



Victoria Atkins MP
Minister of State
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Block C, 5th Floor
Tavistock House
Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9JJ
020 7383 0966
info@clinks.org
@Clinks_Tweets
www.clinks.org

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Dear Minister

Our Chief Executive Officer, Anne Fox, was very pleased to be able to take part in the roundtable discussion, chaired by you, last Monday on the Prisons White Paper. The voluntary sector's knowledge, expertise and longstanding experience of working to support the wellbeing of people in custody and provide services that enable them to transform their lives, is an essential evidence base to draw upon in defining the government's long term vision for prisons.

We warmly welcome the plans to further consult with partners to inform this policy. I am therefore writing to seek further clarification on this process and to offer Clinks support in this.

Currently, neither the voluntary sector working in criminal justice nor the people most affected – prisoners and their families - have been formally consulted about the principles which should drive policy about prisons. Nor have they been provided with any of the analysis about the future composition of the prison population and prison estate which is both essential to any feedback they would provide and to any strategic plan the White Paper will set out.

At the roundtable, and subsequently, we were informed that the White Paper will include a consultative element, with a number of questions that the government seeks input from partners on and that there will also be a further series of roundtables and meetings with stakeholders on different elements of the White Paper. Given the vital importance of consulting on this key policy area and that this will be a White Paper rather than a Green Paper, we are keen to further understand the form this consultation will take, including the timetable and process for stakeholders to provide submissions, and the process for the government to provide a response.

As the infrastructure organisation for voluntary organisations working in criminal justice and through our role providing the Chair and Secretariat to the Ministry of Justice's Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3), I would like to offer our support in reaching voluntary sector organisations with vital insight to draw upon in this process. I would be delighted to discuss with your officials how we might take this forward including discussion of the White Paper proposals at a future RR3 meeting and facilitation of wider discussion with specialist organisations across the country through our Wales and England Criminal Justice Forums, our network of specialist women centred providers, race and justice network and the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance network.

Yours sincerely,



Jessica Mullen
Director of Influence and Communications

Cc.
Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice
Jo Farrar, Second Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice and Chief Executive Officer, HM Prison & Probation Service