



**Reducing Reoffending**  
Third Sector Advisory Group

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

27 January 2016

**Attending:**

Patrice Lawrence	Clinks (Secretariat)
Richard Nicholls	Clinks (Chair)
Paul Haughton	NOMS
Chantel King	NOMS
Anna Penn	Addaction
Jill Greenfield	Barnardo's
Emma Wells	Futures Unlocked
Joanna McIntosh	HACRO (Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders)
Lee Stephenson	Jigsaw Visitors Centre
Holly Claydon	NEPACS
Mark Proctor	Ormiston
Andy Keens-Down	Pact
Diane Curry	POPS
Susanna Ward	Safe Ground
Nicola Didlock	Spurgeons

**Apologies:**

Foufou Savitzky	Best Start for Families
Evan Jones	St Giles Trust
David Higham	The Well Communities

## **1. Introductions and welcomes**

The members of the Special Interest Group introduced themselves. Chantel King is the Head of New Change Development at NOMS. She comes from an operational background – she has been a governor at HMP Leyhill and HMP Gloucester. She has experience across the sector from high security prisons to the women's estate.

## **2. Context and purpose of the Special Interest Group on Commissioning Family Services - Richard Nicholls**

Richard Nicholls introduced the purpose of the meeting. The RR3 Special Interest Group on Commissioning Family Services will meet at least four times before September 2016 while NOMS is reviewing its commissioning processes. If the commissioning process is not finalised by that time, the Special Interest Group may opt to meet beyond that period. Diane Curry is a member of the RR3 and will feedback to it from this Special Interest Group.

## **3. Current overview – Chantel King, NOMS**

The key driver for change is the Prison Reform Programme, replacing older urban prisons with new builds. It is an opportunity to consider how prisons can best serve their purpose. Key elements of the programme are:

- The review of commissioned design and the impact of the buildings themselves;
- Increased autonomy for local prison governors - relaxing centralised controls with no requirement for legislative change;
- Devolution based on the academy school and foundation trust hospital models. In April 2016, six early adopters of the devolution model will be announced. There is currently no further information about which prisons will be selected or the criteria for doing so;
- The role of visitors centres – the different models, the range and extent of services and the way that diverse services are funded.

## **4. Discussion and questions**

The impact of devolution and autonomy prompted considerable discussion, especially the identity and role of the early adopters. The Special interest Group also recommended other issues to consider:

- Devolution creates competition between services; is there a danger of creating a hierarchy of prisons and services?
- How will devolution address problems around information-sharing?
- If existing organisations lose funding, how do we ensure their expertise and knowledge are not lost?
- Will effective organisations lose funding?
- How do the proposed changes fit with the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda?

The following points were specific to visitors' centres.

- The current funding of visitors' centres has a historic context which has led to some prisons being continually funded while others are not. Some standardisation of funding may be welcome.
- However, it may help if there is agreement about what baseline services should be delivered and to what standard. Should there be minimum standards and what could they cover?
- What government department/s should pay for the services? Some may sit under the Ministry of Justice, but should the cost of other specialist services be picked up more relevant government departments?
- If it is not satisfactory to simply measure visitor numbers, what *should* be measured? How is added value assessed? What does a 'good' visitor centre look like?
- There is a responsibility to safeguard children on the premises. It is essential that this remains.
- How can technology be used to strengthen relationships?

## 5. Closing remarks

Chantel left the Special Interest Group members with questions to consider.

1. What do members think are the risks and benefits of services being commissioned on an autonomous or devolution-model basis?

2. How should people who may benefit from a service be identified? Currently, prisoners self-define. Should there be an alternative referral system?
3. What do 'good' family services look like?

The discussion will continue at the next meeting in April, on a date to be agreed. Chantel has been invited to attend.