



**Notes from the Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) Special Interest Group on
Covid-19
Wednesday 19th May 2021 via Zoom**

Attendees:

Anne Fox, Clinks (chair)	Burcu Borysik, Revolving Doors Agency (co-opted)
Will Downs, Clinks (notes)	Pippa Goodfellow, Alliance for Youth Justice (co-opted)
Francesca Cooney, Prisoners' Education Trust	Paul Grainge, RECOOP
Alice Dawnay, Switchback (co-opted)	Linda Patterson, User Voice (co-opted)
Neil Grutchfield, Synergy Theatre (co-opted)	Tracy Wild, Langley House Trust
Alasdair Jackson, Recycling Lives	Emma Wells, Community Chaplaincy Association
Simon Ruding, TiPP (co-opted)	Rachel Tynan, Unlock (co-opted)
Kate Paradine, Women in Prison	David Liddemore, HMPPS
Vicki Markiewicz, Change Grow Live	Milosz Bruski, HMPPS
Mellissa Berry, Include (co-opted)	Ruth Boyd, HMPPS
Khatuna Tsintsadze, Zahid Mubarak Trust	Nicola McChlery, MoJ
Peter Dawson, Prison Reform Trust	
Vicki Cardwell, Spark Inside (co-opted)	

Apologies:

Nina Champion, Criminal Justice Alliance
Helen Dyson, Nacro
Lisa Dando, Brighton Women's Centre
Martin Blakebrough, Kaleidoscope
Dee Anand, Together for Mental Wellbeing

Changes to HMPPS Covid-19 Gold Command

- The HMPPS Covid-19 Gold Command team have now split their responsibilities between regime recovery and future regime reform.
- Anne Fox placed on record her gratitude to Ed Cornmell, HMPPS and Chris Gunderson, HMPPS for engaging so positively with the RR3 Covid-19 special interest group. She said that relationship has been hugely valuable to the group. She welcomed David Liddemore, Milosz Bruski, Ruth Boyd and Nicola McChlery to the meeting.

HMPPS update on prison regime recovery

- David said there are three live outbreaks across the prison estate, at HMP Preston, Wakefield and Garth¹. There is one outbreak in an approved premise. There are 69 symptomatic prisoners across all sites. Covid-19 related staff absences currently stand at 427, which is a significant reduction of around 1,500 since April 1st 2021. The prison

¹ Please note all figures and percentages included in these notes were accurate at the time of the meeting but are subject to change and update.

population remains below 78,000 which helps provide the space for social distancing and Covid-19 regimes.

- All sites are now on the progression list for stage three of the [National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services](#). 107 adult sites have had approval to start implementing stage three and have all begun implementing some element of the stage three regime. 11 sites remain at stage four: Exeter, Deerbolt, The Verne, Chelmsford, Bedford, Wandsworth, Wormwood Scrubs, Belmarsh, Garth, Swaleside, and Preston. There is an expectation that some of these sites will progress very soon.
- The process for progression from stage 3 to stage 2 involves the development of local recovery plans that set out how each prison can expand its delivery into stage 2, while addressing various backlogs in the system, for example accredited programmes, training programmes, staff annual leave etc. Stage 2 provides more discretion for individual governors and prison group directors about what goes on in each individual establishment.
- All six Youth Custody sites have remained at stage 3 throughout the crisis. The youth estate will probably progress more quickly to stage 2 as they have continued to deliver a more expansive regime throughout the crisis. This is in recognition that children in HMPPS's care are classed as vulnerable.
- HMPPS is closely monitoring the prevalence of Covid-19 variants and retain the right to step back to re-impose restrictions or move individual establishments back to stage 4. The heat map panel will continue to meet to decide on the RAG (Red-Amber-Green) rating at each site.
- A number of sites have started delivering social visits. Re-opening social visits will remain a gradual process dependent on the circumstances of each local area. HMPPS is conducting pilots at four sites, where people are asked to take a test before attending, to potentially allow for greater level of contact and interaction.

Questions on regime recovery

- An attendee asked HMPPS to provide more specific details on why there needs to be a delay in allowing physical contact at social visits. People accept that there is a heightened risk of infection in prison, but this can be easily mitigated by testing and vaccinations. Anne Fox said she raised this point with HMPPS previously.
- David said he wasn't able to give a more specific response at this stage but HMPPS is aware this issue is contributing to frustration amongst people in prison and their families. There is a desire to move quickly and HMPPS hopes to be able to announce some level of contact soon.
- An attendee asked what HMPPS hoped to learn from its social visits pilots and how long it will take for that learning to shape delivery. Nicola said that social visit pilots are focussed on testing, not on physical contact. There are short-term pilots being conducted with the aim of informing stage 1 design. Longer-term pilots are also being conducted with the aim of collating more robust evidence to inform future regime design.

- Anne said the majority of social visit services are provided by family service providers. They are engaging and keen to work with HMPPS to find solutions to these issues.

HMPPS update on prison regime reform

- Milosz said in the shorter term, the team are focused on designing a reformed stage 1 of the national prisons framework, so that prisons are able to begin to progress into a reformed model. Stage 1 will then provide the basis for a longer-term vision of prison regime reform.
- HMPPS wants to 'build back better'. It is taking the learnings about effective regimes, from both before and during Covid-19, to see how it can establish improved regimes. The current vision is for a regime that ensures time is well spent towards supporting the rehabilitation of someone in HMPPS care, including ensuring the time of prisoners, prison staff and the staff of partners and providers are utilised in the best way.
- The work has three broad areas of focus:
 - *Purpose* – to work towards a more personalised approach to meaningful activities; to focus on assessing the needs and risks of individuals and deliver a regime that addresses those needs and risks. HMPPS will work towards establishing measures that support such outcomes.
 - *Place* - to consider how the physical environment and ways of working can ensure safety, decency and order. There is an acknowledgment that restricted regimes during Covid-19 decreased people's quality of life and their level of mental health. Regimes restrictions also had the unintentional consequence of reducing violence and contributing to some people feeling safer. HMPPS want to create more generous regimes in the future and to ensure relationships are at the core of their work, promoting safety, order and decency
 - *People* – to make sure staff and partner agencies are able to support prisoners in the most effective way, to enable individuals to make effective use of time in custody and achieve the right outcomes for people in custody. HMPPS is meeting with governors and prison group directors, and engaging with a variety of stakeholders, to think about what this should look like.
- Anne Fox said there should be an additional focus on *partners*. There needed to be a clear role for voluntary organisations in reform planning, as voluntary organisations provide support to people in prison that can transform regimes and the outcomes that can be achieved. Voluntary sector coordination at the local level will be crucial for this and HMPPS should consider how a governor or a prison group director can be supported to think strategically of the value of partners as part of a better regime. Milosz said he hoped issues around partners could be addressed under *people*.

Discussion

- An attendee asked to what extent future regime reform would take into account the views of people in prison. Milosz said HMPPS is collecting the views of people in prison through HMIP inspections, surveys from people in prison with access to in-cell technology and forums and councils organised by individual prison governors. He said Stephen O'Connell,

Deputy Director Prison Recovery and Rosie Travers, HMPPS Insights Group, are leading on work around service user engagement with Prison Reform Trust and User Voice.

- An attendee said peer support services can be vital in helping to reduce self-harm and deliver social care. As HMPPS design the future regime and consider measures and outcomes, they must consider how peer support models can play a vital role across a range of measures. Milosz said that he wanted to see more peer support and staff-led activities. He hoped the future regime design would allow more informal activity to flourish.
- An attendee asked how HMPPS would approach staff agency and wellbeing in the future regime work. Milosz said that Covid-19 has reaffirmed the value of regular communication and consistent approaches to staff. He said they were also exploring the relationship between the key worker and the people they support in prison and the role that will play in future regimes.
- An attendee asked whether there was any update on further investment in in-cell technology, citing the need to set the prison estate up better so that people are able to learn and access services in cells. David and Milosz agreed that greater access to in-cell technology would enhance future regime work. Some establishments still require major investment in infrastructure before they can enable in-cell technology.
- An attendee asked what plans were in place to ensure people being held on remand for long periods would have access to services in prison. Milosz welcomed the question. He said they were working closely with colleagues working on estate reconfiguration to ensure there is a clarity of purpose for remand and resettlement prisons.
- An attendee asked how HMPPS planned to take individual prisons and their teams with them on plans for regime reform. He said good ideas are often not implemented because of a lack of "buy in" on the ground. Milosz said HMPPS was taking a collaborative approach to this work and wanted to ensure that alongside clear central guidance and direction there is scope for local innovation. David said that adjusting measures for purposeful activity towards achieving outcomes will help drive behaviour in prisons.
- An attendee asked if HMPPS is listening to racially minoritised people in prison to shape prison regime reform. Milosz said HMPPS asks that any survey conducted amongst people in prison takes into account the specific experiences of people with protected characteristics and racially minoritised people. HMPPS is also looking for published evidence elsewhere, and for example valued Zahid Mubarak Trust's report *A voice of our own*.
- An attendee asked how HMPPS hoped to ensure future regimes were truly personalised given the number of prisoners and staff. They asked whether digital in-cell tech had a role to play in this. Milosz said that there are different ways that are going to be explored in how HMPPS can aim to improve its focus on identifying needs and risks of individuals and how this can shape any regime offer. In-cell technology would play an important role in being able to provide more personalised resources to individuals.

- An attendee asked about how the HMPPS regime reform team were considering the impact of probation reunification on services inside prisons. The removal of specialist housing support in women's prisons will probably create a gap in provision. Milosz said they are looking at the impacts of changing services and they are keen to understand that. They are engaging with probation reform colleagues.