



Supporting the voluntary sector  
working in the criminal justice system

## Member advisory forum meeting notes

Tuesday 3 October 2023, 13:00-15:00 via video call

### Attendees

Riana Taylor	Circles UK
John Speyer	Hear Me Out
Christopher Leslie	Inside Out Support Wales
Dawn Harrison	Changing Lives
Lucy Ball	New Bridge Foundation
Emma Kidger	Clinks (chair)
Anne Fox	Clinks

### Apologies

Lynn Kelly	POPS
Bex Roberts	Junction 42
Laura Munt	Depaul UK
Maisie Hulbert	Clinks Trustee
Janine Alcantara	Employment 4 All
Khatuna Tsintsadze	Zahid Mubarek Trust
Peter Merrifield	Support When It Matters (SWIM)
Matina Marougka	Together for Mental Wellbeing
Josh Stunell	bthechange CIC
Paul Bernard	Clinks

### 1. Welcome and introductions

- EK welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. What issues / opportunities are we seeing facing the sector at the moment?

- MoJ contract reporting requirements for small value contracts – organisations are having to spend extensive time writing reports which takes away time to be able to focus on high quality provision of services, particularly the case for small organisations

- There is a discrepancy between what is seen as 'light touch' by MoJ for reporting requirements – lack of understanding of what the reality is for small voluntary organisations
- Probation staff not having time to engage with voluntary organisations due to extremely high workloads – one example of a probation officer who was holding over 200 cases was shared
- Major concerns around retention in probation, particularly for organisations which rely heavily on probation staff involvement in the interventions being delivered e.g. risk assessments
- Staffing – particularly in relation to vetting in prisons – clearance time is taking between 6-12 weeks in some areas, which is causing some staff to drop out of recruitment processes and secure employment which does not have such a lengthy start time
- Staffing – effect on current team and morale as they are having to cover work and take on higher caseloads of people due to staff shortages
- Volumes of referrals for women on CRS contracts – automatically referred into services if female, may not always be an appropriate referral/have had the service discussed with them
- Small organisations struggling to get contracts due to complexity of processes, understanding that grant funding is preferable but it is so competitive, which means that contracts are a more sustainable option, yet inaccessible in many ways
- Difficulty in finding Trusts/Foundations which offer sufficient money for criminal justice organisations
- Fundraising challenges – individual donations have decreased as a result of increased cost of living in wider community
- Positives – volunteer recruitment has become easier in some cases due to increased interest, particularly in younger cohort

### **3. Clinks training offer – is it fit for purpose and what are the gaps**

- More training on creative ways of working and engaging with people in contact with the CJS – a lot of frontline staff are coming straight from University and are inexperienced
- Current training offer is effective and useful for the sector to engage with
- Preference for face-to-face training where possible from some forum members, particularly for bespoke sessions that can be tailored to an organisations needs, however virtual training offers are more accessible
- Suggestion for training session on working with older people in prison – increased population size over recent years
- Training on how to work with people with neurodiversity needs – look to work with/outsource to specialist organisations with expertise
- Discussion had about rise in training costs from £50-£75 for members, all forum members felt this was an appropriate cost for the current sessions that are on offer from Clinks
- If Clinks is to grow the training offer, could look to put on training in partnership with Clinks member organisations – invite co-facilitation and then look to split income proportionately
- Consideration for Clinks to explore research opportunities in the future – a potential income generation method

### **4. Anne Fox (CEO) – Clinks future strategy**

- Anne is preparing to develop next strategy which will be due to launch from 2024 – really important to engage with member representatives (this forum is the starting point for this)
- Impact assessment is currently underway

- Looking to come together as a staffing group, Trustees and sector representatives to create our new goals for 2024 onwards
- A lot of praise and positives were shared by forum members about the reach and impact that Clinks has – particularly in relation to networking opportunities created and provided and the safe spaces that organisations can benefit from
- More guidance on how small organisations can access contracts was requested
- Clinks to be more involved in immigration detention – not on a policy level but for on an operational level
- More of a focus on the role of the arts in criminal justice – particularly within immigration centres – transfer learning from CJS to other statutory bodies e.g. Home Office
- Consideration of boundaries of Clinks support – expansion outside of England and Wales, for example, or tapping into other sectors
- Look at approaches to strategic planning, how often going to have to review and rewrite, consideration of iterative processes
- Consideration of how to engage individuals within organisations, not just organisations themselves e.g. workforce professional development
- Discussion had around how to engage with membership:
  - Ask members what they are struggling with and how can Clinks help (or not)
  - What is it about Clinks that members can't do without
  - What is it that Clinks can do that nobody else can
  - If Clinks was to disappear tomorrow, what gaps would appear
  - Asking qualitative questions that are open-ended to make sure all different types of people feel able to respond
  - Invite new staff to engage in the process alongside more experienced staff to ensure that people understand Clinks benefits and what they can get from membership/feed into strategy development – bringing fresh perspectives

## 5. AOB

- Clinks annual conference – 22<sup>nd</sup> November – all forum members encouraged to attend, tickets on sale on our website

## 6. Meeting admin

- Next meeting: **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 1-3pm**