-2016 T2A Pathway programme delivering interventions to young adults in six locations across England. These voluntary sector led projects will represent collectively a whole pathway approach to working with 18-25 year olds throughout the criminal justice process. They are being independently evaluated by Sheffield Hallam University. The six projects are run by Addaction, Advance, Pact (Prison Advice and Care Trust), Prince's Trust, Remedi, and Together for Mental Wellbeing and more information can be found at <http://www.t2a.org.uk/pathway>

Learning from these projects demonstrates the specific nature of voluntary sector contributions in this area. *Going for Gold*⁵ highlights how links with specialist voluntary sector organisations can ensure appropriate delivery of services to young adult women, people from BAME communities, young people with mental health needs, learning disabilities or communication difficulties. In addition the guide outlines a range of benefits to working with the voluntary sector including better outcomes for young adults. These include: a purely voluntary agreement to participate leading to a trusting relationship not bound to formal supervision or court orders; the capacity to be led by the needs and aspirations of service users; long term working beyond the expiry of any license or order; specialist services that responded to or involved the community; support offered outside of traditional office based appointments; and service user involvement in design and delivery of services.⁶

Clinks recommends that any MoJ strategy for the management of young adults throughout the CJS, as recommended by the T2A Alliance, should take account of this existing good practice and consider how to further support such approaches.



- **The suitability of current provision for young adult offenders i) in the community and ii) in custody, including the extent to which there is distinct provision currently and The Harris Review advocated a distinct approach to young adult offenders. Is this desirable? If so, what would this entail i) in the community and ii) in custody? If not, why not?**

The voluntary sector has, in many local areas, pioneered a distinct approach to young adults in both the community and custody. There are also a number of examples of good practice in the community led by statutory services. This includes one of the T2A Alliance pilots which was led by Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust⁷ and a range of examples led by or involving Community Rehabilitation Companies, Integrated Offender Management, National Probation Service and Youth Offending Services cited in Clinks' *Effective Approaches with Young Adults*.⁸

The outcomes from these projects and interventions, alongside the range of evidence from the field of criminology, psychology and neuroscience, as cited in the T2A Alliance submission, supports the Harris Review recommendation for a distinct approach to young adults. We support the T2A Alliance assertion that young adults should be defined as 18-25.

- **The Harris Review concluded that all young adults in prison are vulnerable and that the experience of being in prison is particularly damaging to them as they are developing. Do you agree? and What is the evidence on how outcomes across a range of measures for young adult offenders compare with other offenders?**

In addition to the evidence outlined in the T2A Alliance submission regarding the vulnerability of, and outcomes for, young adults, Clinks wishes to draw the inquiry's attention, in particular, to the specific vulnerabilities and outcomes experienced by young adults from equality or minority groups.

» **Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young adults**

The findings of the Young Review in relation to outcomes for Black and/or Muslim men in this age group are particularly relevant. BAME representation in the prison population is heavily influenced by age. There are many more young BAME male prisoners than older ones, with the number in the adult estate being highest for 18-20 year olds and 21-24 year olds.⁹ As the committee will be aware 18-25 year olds of all ethnicities and faiths are over represented in the CJS and there are even higher levels of over representation of BAME offenders within this age group.¹⁰

Most publically available data does not cross reference age with ethnicity or other protected characteristics and therefore it can be hard to understand the specific vulnerabilities of particular groups within this age group. However, we do know that in prison, people of Black or mixed origin are subject to higher rates of adjudication, spend more days than average in segregation and are more frequently subject to use of force.¹¹ This statistic, in combination with the fact that 18-20 year olds overall are more than twice as likely to be subject to adjudication and 21-24 year olds slightly more likely¹², reveals a stark picture of outcomes for BAME men in prison in this age group. Similarly we know that 18-24 year olds have the highest reoffending rates of any age group¹³ and overall Black offenders are more likely to reoffend than their white or Asian counterparts.¹⁴

In addition to these statistics relating to BAME experience of the CJS, these disparities are often part of a complex mix of educational, employment, health and social inequalities that have characterised many of their lives¹⁵ and are likely to compound their vulnerability.



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Clinks commends the Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service for their commitment to work with the Young Review's advisory group to address these issues and would suggest that they consider how any future focus on young adults can link with this work.

Clinks is also aware of and commends to the inquiry the submission from the Young Review which further expands on these issues relating to the particular needs and challenges faced by BAME young adults in the CJS.

» **Young women**

Clinks' recent research *Who Cares?*¹⁶, the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection report into girls in the Criminal Justice System¹⁷ and the Select Committee's own inquiry in July 2013 *Women offenders: after the Corston report*¹⁸ highlight that because of their relatively low numbers the distinct needs of women and girls in the CJS are often overlooked.

Women in the young adult age group often experience higher levels of home violence, sexual abuse, care history, mental health problems, poor self-image and self-harm as well as poor education outcomes¹⁹. As pointed out in the T2A Alliance response this is also often the case for older women who have offended but for young women these traumatic experiences are likely to have been more recent.

The Advance Minerva T2A pathway project provides a young adult women specific service, in a women-only environment with a particular focus on individually tailored support including around mental health, domestic and sexual violence and abuse, alcohol and drug misuse and life skill development.

Similarly Pecan's Moving On programme is a one-to-one mentoring service supporting women aged 18-25 through the transition from prison into the community, and for up to a year after their release. Mentors can provide non-judgemental advice and guidance, foster women's self-belief and problem-solving abilities, and ultimately support them in their rehabilitation and desistance from crime. You can read a case study following one woman's progress with a Pecan mentor, overcoming multiple health challenges and other barriers to achieve her own goals for her life on the Clinks website.²⁰

Clinks' recent research into community based services supporting women offenders found that there is a constant need to advocate and reiterate the case for women specific approaches. Those interviewed for *'Who Cares?'* felt that the Ministry of Justice and NOMS need to strengthen their messaging around why women's services are essential and effective. Clinks recommends that any strategy for young adults should recognise and address the specific and distinct needs of young women.

» **Young adults with disabilities**

Up to 60% of young people in custody have experienced a traumatic brain injury and there are high levels of both physical and learning disabilities and communication difficulties amongst people who have offended. Often these issues can go unidentified meaning that they are not taken into account with regards to compliance with custody or probation requirements. As with BAME young adults and young women, any national or local strategy for young adults must take into account the prevalence of and specific needs of those with disabilities.



Clinks recommends that any strategy adopted centrally or locally with regards to young adult offenders takes into account the particular needs of young adults from these groups. Our recent *Effective Approaches with Young Adults* guide for probation services provides a range of practical advice for tailoring services to these groups.²¹

» **The impact of young adults' family relations on their vulnerability**

Clinks welcomes the Harris Review's assertion that "the separation of young people from their families and support networks is likely to lead to loneliness and to exacerbate vulnerabilities."²² Clinks convenes a network of family-focussed organisations who recently expressed that approaches to working with young adults must take into account their relationships with family members, and the possibility that they may themselves be parents.

Families often have a more direct role in the lives of young adults than with older offenders. Therefore we also welcome the Harris Review's proposal of a specific role within custodial establishments (the CARO Officer) who will have responsibility, among other things, for maintaining contact with families. The need for this contact should also be taken into account within probation services, both in Community Rehabilitation Companies and the National Probation Service.

While it can sometimes be beneficial to work with family members it is important to first establish a young person's family history. A disproportionately large number of young adults in contact with the CJS have been in care. Care leavers have particular challenges as they transition to adulthood due to their common experience of trauma, poor or absent support from families and their experience of living in institutions or foster care. A young adult's previous experiences of the care system must be recognised in assessment procedures, and appropriate support developed, as advocated for by the Care Leavers Association.²³

In addition it is also important to recognise the impact of the protected characteristics outlined above on family relationships. The Young Review found a range of complex factors relating to faith and ethnicity that affected an individual's relationship with their family and the extent to which family structures were supportive of desistance. Some research identifies family structures, particularly in Bangladeshi communities, as providing social capital which supports the move away from offending. However, the review also found that in many ethnic minority communities the stigma attached to offending (and associated drug and alcohol misuse) resulted in families and communities rejecting loved ones who had offended. Therefore care must be taken to avoid homogenising and stereotypical assumptions about the nature of BAME offenders' family relationships.

Similarly, gender is an important factor to consider in young adults' relationships with their families. Young women are often primary carers and are less likely than men to live with parents after leaving custody meaning that they have greater housing needs as safe accommodation is harder to find, particularly if women-only accommodation is needed. The challenge of finding suitable accommodation emerged as a particularly prominent theme in Clinks' *Who Cares?* report. Our research found that the issues of safe, affordable and appropriate accommodation and the impact of cuts to public services were becoming intertwined. Accommodation is a key resettlement need for many female offenders and poor quality housing or lack of access to suitable accommodation can contribute to reoffending. For those in crisis, no safe place to stay can exacerbate their vulnerability.²⁴



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Conclusion

In this submission Clinks have provided additional and complementary evidence to that submitted by the T2A Alliance relating specifically to the role of the voluntary sector in providing suitable and effective responses to young adults in the CJS; the specific vulnerabilities and outcomes of young adults with protected characteristics and the impact of family relationships on young adults' vulnerability. Where we have not answered specific questions posed by the inquiry we would refer the committee to the T2A Alliance submission which has our full support. We hope that this evidence is helpful to the Justice Select Committee and look forward to engaging further with the Inquiry as appropriate.

CLINKS

Clinks supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders. Clinks aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders.

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End notes

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