

**Notes from the Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) Special Interest Group on
Covid-19
Wednesday 18th August 2021 via Zoom**

Attendees

Nicola Drinkwater, Clinks (chair)	Esther Baker, Synergy
Noori Piperdy, Clinks (secretariat)	Tracey Eadie, Recoop
Franklin Barrington, Clinks	Peter Dawson, Prison Reform Trust
Alice Dawnay, Switchback	Isobel Fisher, MoJ
Emma Wells, Community Chaplaincy Association	Lana Bracewell, MoJ
Francesca Cooney, Prisoners' Education Trust	Milosz Bruski, HMPPS
Khatuna Tsintsadze, Zahid Mubarek Trust	Ruth Boyd, HMPPS
Nicola Salt, Changing Lives	

Apologies

Alasdair Jackson, Recycling Lives	Phil Maguire, Prison Radio Association
Matina Marougka, Together for Mental Wellbeing	Vicki Markiewicz, Change Grow Live
Peter Atherton, Community Led Initiatives	

Opening remarks

- Nicola Drinkwater, Policy Manager, Clinks (Chair) opened the meeting and thanked attendees for joining. She explained that she will be chairing in the absence of Jess Mullen, Director of Influence and Communications, Clinks.
- Nicola invited an update from Milosz Bruski on Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Covid-19 Gold Command and the Stage 1 framework, and Lana Bracewell, Ministry of Justice (MoJ) on Structured on Wing Activity (SOWA).

Covid-19 Gold Command update and the Stage 1 Framework

Note: all facts and figures are correct as of the 18th of August 2021, but may have subsequently changed

- Milosz explained that Stage 1 is about transitioning to locally owned regime delivery with some steer from the centre, focussing on managing the threat stemming from prolonged restrictions, whilst recognising that Covid-19 still poses a threat to establishments. This includes the creation of a Stage 1 Safe Operating Procedure, in collaboration with Public Health England and Public Health Wales, which outlines which Covid-19 measures should be kept at Stage 1.
- He stated that the gateway opened a few weeks prior to the meeting but there are currently no sites that have progressed to Stage 1, but are expecting applications from governors very soon. As of Tuesday 17th August, 45 adult prisons and three Youth Custody Service sites have progressed to Stage 2 of the [National Framework](#), with the remainder of establishments at Stage 3.
- The Stage 1 framework will be used by governors to tell them what they need to be aware of when designing their own regimes. This includes a requirement for each establishment to

review its equality analysis, ensuring that regime stages do not put any groups at a disadvantage. He welcomed [the work from the Zahid Mubarek Trust which highlighted the impact of Covid-19 on racially minoritised people](#). The framework also provides information around resourcing capabilities that governors can refer to.

- The Stage 1 framework also links regime delivery to key work, as part of the wider Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model, which HMPPS wants to see embedded further into the regime where possible. Milosz also explained that there is a focus on safety and sufficiency in the framework and recognised the difficulties in achieving a balance between the two. Stage 1 has reflected on learnings from Covid-19 as well as the regimes pre-pandemic and there is great potential for change and improvement going forward.
- The changes that will be implemented at Stage 1 will not be linear and therefore HMPPS is not expecting to see the same changes everywhere. The framework provides prison governors with a series of principles and design considerations, including on the delivery of purposeful activity to respond to the needs, risks and strengths of individuals in prisons.
- Milosz ended by explaining that although the gateway has been opened by ministers, the framework is still an on-going piece of work. HMPPS welcomes dialogue from the voluntary sector when these changes are implemented, and is committed to learning from this transition to ensure that it is up to date with views from staff, prisoners and the sector. He welcomed the upcoming report that will be published from the Prison Reform Trust regarding their view.

Discussion

- One attendee recognised the description of purposeful activity as providing the right activity to the right person at the right time. They noted that for racially minoritised individuals, this is extremely important, and wanted to understand how HMPPS will conduct this. Milosz reiterated the requirement to review existing equality analysis assessments. He said HMPPS is committed to ensuring the needs of racially minoritised people are recognised in prisons and probation services.
- One attendee noted the recent announcement of the [Prisons White Paper](#) and was interested to know how the work conducted by Covid-19 Gold Command, including the Stage 1 framework, relates to the work on the white paper. Milosz explained that the work of the regime recovery and regime reform team, including elements such as purposeful activity mentioned earlier, is likely to be included in the white paper that will be delivered.
- One attendee asked how Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Prisons (HMIP) recommendation of 10 hours out of cell/activity each day fits into the Stage 1 framework. Milosz explained that HMPPS is in regular contact with HMIP and together they are collaboratively working towards how time out of cell can best be delivered. It is important to ensure that the activities people attend are purposeful, rather than setting a minimum requirement on time out of cell - quality is the basis of "time well spent" and therefore the priority for future regimes.
- He emphasised further expectations from HMIP such as the need for a safer regime, and referred to recent guidance published by HMPPS which explained that although prisoners

wanted to return to their meaningful lives before Covid-19, they did not want to return back to the lack of safety they previously experienced. This will also need to feature in HMPPS planning processes.

- One attendee recognised the difficulty in achieving a balance between sufficiency and safety and wondered if there was a definition of sufficiency that HMPPS is working towards. Milosz recognised the difficulty in providing a concrete definition for what a sufficient regime should look like, but explained that establishments are informed of a number of parameters, such as hours per day of purposeful activity, effective resourcing and safeguarding commercial contracts. The attendee added that meaningful contact does not always come from commercial contracts and how relationships outside of contracted services can too be safeguarded. Milosz agreed and highlighted that although these decisions will now be localised, there are stipulations in the guidance which encourages the involvement of the voluntary sector.
- One attendee asked if the guidance for the Stage 1 Framework has been published outside HMPPS. Milosz said the guidance is still undergoing changes but the final version will be published in due course.
- One attendee said to better aid the transition on release, people in prison should be kept out of cell as much as possible. Milosz explained the difficulty surrounding time out of cell due to supervision levels and the challenging landscape of staff shortages. He stressed that HMPPS does not want to set up establishments to fail, and guidance will depend on what is purposeful and safe. Measuring time out of cell is not the only factor to consider as prolonged periods out of cell without structure can lead to safety concerns.
- One attendee commented on the practicalities of purposeful activity, such as the allocations process for activities. The attendee highlighted examples of when people in prisons are transferred to different activities whilst in the middle of a qualification, and the waste of resources that this leads to. The attendee suggested the need for a framework to ensure this does not keep happening. Milosz agreed with this and explained that HMPPS is aware of these allocation issues and is currently looking at it through the use of needs, risks and strengths assessments. More coordination is expected long term to move away from this resourcing issue.

Structured on Wing Activity (SOWA)

- Lana works on prison policy at MoJ but is working very closely with the HMPPS regime reform team on the development of the Stage 1 framework. SOWA refers to additional enrichment activity including prison delivered services, officer-led activities and voluntary and community interactions. The hope is for SOWA to be a part of standard regimes and to make more use of the downtime that has become especially pertinent over the pandemic.
- Lana explained that prisons will be asked to introduce or encourage SOWA as they move to Stage 1, so her team is developing information for prison governors to give some examples of what SOWA can include and the potential benefits. The information will not introduce any new expectations or standards, but hopes to share some good practice and inspiration of what prisons could deliver.

- Lana invited comments from the attendees of what can be included in this information, including notable practice, tips on how to deliver these activities, what resources might be needed, how to best engage people in prisons, innovative practices, how the voluntary sector can be involved and what some of the risks of these activities might be. Lana noted that there is scope for future involvement, but at this stage, requests comments to accompany the Stage 1 framework.

Discussion

- One attendee questioned how governors will access organisations that are able to offer SOWA. Lana explained that there is no central mechanism for commissioning, and prisons will need to use local connections and existing relationships and will hopefully be inspired to explore additional options by the examples of notable practice in the guidance.
- One attendee asked whether education providers could be involved in SOWA. Lana explained that she is aware that her colleagues are working on this and would like to request more funding to aid education as part of the spending review. Lana will be in touch with the attendee to provide a further update.
- One attendee said the transition to the new probation service has currently created a gap in resettlement support services in prisons. They advised that it may be worth encouraging those working in probation to bridge the gap between resettlement services that have historically been delivered on prison wings. They suggested that SOWA includes activity to support resettlement planning. Lana thanked the attendee for their comment and will take this on board.
- One attendee noted that SOWA carries the implication that activity needs to be worthy and purposeful, and suggested that SOWA should also be used as an opportunity for people in prison to have fun and see their friends. Lana agreed and explained there has already been some thinking regarding this.
- Lana welcomed written comments from attendees as soon as possible, and to contact Noori (secretariat) for further information.

Closing remarks

- Nicola explained that the date for the next meeting will be confirmed with attendees later in the month due to Jess's absence. Nicola also mentioned that there was thinking to refresh the membership of this group, but this was postponed due to Anne Fox's (CEO of Clinks and previous chair) absence. She asked attendees to expect further information in due course.
- Nicola thanked those for attending and brought the meeting to a close.