



Ministry of Justice responds to Clinks' call for an open consultation on the future of probation

Clinks welcomes today's consultation announcement on the future of probation. Our research on the voluntary sector's engagement in Transforming Rehabilitation shows that our sector is [under represented, under pressure and under resourced](#) and calls for the Ministry of Justice to openly consult on the purpose and structure of probation.

The government's proposals recognise Clinks' findings that charities in probation supply chains have had to adapt services or subsidise them with other charitable funds, undermining their quality and sustainability. Our research highlighted confusion about what should be funded by probation which is causing disinvestment in voluntary sector services from other sources. We therefore welcome the proposal for future probation contracts to be more clearly focused on core offender management functions and delivering the standards the courts require.

We particularly welcome the Ministry of Justice's intention to set out a clearer role for the voluntary sector and better facilitate its involvement in the design and delivery of the wider services that support rehabilitation and resettlement. These services are often distinct from the role of statutory probation to deliver the sentence of the court, but provide essential support to ensure that individuals can complete that sentence and transform their lives.

The consultation acknowledges that the current system has presented challenges for the voluntary sector, despite the central role that was outlined in the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms. The sector will need assurances that the lessons of the current system will be learnt. We hope that this consultation signals the start of a genuine co-design process for future commissioning and partnership arrangements between probation services and the voluntary sector.

Clinks' Chief Executive Officer, Anne Fox, said:

"It is timely for the Ministry of Justice to take the decision to terminate current contracts in 2020 and take steps to stabilise current arrangements. Research from Clinks and others indicates that probation services, and the voluntary sector's role in them, are currently unsustainable and not able to deliver to the quality we would like to see.

"Looking to the future, this is an opportunity to address serious limitations in the current system and ensure that the voluntary sector's knowledge and skills are properly utilised in support of the high quality probation services needed. We will however need to be confident that the final proposals adequately address the current problems in the system and do not represent tweaking around the edges. We look forward to working with the Ministry of Justice to ensure this is not the case."

ENDS

For further information please contact Anne Fox (anne.fox@clinks.org, 07534 819714).

Notes to editors

1. Clinks is the national charity for voluntary organisations in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. We support, represent and advocate for the voluntary sector in criminal justice, enabling it to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families.

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2. Since 2015, in response to feedback from our members and other voluntary sector organisations, Clinks has led the TrackTR partnership to undertake in-depth research into 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 from this research. It is based on a survey of 132 voluntary sector organisations between February and April 2017 and includes six in-depth case studies. It identified seven key findings and made 11 recommendations that we believe can make a difference, and help us to understand what the next generation of probation services could look like.