



**Reducing Reoffending**  
Third Sector Advisory Group

**Minutes from Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) Special Interest  
Group on Commissioning Family Services**

8<sup>th</sup> November 2016

**Attending:**

Patrice Lawrence	Clinks (Secretariat)
Richard Nicholls	Clinks (Chair)
Lee Stephenson	Jigsaw Visitors Centre
Alison Goddard	Lincolnshire Action Trust
Helen Attewell	Nepacs
Mark Proctor	Ormiston
Andy Keens-Down	Pact
Jennie Spanton	Pact
Diane Curry	POPS
Sarah Hillier	Spurgeons
Joanne McIntosh	HACRO
Charlie Weinberg	Safe Ground
Emma Wells	Future Unlocked
Polly Wright	Barnardo's

**Apologies:**

Matthew Livingstone Pre-School Learning Alliance

Lord Farmer and Samantha Callan also joined the meeting for item 7.

## **1. Introductions and welcomes**

The members introduced themselves.

## **2. Agree the notes of the previous meeting**

Members of the Group confirmed that they were still waiting for written confirmation of the extension of their contracts.

There were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

## **3. Clinks' review of family work**

Richard Nicholls informed the Group that Clinks is reviewing the impact of its family work on organisations. He will be contacting organisations to organise meetings and interviews to inform the review.

**Action: RN to contact selected members as part of the survey of Clinks' family work.**

## **4. NOMS visitors questionnaire feedback**

NOMS has drafted a questionnaire to explore the experiences of people visiting friends and family members in prison. They asked Richard Nicholls to circulate it to organisations working with the families of prisoners for comment.

The Group commented on the length of the questionnaire, the detail of the questions and the means of capturing the information; there was uncertainty as to whether the questionnaire was intended as a hard copy or online survey. Would help be available to complete the survey in prisons without voluntary sector support? How often would the survey be carried out?

Members also queried if a new independent survey was the best way to capture information. Organisations were aware of a number of existing surveys, including those used by the organisations themselves. Alternatively, focus groups could be used to explore issues in depth.

However, a national, universal survey could be a useful to capture baseline information on how prisons support the families of prisoners. It was a potential tool for performance management.

## 5. Update on reform prison grants

Richard Nicholls updated the Group. Organisations that had been unsuccessful should have been informed; feedback on bids is available. However, details of the successful bids cannot be publicly released until all the grant contracts have been signed.

## 6. Feedback on Family Commissioning Roadshows

Richard Nicholls has contacted Richard Booty at NOMS outlining the organisations' concerns and was awaiting responses on some of the issues. The Group felt that responses should ideally be received within five to seven days to give organisations enough information to decide whether to apply.

Richard Nicholls confirmed that the commissioning timetable has changed.

Publish Contract Notice – 09/01/2017

Closing date for Stage 1 – 03/02/2017

Award of Framework – 01/05/2017

Mini Competition (Stage 2) 02/05/2017 to 30/6/2017

Contracts Awarded – 3/7/2017

Contract Delivery – 02/10/2017

NOMS will be notifying all interested parties of the timetable change shortly. However, members felt that changing the timetable is insufficient; the whole process should be simplified.

Organisations that attended the roadshows still sought a number of points for further clarification. It was requested that Richard Nicholls take the following queries back to NOMS.

- Are the Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) still available to meet or has the commissioning process formally begun? Members had received conflicting information.
- The Transforming Rehabilitation prime and subcontracting process had complicated the relationships between organisations who may at different times be commissioners, competitors and partners to each other. How will this commissioning process encourage constructive partnerships?
- Can the first stage be simplified to ensure organisations do not have to replicate information several times?
- Can NOMS formally extend organisations' contracts until the end of September 2017?
- When will details of the 'lots' be released so organisations know what they are bidding for?

- Do organisations have to go through the pre-qualifying application for each lot/cluster even if they only intend to bid in the mini-competitions?
- The White Paper on Prison Safety and Reform reiterates the move towards governor autonomy. How does this fit with a national commissioning process?
- The budget is inadequate to provide universally good quality services. Will NOMS be lobbying for more funds in the future?

**Action: RN will take these queries to NOMS for a response**

**Action: RN will invite a MOJ official to a future meeting to outline how the commissioning will fit with the new policy landscape.**

## **7. 1.30 to 2.30: Lord Farmer and Samantha Callan leading a session to inform the Farmer Review**

Lord Farmer outlined the purpose of the Review – its aim is to examine the impact of family ties on reducing recidivism and intergenerational crime. It is hoped that the Review can influence the prison reform process as well as offer practical recommendations for building and sustaining the bonds between prisoners and their families.

The initial discussion focussed on the proposed commissioning process. Members felt that the tender was more appropriate for bigger contracts and more generalised services – such as cleaning contracts – and was inappropriate for organisations delivering specialised and tailored services. The competitive nature of the process risked splitting long term constructive partnerships and leading to fewer providers and a loss of expertise and quality.

Organisations were concerned that public sector prisons who were not part of the first phase of reform were able to opt out of the national commissioning process. Some prisons were using internal staff to deliver family support work without the expertise and experience that voluntary sector organisations bring. There was also frustration that after many years of campaigning for visitor centres, they are not included in the brief. It is a missed opportunity to provide decent, hospitable and safe provision for all families.

It was noted that the recent White Paper on Prison Safety and Reform stated a commitment to:

*‘support prisoners to maintain links back to the community, we will work to develop a measure of the quality of prisoners’ family relationships.’ (p.24)*

Organisations appreciated the support behind the Review and the mention of family support in the White Paper. They felt it important for the government to reiterate its

commitment to the sector by allocating an appropriate budget for evidence-led effective services. It was also essential that the needs of families should inform the vision, purpose and funding of the commissioning process rather than the other way round. Organisations also queried how the 'measure of quality' mentioned in the White Paper would be designed, implemented and used to hold governors accountable for the provision of family support in prisons.

In terms of policy development, Lord Farmer explained that there was considerable government interest in the Review – 'the door is opening'. Organisations recommended more effective work between different government departments. The Troubled Families initiative, for instance, is an opportunity to pool budgets to fund work supporting the families of prisoners.

There was also a call for governors to take responsibility for integrating family work into mainstream rehabilitation services. Training about the needs of families should be incorporated into professional development.

Members also wanted the opportunity to liaise with a high level policy lead with responsibility for the families of prisoners at NOMS or MoJ.

Lord Farmer invited organisations to continue sending their recommendations.

## **8. Discussion: The future of the Special Interest Group on Commissioning Family Services and influencing policy**

Patrice Lawrence, who leads the work on the families of prisoners at Clinks and provides the secretariat for this Group, informed members that she is leaving Clinks at the end of 2016. Members were asked to comment on the impact of the Group so far and their opinions on whether the Group should continue. How should issues raised by the group be taken forward by Clinks?

Diane Curry provides the link between this Special Interest Group and the main Reducing Reoffending Third Sector (RR3) Group. She felt that it has been important to feedback organisations' experiences of contributing to the commissioning process to the RR3. It was also important for the commissioning team from NOMS to attend these meetings and hear organisations' concerns directly even if the Group had hoped their input would have had a greater influence over the content of the commissioning roadshows.

Diane felt it should be noted that the Group offered an effective collective voice that rose above individual organisations' needs.

The RR3 is due to end in March 2017. This Group agreed that it should meet twice more before concluding. A member of NOMS commissioning team will be invited to the next meeting to answer outstanding queries.

**Action: RN to invite Richard Booty to the next meeting**

The final meeting will enable organisations to reflect on the overall learning outcomes from the tendering process and this Group's role in influencing it.

The Group considered how organisations working with the families of prisoners can continue to influence CJS policy beyond the RR3. It is important that they have a strategic role that recognises the importance of their specialist knowledge. The Group discussed the role of Clinks. Clinks' provides advocacy for the sector; capacity building and access to NOMS – all of these are especially important for smaller organisations.

A key issue is still the need to push for a bigger budget allocated for family services as the £65 per adult male calculation used for the commissioning process is inadequate. The Group discussed the effective use of evidence including the potential recommendations from the Farmer Review and the statistics relating to family ties and their relation to reducing reoffending.

**Action: RN to discuss strategies with Clinks policy team.**

Date of the next meeting **5<sup>th</sup> January 2016.**