

September 2016



CLINKS  
RESPONSE

# Justice Committee inquiry on prison reform

Written evidence submitted by Clinks

## About this response

Clinks is the national infrastructure organisation supporting voluntary sector organisations working with offenders and their families.

We are a membership organisation with over 500 members including the voluntary sector's largest providers as well as its smallest. Our wider national network reaches 4,000 voluntary sector contacts. Overall, through our weekly e-bulletin Light Lunch and our social media activity, we have a network of over 15,000 contacts, which include 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.

Since 1998, we have played a vital role in supporting voluntary sector involvement in prisons, to maximise the sector's contribution to the rehabilitation and resettlement of people serving custodial sentences.

## About this submission

Since late 2015, Clinks has undertaken a significant volume of work focused on prison reform and the impact of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme on the sector's work in prisons, including:

- Our submission to the Coates Review of prison education<sup>1</sup>
- Clinks' joint report with the Prison Reform Trust, *The role of the voluntary and private sector in providing opportunities for rehabilitation for people on temporary release*<sup>2</sup>
- A new Do It Justice guide, *The rehabilitative prison: good engagement with the voluntary sector*<sup>3</sup>
- A Clinks discussion paper on prison reform, *The rehabilitative prison: What does 'good' look like?*<sup>4</sup>
- Clinks' chairing of the Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3), which provides expert voluntary sector advice to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), and production of RR3's recent report on prison reform<sup>5</sup>
- A new publication, *Valuing volunteers in prison*, commissioned by the MoJ to review volunteer involvement in prisons<sup>6</sup>
- The launch of a new project in three prisons in the south west, supporting the co-ordination of the voluntary sector<sup>7</sup>
- The publication of Change and Challenge, the second report in a series tracking the voluntary sector's experience of the changes brought about by the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) reforms.<sup>8</sup>

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supporting voluntary organisations that  
work with offenders and their families

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Clinks continues to support the Young Review's Independent Advisory Group, chaired by Baroness Young of Hornsey, which is now working with the MoJ and National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to improve outcomes for young Black and Muslim men across the CJS. The Young Review recently made its own submission to the Lammy Review of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation in the CJS, which included specific recommendations regarding BAME people in custody.<sup>9 10</sup>

We also actively support the voluntary sector's work with women in prison or at risk of entering custody,<sup>11</sup> and provide ongoing support for voluntary sector organisations working with prisoners' families<sup>12</sup> and undertaking arts-based work with prisoners.<sup>13</sup>

## Executive summary

- The purpose of the prison regime should be to actively promote rehabilitation, to facilitate successful resettlement into the community and to support long-term 'secondary desistance'.
- Providing a safe, decent and humane environment is fundamental to creating a rehabilitative prison culture and should be an absolute priority for the prison estate modernisation programme and reform prison proposals.
- Clinks believes voluntary organisations have a key role to play as strategic and delivery partners in the modernisation/reform programmes, helping prisons to become more community-facing institutions and enabling community in-reach by volunteers and non-CJS agencies to undertake a range of activities known to be supportive of desistance.
- The MoJ and NOMS should actively consult with Clinks and other key voluntary sector bodies, such as the Young Review's Independent Advisory Group and RR3's specialist sub-groups, throughout the design and implementation of the prison modernisation/reform programmes, to utilise their expertise and ensure that the distinct needs of those with protected characteristics or requiring specialist support are met. It will also be important to facilitate consultation with people in prison and their families and to take account of their views.
- It is hoped the new Justice Secretary will provide much needed clarity in her reform plans about the future extent of governor autonomy in the reform prisons and across the wider estate, as their powers currently remain ill-defined and restricted by legislation. Only then will it be possible for each governor to determine what may be achievable within their own establishment.
- The MoJ and NOMS should undertake a review of the commissioning and procurement processes, as well as the grant arrangements that will support prison reform, to ensure they have the necessary flexibility to support effective rehabilitation and the development of a diverse market.
- Governors currently have very little control over the rehabilitation and resettlement services being provided in their prisons. The prison reform programme needs to address this deficit and ensure that governors are integral to the design and delivery of both Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and National Probation Service (NPS) services, thereby enabling them to join up all the work going on in their prison and monitor its quality.

## **1. What should be the purpose(s) of prisons?**

Clinks believes that prison should be reserved to punish, through deprivation of liberty, only those who have committed serious offences and who pose a significant risk.

We consider it a priority to reduce the number of people sent to prison whose criminogenic and wider social and health needs could be addressed more effectively in the community, especially those serving unproductive short prison sentences of up to twelve months for less serious offences.

The use of remands in custody should also be restricted to those who pose a risk to the public while awaiting trial or sentence. This would ease pressures on local prisons and enable them to work in a concentrated way with a more settled convicted population.

Much greater use could be made of voluntary sector provision to support bail arrangements for people with complex and multiple needs, to minimise the risk of further offending and support court attendances.

More should be done for people remanded in custody and subsequently found not guilty and released. Currently they receive no assistance, although their period in custody may have seriously disrupted their relationships, housing, education, employment and entitlement to benefits. It is suggested that some of the currently under-utilised capacity within CRCs could be deployed to offer short-term support to people released from court, perhaps in partnership with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

For people sentenced to imprisonment, the whole purpose of the regime should be to actively promote rehabilitation and to facilitate successful resettlement into the community.

We understand rehabilitation to be a complex process that can support or hamper, but not command or compel, desistance - the individual's own efforts to stop offending.<sup>14</sup>

The aim of prison rehabilitation, working seamlessly with the NPS or CRC delivering resettlement and post-release supervision, should be to support and facilitate long-term 'secondary desistance' - the complete cessation of offending, accompanied by the development of an altered identity as a non-offender, and the person's full reintegration into the family (where possible and appropriate), community and society.<sup>15</sup>

### **How should i) the prison estate modernisation programme and ii) reform prisons proposals best fit these purposes and deal most appropriately with those held?**

Providing a safe, decent and humane environment is fundamental to creating a rehabilitative prison culture and should be an absolute priority for the prison modernisation programme and reform prison proposals.

The work of the Prisons Research Centre at the University of Cambridge suggests that prison regimes characterised by help and assistance, humanity, staff professionalism, bureaucratic legitimacy, organisation and consistency have the strongest positive effects on prisoners' personal development.<sup>16</sup>



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Building on this 'bedrock', the prison system should be transformed, not only in the reform prisons and new prisons but also across the remaining estate, so that each establishment is geared to actively promoting rehabilitation, building on knowledge from research about the factors that are critical to enabling long-term desistance.<sup>17</sup>

Clinks believes voluntary organisations have a key role to play as strategic and delivery partners in the modernisation and reform programmes, helping all prisons to become more community-facing institutions and enabling in-reach by volunteers and non-CJS agencies to deliver activities known to be supportive of long-term desistance, such as support for families and the provision of arts activities.<sup>18</sup> These ideas are further explored in RR3's recent report on prison reform and Clinks' discussion paper, *The rehabilitative prison: What does 'good' look like?*<sup>19 20</sup>

The MoJ and NOMS should actively consult with Clinks and other key voluntary sector bodies, such as the Young Review's Independent Advisory Group and RR3's specialist sub-groups, throughout the design and implementation of the prison modernisation and reform programmes, to utilise their expertise and ensure that the distinct needs of those with protected characteristics, or requiring specialist support, are met. It will also be important to facilitate consultation with people in custody and their families and to take account of their views.

Due to the low numbers of women in prison in England and Wales, it is vital that a distinct approach is developed for the women's estate, considering the specific needs of women in any prison closures or plans around designing and building new prisons. We believe a key opportunity has been missed in all the prison reform plans to date to develop a reformed female estate. The MoJ and NOMS should now work closely with the Advisory Board on Female Offenders and the RR3 Women's Reference Group to develop and implement a new approach.

## What should be the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the following in creating a modern and effective prison system?

### Prison staff

Clinks believes prison officers have a unique opportunity – given sufficient time, training and support – to build strong relationships with those in their care focused on supporting desistance. For example, prisons could usefully develop approaches that further build on the concept that 'every contact matters', which underpinned NOMS' recent piloting of 'Five Minute Interventions' by prison officers.<sup>21</sup>

Prison staff can realistically only be held accountable for outcomes that are under their control, either on the wing or arising from their daily interactions with individual prisoners.

It is also clear that adequate staffing ratios are needed if officers are to maintain safety whilst working in new and more creative ways with the individuals in their care.

### Prison governors

Clinks has welcomed the greater freedoms given to the executive governors of the six early adopter reform prisons, resulting in clear efforts to re-think regimes and to engage more fully with voluntary sector organisations and other community partners.

It is hoped the new Justice Secretary will provide much needed clarity in her reform plans about the future extent of governor autonomy in the reform prisons and across the wider estate, as their powers currently remain ill-defined and restricted by legislation. Only then will it be possible for each governor to determine what may be achievable within their own establishment.

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In reality, it seems unlikely that many existing Prison Service Instructions (PSIs) could be dispensed with altogether, but governors could usefully be allowed greater flexibility in their application, for example to encourage greater use of release on temporary licence (ROTL).<sup>22</sup>

In terms of accountability, governors should be measured firstly on their delivery of a safe, decent and humane prison and then on a range of measures related to their prison's rehabilitation regime and its outcomes – some nationally set and some set by the establishment itself to demonstrate progress against its own benchmarking.

Although the goal of the prison should be to support long-term desistance, it is not thought possible to attribute longer term reoffending outcomes to a single establishment, although a comparison of the reoffending outcomes of similar prisons may be indicative of the relative success or otherwise of their approaches.

#### **National Offender Management Service, iv) Ministry of Justice officials and Ministers and v) other agencies and departments**

While it is clear that greater governor autonomy may reduce the emphasis on national frameworks and the tight budgetary and managerial control currently exercised by the MoJ and NOMS, Clinks believes that a centralised function will remain important in terms of gathering and analysing data, developing the evidence base on rehabilitation and desistance, and monitoring safety and other essential quality standards.

Officials in MoJ and NOMS and their Ministers have always played key roles in recognising and responding to identified gaps in prison services (for example for women, families and people with protected characteristics). They have actively worked and communicated with the voluntary sector, other agencies and departments to develop new policies and practical strategies to address these issues. This national partnership activity is vital to successful prison reform and must therefore be sustained and supported.

## **What are the key opportunities and challenges of the central components of prison reform so far announced by the Government, and their development and implementation?**

The new prison build programme is contingent upon the closure and sale of existing prisons. While this will provide an opportunity to invest in more modern facilities, any prison closure has a significant impact on its community. To meet this challenge, NOMS should provide good advance notice of decommissioning processes, with clear information about timelines. NOMS should also conduct an impact assessment of each prison closure on those in custody, their families, and partner agencies including voluntary organisations, to ensure its decommissioning activity supports the managed exit of important rehabilitation services.<sup>23</sup>

In seeking to build five new prisons during this parliamentary session, it will be important for governors, prison staff, people in custody and their families, plus voluntary sector and other partners, to contribute valuable expertise as to what constitutes an effective design for a rehabilitative prison and ensure prisoners are able to access all the services they require. During the initial planning stages of any new prison, the MoJ and NOMS should conduct a full consultation about its design. When selecting prison locations consideration should be given to accessibility and transport issues, as well as the availability of voluntary and

community services. This appraisal should take into account the needs of all prisoners, including those who experience physical disabilities or belong to other equalities groups.

In terms of wider prison reform, it will be important to avoid the creation of a two tier prison system, with the governors of the reform and new prisons having the freedom to model all that is good in rehabilitation, and the governors of the remaining estate left to struggle within existing facilities, contracts, budgets and modes of operation. For people in prison, this could mean some having access to high quality rehabilitation support while other cohorts get left behind. The most disadvantaged – those affected by severe mental health problems or learning disabilities, physical disability or older age, those serving long-term sentences, as well as those presenting the most challenging behaviours – will need to be brought fully into scope within the planned reforms.

Given the potential impact of all these changes, the MoJ and NOMS should include sufficient time for consultation with the voluntary sector and service user organisations within timelines for the reform programme, and allow for the continued input of their expertise and feedback during the programme's design and implementation.

## **What can be learnt from existing or past commissioning and procurement arrangements for i) private sector prisons and ii) ancillary prison services which have been outsourced?**

Governors of private sector prisons have long enjoyed the ability to commission and procure services directly from the providers of their choice in order to meet the specific needs of their populations. This has often supported innovation and enabled them to purchase services from small, specialist voluntary organisations delivering niche services, particularly for people with protected characteristics or to help sustain and support family relationships.

New freedoms enabling governors of public sector prisons or prison trusts/foundations to manage their own budgets would appear to offer them similar scope to commission specific services from voluntary sector organisations and other partners, to complement those already delivered by CRCs through their supply chains. However, unless all governors are given the same freedoms as those in the private sector, they are likely to still be hampered by bureaucratic procurement and contractual processes led by NOMS, thereby stifling flexibility and innovation and limiting the involvement of smaller, local organisations.

NOMS' current procurement processes are very much geared to large prime contracting models. The majority of the voluntary sector organisations working in the CJS are small and have a turnover of less than £1 million. As recent experiences of Transforming Rehabilitation have demonstrated, smaller organisations have not fared well within prime contractors' supply chains (see also response to question 7).<sup>24</sup> This prime and sub-contractor approach is unlikely to support the kind of flexible commissioning governors will require if they are to meet the diverse rehabilitation needs of their individual populations.

The recent NOMS £1.7 million voluntary sector grants programme, 'Enabling the voluntary sector to contribute to prison reform and better outcomes for prisoners and their families',<sup>25</sup> has enabled the sector and especially smaller organisations to go through a light touch application process, supported and evaluated by NOMS staff with knowledge and expertise in voluntary sector engagement, with input from senior staff in reform prisons.



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This is an approach that should be sustained, enabling NOMS to test new approaches in response to nationally recognised issues. The creative use of grants could also be further developed at the local level, by establishing a larger rolling NOMS grant programme. Individual governors could then draw down grant funding for locally specified services, responding to priorities decided in consultation with local partners, including the voluntary sector. Such an approach would overcome some of the potential stumbling blocks for governors in undertaking their own commissioning and procurement. It would also allow small voluntary organisations to engage with a more proportionate process, thereby supporting local economies and helping to develop a more diverse market.

There remain a number of difficult issues to resolve in relation to the future fit between autonomous commissioning by governors and the central commissioning and procurement of some large-scale contracts.

There is concern in the voluntary sector that, if the budget for national contracts is simply divided up and allocated across all prisons to permit individual commissioning and procurement, some prisons with few existing services will benefit while others with high quality existing provision will suffer. Smaller local organisations that have not previously been in a position to bid may benefit, but other larger organisations may struggle to manage numerous bids across different prison sites and may be unable to sustain existing services if their contracted funding, and any matched funding they currently access, is cut.

It is therefore suggested that the MoJ and NOMS should undertake a review of the commissioning and procurement processes, as well as the grant arrangements that will support prison reform, to ensure they have the necessary flexibility to support effective rehabilitation and the development of a diverse market.

## **What principles should be followed in constructing measures of performance for prisons?**

As the early adopters of any new performance measures, reform prisons should meet baseline standards, but also be able to develop their own in line with local issues and feedback. This should encourage the development of mutual responsibility for longer-term outcomes relating to both the prison and community.

The MoJ and NOMS should ensure that there is clear national oversight of the prison reform programme and robust mechanisms in place to address any failure to achieve outcomes. A local accountability structure could be put in place for each reform prison, such as a board of governors comprising local stakeholders in rehabilitation and resettlement and including voluntary sector representation. This structure should have direct links to the MoJ and NOMS to ensure that identified issues are addressed.

Governors could seek to engage with other already existing local structures such as Local Criminal Justice Boards, PCCs, local authority forums and other community and voluntary networks. They could also refer and feed into local plans relating to community safety, such as Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, Police and Crime Plans and any plans for justice devolution.

The MoJ and NOMS should issue clear guidance to executive governors on the involvement of the voluntary sector and wider community in setting local outcomes. This will ensure that

outcomes are not only appropriate to each individual prison context, but are also outward facing, linking the prison into the community to support the long-term process of desistance.

Consideration should be given to requiring prisons to monitor locally their ability/capacity to meet the needs of BAME prisoners and others with protected characteristics. Some form of voluntary sector/community-led scrutiny could be extremely pertinent and useful in this context.

## **What can be learnt from i) other fields, notably health and education and ii) other jurisdictions about the creation of prison trusts or foundations and related performance measures?**

Clinks does not have a particular view on the creation of prison trusts or foundations, but believes there are lessons to be learned from the creation of academy/free schools. This has largely been a highly centralised model, with the Department for Education holding a contract for each school with the individual trust established to run it.

There are concerns about how, in a centralised model of this kind, individual prison trusts/foundations would develop effective communications and partnerships with the local authorities, mental health trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups, PCCs, voluntary sector organisations and other community partners within their local areas. In this model, there would be a need for some local accountability or governance structure to be established (as suggested in 4.2), to overcome these potential difficulties.

## **Are existing mechanisms for regulation and independent scrutiny of prisons fit for purpose?**

Clinks is pleased to be a member of an external advisory group to HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), which is currently reviewing its Expectations of adult male prisons and how inspectors can better assess the 'health' of establishments to support positive outcomes. HMIP will conduct a public consultation on its proposals early in 2017.<sup>26</sup>

In light of the challenges to safety and decency confronting the prison estate, together with the focus on rehabilitation anticipated through prison reform, it will clearly be important for the Justice Committee and other stakeholders to consider whether the proposed changes to HMIP's inspection methodology will be fit for purpose.

Clinks fully supports the work of HMIP and the Independent Monitoring Boards in providing independent scrutiny of prisons. We believe their independence must be safeguarded and that they should not become regulatory bodies under the direct control of the MoJ. The promised protocol, setting out the terms of engagement between the MoJ and its inspectorates, will be important in underpinning this principle.<sup>27</sup>

The Justice Committee may also wish to consider whether legislation is needed to give formal legal status to HM Inspectorate of Prisons as a whole and not just to the Chief Inspector, thereby protecting its independence and permitting the inspectorate to recruit its own staff. This would align its status with that of HM Inspectorate of Probation.



## **What are the implications for prison reform of...**

### **...the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) programme?**

TR has clearly added another layer of complexity to the reform process. Resettlement services delivered in prisons are now provided by contracted CRCs and their supply chain partners, rather than being under the control of NOMS, prison governors or the NPS.

Although the role of the voluntary sector was central to the Government's promotion of the TR reforms,<sup>28</sup> only one quarter of the 151 voluntary sector organisations that responded to Clinks most recent 'tracking TR' survey reported being funded through a CRC's supply chain.<sup>29</sup> Those in supply chains are predominantly larger voluntary sector organisations, with smaller or medium sized organisations significantly under-represented.

Despite this, the contribution of voluntary sector organisations outside of supply chains to rehabilitation and resettlement outcomes remains considerable. Half of the surveyed voluntary organisations that are outside of supply chains still receive and accept referrals from CRCs and the NPS, whilst over two thirds receive referrals directly from prisons. However, there is growing anxiety about the sustainability of services and those outside of CRC supply chains are more likely to believe that their services are unsustainable.

This reinforces the importance of enabling governors to commission services from smaller, niche providers in a more strategic and sustainable way, to complement those delivered by the CRCs (see also our answer to question 3).

Concerns have been raised by a number of commentators about the quality of 'through the gate' resettlement services now being provided or procured by CRCs. Respondents to the Clinks 'tracking TR' survey echoed these concerns. They felt that a number of services such as housing had been adversely affected and that some groups of users, such as women, had lost access to important sources of support.<sup>30</sup>

Governors currently have very little control over the resettlement services being provided in their prisons. The prison reform programme needs to address this deficit and ensure that governors are integral to the design and delivery of both CRC and NPS services, thereby enabling them to join up all the work going on in their prison and monitor its quality.

### **...the devolution of criminal justice budgets now and in the future?**

The devolution of criminal justice budgets, including those for custodial places, would appear to have much to offer in terms of shifting responsibility for crime back to local areas and dis-incentivising the use of custody.<sup>31 32</sup>

Collaborative local approaches developed through Integrated Offender Management and Making Every Adult Matter have demonstrated the value of joined up local multi-agency action to address entrenched problems and support desistance by prolific and persistent, but low risk of harm, offenders.<sup>33</sup> Voluntary sector organisations have played important roles in these initiatives, providing offenders with important sources of relationship and family support, tangible practical help and access to wider community networks and resources.<sup>34</sup>

Clinks believes these holistic 'whole systems' approaches to offending behaviour are intrinsic to helping offenders remain out of prison and achieve desistance, in addition to formal sentence requirements and the introduction of new technologies such as

satellite monitoring and alcohol tags. More joined-up support for women offenders is currently being piloted in four areas by the MoJ through the use of 'whole systems' grants, an approach that, if successful, could be replicated for other offender groups.<sup>35</sup>

Since 2012, PCCs have inherited important responsibilities for local drugs intervention programmes and youth crime prevention.<sup>36</sup> In her former capacity as Home Secretary, the Prime Minister envisaged PCCs further increasing their responsibilities as crime commissioners, very much in line with the devolution agenda.<sup>37</sup> If so permitted, PCCs could provide a much needed point of coordination for joined up multi agency strategies to prevent and address crime in local areas, to develop community alternatives to imprisonment and to support the development of effective community resettlement services, especially following the fragmentation of local probation services under TR.

## Notes

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**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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