



Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3)

24 June 2025, (10:00-13:10), Online via Teams

Present:

- Anne Fox, Clinks (Chair)
- Sam Julius, Clinks
- Lisa Strelnikova, Clinks
- Louise Clark, Clinks
- Alasdair Jackson, Recycling Lives
- Alice Adamson
- Andrew Lewin
- Eve Marlow
- Dave Higham, The Well Communities CIC
- David Maguire, Prison Reform Trust
- David Dunn, Release Mates
- Matt Grey
- Harlyn Collins
- Janet Phillipson
- Jemma Rix
- Joanne O'Connor, Junction 42
- John Foster
- Josh Stunell, bthechange CIC
- Jurga Kauikiene
- Katrina Ffrench, UNJUST
- Kate Haseler-Young
- Laura Emmerson
- Maria McNicoll, St. Giles Trust
- Matina Marougka, Together for Mental Wellbeing
- Nicola Drinkwater, Women in Prison
- Sam Clifton
- Stephen O'Connor
- Steve Matthews, Shelter
- Tammi Owen, CUBE
- Paul Grainge, Recoop
- Paula Harriot, Unlock
- Richard Knibbs, Nacro
- Vicki Markiewicz, Change Grow Live
- Victoria Baird, Spurgeons
- Lord Timpson, Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

1. Welcomes and Introduction

- 1.1. Anne Fox introduced the first agenda item, focusing on access to and compliance with bail. She noted the presence of the Ministry of Justice's Remand and Bail Policy team, who had pre-submitted questions for discussion. The RR3 team would be taking notes and potentially asking follow-up questions during the session. Before proceeding, Anne invited John Foster from the MoJ to provide opening remarks.

2. Access to, and compliance with, bail

- 2.1. John Foster from the Ministry of Justice's Remand and Bail Policy Team opened the discussion by outlining the current challenges with remand populations, which have reached a record high of 17,500 individuals, a 75% increase over the past five years.

- 2.2. He attributed this growth to systemic pressures, including delays in court processing and increased upstream activity from police and prosecutors. To address this, the MoJ is implementing measures such as expanding the Bail Information Service, increasing community accommodation options, and enhancing court capacity through initiatives like additional Crown Court sitting days and magistrates' powers.
- 2.3. John emphasised the need for collaboration with the voluntary sector to improve bail compliance and invited input from attendees on potential solutions.
- 2.4. Vicki Markiewicz, Executive Director of Change Grow Live, advocated for structured bail conditions linked to tailored interventions, particularly for defendants with substance misuse needs. She highlighted the importance of defining clear expectations for both defendants and service providers, while acknowledging regional disparities in available support. Vicki also stressed the need for contingency plans to address non-compliance, noting the voluntary sector's lack of formal enforcement mechanisms compared to probation services.
- 2.5. Anne raised the potential for learning from existing community sentence models, such as Drug and Alcohol Treatment Requirements and Mental Health Treatment Requirements, to inform bail support frameworks. She questioned whether a "menu" of community-based interventions could be developed to divert individuals from remand, particularly for substance misuse needs.
- 2.6. Vicki Markiewicz expanded on this, advocating for bail conditions that mirror structured community sentences, emphasising behaviour change during the pre-trial period. She proposed tailored interventions (e.g., 6–8 sessions of enhanced support for non-dependent drinkers) and collaboration between bail teams and local services. Vicki highlighted the need to use bail periods productively, rather than as a "holding pen," and suggested a staged approach: initial engagement during bail, followed by continued treatment under a community sentence if convicted.
- 2.7. David Higham stressed the role of grassroots third-sector groups in breaking cycles of addiction and crime. He called for innovative approaches, such as mandating engagement with mutual aid communities or recovery housing, with monitoring through lived experience organisations. David also noted systemic challenges, including defendants deliberately prolonging remand to access prison privileges, and urged solutions that reintegrate individuals into mainstream society.
- 2.8. Alasdair Jackson proposed leveraging employment and volunteering opportunities during bail, citing social enterprises and charities (e.g., the Hart Foundation, Fair Share) as ideal partners. He highlighted existing models where unpaid work placements provide wraparound support (e.g., employment coaching, housing assistance) and suggested replicating this nationally. Anne endorsed the idea, noting its success in reducing stigma when unpaid work is integrated into community settings like women's centres.
- 2.9. Anne discussed the importance of standardising training and access for key workers, particularly in areas like hygiene, food safety, and barista training, to support scaling up resources for organisations offering unpaid work. She emphasised the need for consistency to ensure broader participation. The discussion then shifted to Katrina Ffrench, who raised critical questions about bail conditions, specifically whether they are imposed by courts or police. John Foster clarified that the focus was on court bail, not police bail.

- 2.10. Katrina highlighted concerns about joint enterprise cases, particularly involving young Black males who may be remanded for long periods despite not being present at the crime scene. She suggested exploring opportunities for these individuals to engage with local youth groups or community organizations specializing in violence prevention, rather than immediate remand. This would provide support and structure while legal proceedings unfold.
- 2.11. David Dunn added that many third-sector organisations are willing to work with individuals on bail, remand, or post-sentence. He stressed the need to educate the judiciary on available community resources to ensure judges have confidence in alternative sentencing options.
- 2.12. Paula Harriott reinforced this point, proposing the introduction of community coordinators in courts, a role she had seen succeed in past pilot programs. These coordinators would bridge gaps between smaller grassroots organisations and the judiciary, ensuring meaningful referrals and reducing unnecessary remands. She suggested that even a modest investment (e.g., £50K per coordinator) could significantly improve outcomes by fostering direct connections between courts and local services.
- 2.13. Anne expressed strong support for Paula's idea of community coordinators in courts, calling it a promising model worth developing further. She encouraged Paula to share any existing examples or case studies, particularly from the Birmingham and Liverpool Community Courts in the early 2000s, where this approach had been successfully piloted.
- 2.14. Paula Harriott reiterated the potential cost savings of reducing unnecessary remands by supporting individuals in the community. She emphasised the need to revisit past evidence from these initiatives to build a stronger case for reintroducing the model.
- 2.15. Anne Fox also pointed to parallels with the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model, suggesting that lessons could be drawn from its framework. She invited others in the group to contribute their own examples or experiences with similar approaches.
- 2.16. Nicola Drinkwater highlighted significant gaps in data collection regarding women on remand, noting the disproportionate impact on women who are often later found not guilty or receive time-served sentences. She emphasised the unclear criteria around remanding women as a "place of safety" and stressed the need for voluntary sector involvement to address these systemic issues. Better data and pre-sentence reports, she argued, are essential to understanding women's specific needs and developing appropriate alternatives to remand.
- 2.17. Anne Fox supported these observations, underscoring the importance of data-driven solutions to identify who could benefit from community-based bail options. She encouraged participants to share examples of successful interventions, building on Paula Harriott's earlier proposal for community coordinators in courts.
- 2.18. Vicki Markiewicz then contributed practical insights, acknowledging that while effective models exist, such as dedicated bail support workers in prisons and specialist courts, consistent funding remains a major barrier. She pointed to successful drug/alcohol and women's courts in Birmingham, Teesside, and Bristol as evidence that structured assessments and support services can reduce unnecessary remands. However, without sustained investment, she cautioned, the judiciary lacks the resources to make informed bail decisions.

- 2.19. Victoria Baird shared insights from her organisation's work supporting families across prison estates. She highlighted the challenges voluntary sector organisations face in engaging with courts, recounting instances where Spurgeon's staff were turned away due to a lack of pre-arranged appointments.
- 2.20. Victoria emphasised the critical role families play in rehabilitation and stability, whether during bail, remand, or post-conviction. She endorsed Paula Harriott's proposal for court-based community coordinators, stressing that such a role could provide much-needed stability for families during the uncertain bail period, preventing breakdowns and escalation of issues. Victoria's contribution underscored the difficulty voluntary organisations face in accessing courts without formal connections, reinforcing the need for systemic solutions to bridge this gap.
- 2.21. Paul Grainge from Recoop discussed innovative uses of electronic monitoring based on his experience working with an electronic monitoring contractor in Bristol. He described a progressive approach where exclusion zones, such as shopping centres, were used creatively to deter shoplifting linked to drug and alcohol addiction, coupled with community-based interventions to fill the time productively.
- 2.22. Paul argued that electronic monitoring is often underutilised, typically limited to overnight curfews, and called for better training for the judiciary to explore its potential more imaginatively. His example demonstrated how combining electronic monitoring with targeted support can effectively address behavioural patterns, offering a model for reducing remand and reoffending.
- 2.23. David Higham provided a powerful anecdote about informal engagement with a "habitual offender" intercepted at a police station. His lived-experience organisation accompanied the individual to court and spoke on their behalf, highlighting their engagement with recovery services and efforts to reunite with their children. Impressed by the visible progress, the judge opted against imprisonment, a decision which was initially intended. David stressed the importance of educating the judiciary about the transformative potential of community-based support, illustrating how early intervention, from police stations through to courts, can divert individuals from custodial sentences. His example reinforced the value of partnership working across the justice system to create meaningful alternatives to remand and incarceration.
- 2.24. Anne drew parallels between diversion schemes and potential bail support systems, emphasising the need to challenge judicial perceptions of risk. She argued that while courts often default to remand due to perceived "confidence" in containment, this approach fails to address underlying needs - particularly for those with addiction issues who receive minimal support while on remand. Anne stressed that the sector must collectively push back against unrealistic expectations of guaranteed outcomes from community alternatives, when prison demonstrably provides even less rehabilitation.
- 2.25. Richard Knibbs expanded on the psychological toll of extended bail/remand periods, highlighting how hopelessness and mental health deterioration undermine engagement. He emphasised the critical need to connect bail support directly to sentencing outcomes, creating tangible incentives for participation. Richard proposed a model where progress during bail (e.g., securing accommodation, addressing substance use) could actively influence sentencing decisions, transforming this "depressing mid-period" into meaningful

rehabilitation time. His intervention underscored the importance of designing systems that reward progress rather than penalising imperfect compliance.

- 2.26. Josh Stunell spotlighted the wasted potential during prolonged investigation periods, where individuals could be engaged in structured support. He reinforced the need for a dedicated community link worker role spanning the entire justice journey - from police stations through courts. Josh provided concrete examples where his team's court advocacy, based on deep engagement during bail periods, had successfully diverted individuals from custody. His emphasis on authentic, evidence-based court presentations highlighted the need for professionals who can "tell the whole story" to decision-makers.
- 2.27. Steve Matthews connected these discussions to upcoming reforms under the Criminal Justice Service proposals. He identified potential synergy between the advocated community coordinator role and the CRS's proposed "link worker" position, suggesting this could be strategically leveraged. While acknowledging evolving CRS specifications, Steve urged the group to influence how these roles are operationalised to ensure court liaison becomes a core function. His intervention grounded the theoretical discussion in practical policy opportunities.
- 2.28. Vicki Markiewicz expanded on the potential of integrating bail support within the new Criminal Justice Service commissioning framework. She highlighted the drug and alcohol treatment system as a key example, where individuals on bail could access psychosocial interventions, employment support, and stable housing, critical factors in reducing reoffending. Vicki stressed the importance of "wrap-around support", linking bail conditions to broader services like homelessness assistance, healthcare, and recovery housing. She noted that CRS's navigator/link roles could be pivotal in coordinating these services, ensuring individuals receive holistic support during their bail period.
- 2.29. Paul Grainge shared insights from his work with MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) cases in approved premises, where a coordinator role, akin to the Housing First model, proved transformative. By providing intensive orientation and risk management support, individuals transitioned from high-risk (MAPPA 3) to lower-risk (MAPPA 2/1) categories within weeks. Paul underscored the value of a dedicated coordinator in bridging gaps between justice-involved individuals and community services, reducing anxiety and improving compliance.
- 2.30. Victoria Baird reinforced the family-focused approach, citing David Higham's earlier example of how engagement with lived-experience organisations motivated positive change. She pointed to community-based family hubs (run by churches, local authorities, and charities) as underutilised resources. By connecting individuals on bail to parenting courses, social networks, financial aid, and food banks, these hubs address the root pressures behind criminal behaviour. Victoria argued that whole-family support significantly boosts bail success rates by stabilising the broader environment around the individual.
- 2.31. Tammi Owen emphasised the importance of community-led solutions, highlighting her organisation's restorative approach that empowers individuals with lived experience to drive change. She stressed the need to shift decision-making power to communities, enabling them to resolve issues locally rather than relying on top-down interventions. Tammi raised a critical question: How can the sector convince commissioners and courts to invest in community hubs and family support services as viable alternatives to traditional

bail conditions? She advocated for systemic change that prioritises local expertise and sustainable solutions over short-term fixes.

- 2.32. Anne Fox built on this, cautioning against imposing excessive conditionality on voluntary sector organisations, which could conflict with their ethical principles. She underscored that while the sector can provide access to services (housing, employment, family support), enforcement of bail conditions must remain with statutory bodies like probation or courts. Anne cited a grassroots recovery housing project as an example of community-driven success, funded through creative, localised support rather than rigid systems.
- 2.33. Victoria Baird reiterated the pivotal role of families in bail success, noting that current processes often exclude them despite their firsthand knowledge of challenges and solutions. She shared examples of family resettlement meetings, akin to bail support meetings, where involving relatives and professionals (e.g., probation officers) uncovered root causes of behaviour and co-designed interventions. Victoria proposed scaling this model, with safeguards for cases where family contact is unsafe, and highlighted the need for financial and practical support (e.g., benefit transfers, childcare) to stabilise households during bail periods.
- 2.34. Vicki Markiewicz proposed a collaborative "team around the person" approach, drawing parallels with multi-agency models used in other sectors. She suggested regular three-way reviews involving probation (for "offender" management), voluntary organizations (for support services), and families where appropriate. This structured collaboration would mirror successful frameworks like child protection meetings, ensuring clear role definitions while enabling coordinated support during bail periods. Vicki emphasised this could prevent siloed working and improve outcomes for individuals in probation-approved housing or community settings.
- 2.35. Anne Fox endorsed this model, citing adoption and children's services as proven examples where multi-disciplinary teams operate effectively. She highlighted the critical need for formalised information-sharing structures in justice settings, noting current reliance on ad-hoc collaboration creates systemic gaps.
- 2.36. David Dunn raised pressing funding challenges, observing that most small organisations budget for post-prison support, not bail interventions. While acknowledging the potential economy of scale in serving both populations, he stressed the need for dedicated resources to expand capacity.
- 2.37. Anne Fox wrapped up the discussion by emphasising the importance of learning from existing systems, particularly highlighting the Intensive Supervision Court evaluation in Birmingham. She pointed out that while women's centres like Black Country Women's Aid and Anawim played central roles in these initiatives, they weren't formally funded to participate - underscoring the need for proper resource allocation to community organisations supporting court-mandated interventions. This observation reinforced the recurring theme throughout the meeting about the necessity of sustainable funding models for voluntary sector involvement in bail support systems.
- 2.38. John Foster contributed two final key insights for consideration. First, he stressed the need to improve judicial awareness of local community services, suggesting this could be achieved through existing governance mechanisms. Second, he proposed exploring potential synergies with the national Bail Information Service (BIS), which provides courts

with objective data to inform decisions, noting opportunities to better connect BIS with community service providers. These suggestions offered concrete pathways to address some of the systemic barriers identified during the discussion.

3. Independent Sentencing Review – Lord Timpson

- 3.1. Lord James Timpson began his address by expressing his strong support for the Independent Sentencing Review, describing it as a key motivation for taking on his ministerial role. He emphasised that the review's strength came from combining policy expertise with frontline sector insights to create meaningful, evidence-based reforms. While acknowledging that not all recommendations might meet with universal approval, he conveyed his confidence that the review provided a solid foundation for transforming the justice system. The Minister outlined three critical elements currently driving reform efforts: the Sentencing Review itself, the recently settled Spending Review (though specific allocations remain pending), and the forthcoming Brian Leveson Review. He stressed that these components must work together to address systemic challenges, particularly highlighting how probation services have been historically underfunded and undervalued compared to prisons.
- 3.2. Sharing candid observations from his first year in office, Lord Timpson revealed how the scale of operational challenges had become apparent, with short-term fixes often taking precedence over long-term strategic planning. He provided clarity on the legislative timeline, with the bill expected to be introduced in early July and passage anticipated in early 2026. The Minister emphasised the need to balance reform ambitions with maintaining operational capacity, noting the prison system currently had 1,998 available spaces, a relative improvement but still requiring careful management. He stressed that reforms must proceed without compromising the justice system's ability to function day-to-day.
- 3.3. Lord Timpson proposed moving toward longer-term, more stable funding arrangements to enable better workforce planning and service development in the sector. He encouraged ongoing input from attendees, making clear that the review represented a starting point rather than a complete solution. The Minister's tone suggested a genuine openness to continued collaboration and challenge from sector experts. The address highlighted several key investment areas, including the £700 million additional funding for probation services with priority spending on accommodation solutions, electronic tagging, and diversion programs. Intensive supervision courts were identified as a model for effective cross-sector collaboration.
- 3.4. Lord Timpson offered a balanced perspective - expressing optimism about AI's long-term potential while cautioning against viewing it as a quick fix. He emphasised more immediate operational needs, particularly reducing probation staff administrative burdens (currently consuming 70-80% of time), improving core IT systems to support frontline work, and enhancing electronic monitoring capabilities. Concluding his remarks, Lord Timpson focused on human capital challenges facing both statutory and voluntary sectors. He stressed the need to attract and retain high-quality staff across the system, develop meaningful career pathways for professionals, and maintain relentless focus on rehabilitation outcomes.

- 3.5. Anne Fox expressed appreciation for the government's commitment to partnership with voluntary organisations. She noted the emotional significance of seeing voluntary sector contributions formally recognised in the review after years of advocacy. Drawing on Diane Curry's principle that "people help people change," Anne emphasised the sector's focus on relationship-based support, with technology serving as an enabler rather than replacement for human connections. She then opened the floor for questions, encouraging attendees to introduce themselves and their organisational roles.
- 3.6. David Higham of Release Mates, representing lived experience perspectives, welcomed the review's proposals while voicing concerns about implementation. He shared cautionary experiences from Through the Gate reforms, where initial £10 million funding for recovery-focused services ultimately failed to sustain smaller organisations when contracts were awarded. David highlighted the disconnect between probation commissioning processes and grassroots providers, noting how many lived experience organizations deliver outcomes without formal funding. His pointed questions challenged how the reformed probation system would genuinely engage and support smaller, community-based providers delivering vital services.
- 3.7. Lord Timpson acknowledged the complexity of David's procurement-related questions and indicated he would address broader points before deferring to colleagues on specific commissioning details. The exchange highlighted tensions between reform ambitions and practical implementation challenges, particularly regarding sustainable funding for specialist providers. David's intervention underscored sector concerns about whether systemic changes would translate into meaningful partnership opportunities at local levels.
- 3.8. The discussion reflected both optimism about the review's potential and wariness from organisations bearing scars of previous reform cycles. Participants appeared eager to understand how this initiative would avoid past pitfalls where voluntary sector contributions were celebrated in principle but marginalised in practice. The Minister's willingness to engage with these challenges suggested recognition of their importance to successful implementation.
- 3.9. Lord Timpson acknowledged the vital role of voluntary sector organisations, drawing from his two decades of unpaid prison work to demonstrate his understanding of their challenges. He highlighted recent initiatives including the Drugs and Alcohol Expert Advisory Group and shared his firsthand experience attending recovery meetings to better understand substance misuse issues.
- 3.10. Lord Timpson also addressed his efforts to remove vetting barriers for people with lived experience seeking prison access, showing his commitment to practical, grassroots solutions. Turning to operational reforms, he emphasised his focus on foundational improvements - from staff recruitment and training to reducing probation officers' administrative burdens. While openly admitting the complexities of procurement systems remained challenging, he expressed cautious optimism that longer-term funding models could better support smaller organisations. His pragmatic tone acknowledged current system limitations while demonstrating hands-on engagement with operational realities.
- 3.11. Matt Grey provided a detailed response regarding procurement reforms, directly acknowledging the disproportionate burden current systems place on small organisations. He outlined several concrete improvements underway, including upcoming 2023

procurement regulation changes designed to simplify framework access for smaller providers. Grey explained how different approaches were being implemented with CRS recommissioning and emphasised increased market engagement through specialised clinics and briefing sessions. Citing the recent independent approved premises procurement as a success story, he described efforts to streamline governance processes while maintaining that new regulatory flexibility should gradually reduce sector burdens. His response balanced recognition of existing challenges with a roadmap for incremental improvement.

- 3.12. David Dunn powerfully reinforced earlier concerns about probation's engagement with small organisations, voicing frustrations shared across the grassroots sector. He reported widespread issues including excessively lengthy information sharing agreements - noting his own organisation's 18-month wait - and a pervasive sense of being undervalued despite delivering critical outcomes. Dunn painted a vivid picture of frontline workers' extraordinary dedication, from round-the-clock availability to personal sacrifices, all without adequate systemic support. His testimony highlighted the stark disconnect between reform aspirations and on-the-ground realities, with passionate organisations operating without the institutional recognition or resources their work merits. The discussion underscored an urgent need to translate high-level commitments into practical changes in how probation engages with community providers at the local level.
- 3.13. Vicki Markiewicz emphasised the need for adequate resourcing to support their implementation. She highlighted the importance of properly funding needs assessments and community support services to avoid duplication of effort. Vicki stressed that while the voluntary sector possesses passion and expertise, current resources often limit their ability to meet the demands outlined in the review. She called for strategic investment decisions to maximise impact, noting the critical opportunity presented by the ongoing CRS recommissioning process to better align community services.
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- 3.15. Nicola Drinkwater from Women in Prison raised several key issues on behalf of the women's sector network. She welcomed the review's recognition of racial disproportionality in the justice system and its recommendation for sustainable funding for women's centres. However, she identified gaps in addressing women coerced into offending through domestic abuse, advocating for a statutory defence mechanism. Nicola also emphasised the need to prevent women entering the system through upstream interventions, offering sector support to develop these approaches further.
- 3.16. Lord Timpson acknowledged the challenges around information sharing between statutory services and community organisations, recognising this as a systemic barrier needing attention. On resourcing, he committed to fighting for appropriate allocations while being transparent about the growing demands on the system from both prison and probation populations. The Minister emphasised following evidence-based approaches and

learning from successful models, drawing parallels with his business experience of adopting proven ideas.

- 3.17. Regarding women-specific issues, Lord Timpson expressed strong support for women's centres while advocating for a mixed model approach incorporating both residential and day services. He noted the gradual rollout of intensive vision courses would allow proper evaluation, and confirmed domestic abuse remained a priority area. The Minister highlighted the emerging Women's Justice Board plan as a comprehensive framework for addressing these challenges, demonstrating his awareness of both the progress made and remaining work needed in women's justice reform.
- 3.18. Matt Grey outlined the next steps for allocating the department's spending review settlement, emphasising the need to balance investment in probation services with other system pressures. He explained the internal process of determining funding allocations across contracts and grants would continue through the summer, with ongoing engagement with sector partners. Matt highlighted efforts to conduct comprehensive needs analysis to determine optimal service delivery models, whether through in-house provision or external commissioning. He stressed the importance of local delivery where possible while maintaining national coordination through existing frameworks like CRS and the prison dynamic purchasing system.
- 3.19. Anne Fox raised critical questions about measuring voluntary sector impact, noting the difficulty organisations face in producing robust evidence given funding uncertainties. She cautioned against simplistic metrics that fail to capture the sector's unique contributions to intermediate outcomes. Fox highlighted specific gaps in services for serious sexual "offenders" and advocated for simpler grant funding mechanisms for small organisations, drawing on lessons from previous transitional funding programs. She challenged assumptions about in-house service delivery, urging a more nuanced evaluation of what different providers bring to rehabilitation outcomes.
- 3.20. Steve Matthews focused on accommodation services, welcoming proposed investments but highlighting systemic coordination challenges. He described current relationships between probation and voluntary sector providers as overly transactional, constrained by commissioning models that inhibit partnership working. Matthews endorsed earlier proposals for regular three-way meetings between probation, providers and service users to improve rehabilitation support. He identified metrics and commissioning processes as unintended barriers to effective collaboration, calling for cultural change to enable more integrated service delivery.
- 3.21. Paula Harriott reinforced the case for voluntary sector coordinators in courts to improve local service integration, building on Steve Matthews' partnership proposals. She highlighted persistent vetting challenges facing people with lived experience seeking prison access, despite ongoing consultations about reform. Harriott expressed frustration at delays in implementing a new vetting framework, leaving many potential volunteers and workers in limbo. Her intervention underscored how operational barriers continue to hamper the sector's ability to contribute fully to rehabilitation efforts.
- 3.22. Paula Harriott pressed for urgent action on vetting delays, highlighting real-world consequences for individuals and organisations. Her direct question to the Minister about concrete steps and timelines reflected sector frustrations with bureaucratic obstacles

hindering service delivery. The exchange underscored how procedural barriers can undermine policy intentions, even when political will exists for reform.

- 3.23. Richard Knibbs raised the intersection of technology and rehabilitation, advocating for structured collaboration between tech firms and voluntary organisations. His intervention highlighted the need for digital solutions informed by frontline expertise, suggesting the sector could serve as an innovation testbed. This perspective balanced enthusiasm for technological advancement with recognition of complex human realities in rehabilitation work.
- 3.24. Victoria Baird emphasised often-overlooked family dimensions of sentencing and rehabilitation. Her contribution stressed systemic changes needed to recognise primary caregivers in custody and maintain family connections. The call for integrated support spanning prison and community contexts highlighted gaps in current provision, particularly for male primary carers whose parenting responsibilities frequently receive inadequate attention.
- 3.25. Alasdair Jackson delivered a pointed valedictory critique of commissioning practices, arguing the sector's proven solutions remain underutilised. His blunt assessment contrasted high-performing grassroots organisations with "tick-box" contractors, challenging the Ministry to fundamentally rethink procurement approaches. This intervention crystallised long-standing tensions between policy aspirations and implementation realities.
- 3.26. David Maguire raised concerns about groups excluded from sentencing review benefits, particularly those serving longer sentences. His questions about resource allocation and early release mechanisms highlighted potential unintended consequences of reform. The focus on indeterminate sentence prisoners and open conditions access addressed systemic inequities requiring careful policy design.
- 3.27. Lord Timpson addressed the remaining questions with focused responses, demonstrating his grasp of both policy details and operational realities. On accommodation, he reaffirmed his commitment to halving releases to no fixed abode, linking this to probation's £700 million funding boost while acknowledging technology's limitations without human relationships. His reference to Manchester's co-commissioning model showed appreciation for local innovation in partnership working. The Minister took personal responsibility for vetting reforms, revealing ongoing daily engagement with the issue while delegating specific updates to Matt Grey.
- 3.28. Lord Timpson balanced enthusiasm for technological solutions with robust defence of human-centred approaches, humorously referencing "AI Dan" while emphasising relationship-based rehabilitation. He endorsed Lord Farmer's family-focused work and ROTL's role in maintaining family ties, showing consistency with his long-standing advocacy in this area. His response to Alistair Jackson blended personal appreciation with pragmatic advice about working within government systems, drawing lessons from Employment Advisory Boards' success in aligning sector and departmental interests.
- 3.29. On sentencing mechanisms, Lord Timpson acknowledged limitations of the "up the hill" earned progression model for certain prisoner groups, confirming ongoing consideration of life sentences and indeterminate cases. His vision for therapeutic Category D communities revealed personal commitment beyond ministerial duty, though time constraints cut short further elaboration. The Minister's parting assurance of an "open

door" reinforced his collaborative approach, while the rushed conclusion underscored the challenging balance between comprehensive engagement and ministerial schedules.

- 3.30. The Independent sentencing review ended with mutual appreciation, but clear recognition of ongoing work needed to translate review recommendations into tangible improvements for both sector organisations and those they serve.

4. Professional Standards Review – Sam Clifton, Deputy Director, Professional Standards & Behaviour (HMPPS)

- 4.1. Following his introduction by Anne Fox, Sam Clifton delivered a comprehensive presentation on the Rademaker Review, its origins, recommendations, and the strategic implementation plan currently underway within HMPPS. He began by acknowledging the absence of his colleague, Natalya O'Prey, who had intended to co-present but was unable to attend due to illness. Despite this, Sam expressed his enthusiasm for engaging with the group and emphasised the importance of the review, particularly in light of HMPPS's ongoing efforts to address racism, discrimination, and cultural challenges across the organisation.
- 4.2. Sam provided context around the development of the Rademaker Review, noting that HMPPS had actively sought the review and had worked to support its progress through publication. He explained that the delay in publicly discussing its contents had largely been due to the need to carefully consider legal implications of the review, but with the review now published, his team was committed to full transparency and collaboration. The overarching goal, he said, was not simply to tick off the 12 recommendations, but to use them as a catalyst for lasting cultural change.
- 4.3. Sam walked through the recommendations in detail, highlighting the creation of an independent central channel for reporting bullying, harassment, discrimination, and victimisation as a cornerstone of the proposed reforms. This channel, he explained, would replace current line-management-led reporting mechanisms and offer a more trusted, impartial route for staff to raise concerns. Sam also touched on updates to the Discrimination Incident Reporting Forms (DIRFs) and the need for more effective implementation of workplace adjustments, acknowledging current shortcomings in the system due to managerial discretion or operational pressures.
- 4.4. The review's focus on addressing sexual harassment, consolidating data, improving climate assessments, and reforming investigator and mediator recruitment was outlined next. Sam underscored the need for better data integration and transparency, particularly in relation to how BHDV cases are handled and trends identified. He also spoke to the need for deeper insights from staff climate assessments and how the current process may sometimes overlook the perspectives of minority or marginalised staff as it collates together a large number of views from a given part of HMPPS (like a prison or probation delivery unit).
- 4.5. Later in his presentation, Sam discussed the importance of recognising and promoting leaders who are actively creating positive change, as well as rethinking performance feedback mechanisms to ensure cultural leadership is evaluated alongside operational effectiveness. He concluded the list of recommendations by focusing on values-based recruitment and progression, noting that HMPPS intends to integrate its core values

throughout the entire employee lifecycle, from attraction and recruitment to development and leadership, rather than treating values as static or symbolic.

- 4.6. Sam reiterated that the response to the Rademaker Review was not just an administrative task but an opportunity for transformative culture change across HMPPS. He noted the acceptance of all 12 recommendations and explained that each had been assigned a delivery timeline and accountability pathway. He also introduced the forthcoming appointment of an independent commissioner who would oversee the new central complaints unit and report regularly to senior leaders and ministers. Lastly, he shared that efforts were already underway to shift the internal team from policy-focused work to active programme delivery and to clarify immediate policy flexibilities available in the current grievance system. Sam concluded by welcoming future engagement with the group and opened the floor for questions and discussion.
- 4.7. Anne emphasised the lack of a standardised or safe mechanism for external organisations, particularly those working with racially minoritised communities to raise concerns, provide constructive challenge, or offer expert input. She noted that while many of these organisations possess deep knowledge, they often face barriers to influence due to the decentralised nature of partnerships across prisons and probation services. Anne asked how the voluntary sector might be integrated more structurally into the reform process, especially in light of the proposed governance structures outlined in the Rademaker Review response.
- 4.8. Sam acknowledged the importance and validity of the challenge, agreeing that expertise and insight from outside the system, particularly from voluntary sector partners, is essential for successful cultural change. He outlined several current and planned mechanisms intended to support this kind of engagement. Firstly, he reiterated a willingness to maintain an ongoing relationship with this group, noting that revisiting key themes such as race, or diving more deeply into individual recommendations from the review, would be both welcome and useful.
- 4.9. Sam then described the formation of a new Professional Standards External Advisory Board (PSEAB), which had recently entered the recruitment phase. The board is being designed to provide a regular forum for scrutiny, advice, and engagement from individuals across sectors with expertise in discrimination, staff culture, and equity. Interviews had already taken place with around 16 potential chairs and members, and the aim is to create a diverse and well-rounded group. He stressed that the intention was for the PSEAB to be a “critical friend” rather than a rubber stamp, able to see early drafts, engage with work-in-progress, and challenge ideas constructively before they are finalised.
- 4.10. Sam also described internal changes within the Disparities Unit that support better external engagement. Each protected characteristic now has a named lead within the unit, allowing for deeper, more meaningful relationships with staff networks, unions, and external stakeholders. He acknowledged the challenge of avoiding siloed thinking in such a structure but emphasised that this approach is intended to foster more informed, sustained dialogue with partners working on specific areas of equity.
- 4.11. Finally, Sam addressed Anne’s concern about the lack of recourse for people working alongside HMPPS, such as voluntary sector staff, contractors, or external service providers, who may witness or experience discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour but lack formal channels to raise concerns. He confirmed that while the primary focus of many current

reforms is on directly employed staff, HMPPS recognises this gap and is actively considering how to build a clearer, safer route for non-staff partners to report concerns and feed into the wider accountability framework. He acknowledged that the answer to this question is still emerging and invited further input from the group to shape this thinking as the reforms move forward.

- 4.12. Following Sam Clifton's comments on inclusivity and partnership with the voluntary sector, Anne Fox invited the group to reflect more deeply, particularly those representing specific protected characteristics, such as race and gender. Joanne O'Connor, representing Juncture 42 and holding the prison seat, raised three key points. First, she asked how the third sector is envisioned within the implementation of the Rademaker Review, especially given that many voluntary sector organisations employ staff working inside prisons. She highlighted the need for clarity and alignment, particularly around workplace policies like reasonable adjustments, when the employing organisation and the prison operate under different frameworks. Secondly, she emphasised the cultural differences between the third sector and HMPPS, suggesting that this distinction could be a strength if leveraged to promote rehabilitative culture. Joanne asked whether there had been consideration of how third sector organisations could help embed positive values through their day-to-day work in prisons.
- 4.13. Sam agreed wholeheartedly, affirming the value that external partners bring, particularly those who navigate both their own organisational culture and that of HMPPS. He noted the potential for this duality to generate meaningful insight and innovation and acknowledged that the Rademaker recommendations must ultimately serve everyone working within the prison system, not just those directly employed by HMPPS. He admitted that the path to aligning HR processes between sectors, or developing clear accountability routes for external staff, remains a work in progress. However, he reiterated a commitment to maintaining open dialogue, encouraging sector partners to help shape both policy and implementation as the work evolves.
- 4.14. Joanne also made an important point about two-way communication, raising concerns not only from third-sector employers but also about third-sector staff, and how HMPPS must engage meaningfully and transparently in those cases. Anne Fox supported this with a powerful anecdote about a sector leader who was banned from the prison estate following a complaint process that lacked transparency and due process. She suggested that an independent person or mechanism could play a crucial role in resolving such disputes and protecting relationships between voluntary organisations and prisons, especially given the inherent power imbalance.
- 4.15. Paul Grainge of Recoop added another layer to the discussion, sharing a concern specific to older prisoners and peer support staff. He described situations where health concerns raised by peer supporters had been ignored, contributing to serious harm or death. He highlighted the emotional toll this takes on peer supporters and staff, especially when they are not believed or when their concerns are not escalated effectively. Sam acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and encouraged Paul to engage with the Disparities Unit to explore potential escalation mechanisms or safeguarding improvements. While not a core focus of the Rademaker Review, he agreed that this was a vital area for further policy development.

- 4.16. Anne Fox returned to the conversation to stress the need for scrutiny and cultural challenge, particularly around internal systems such as DEATs (Diversity and Equality Action Teams), which some community organisations see as structurally biased. She raised a provocative but essential question about cultural change: how can HMPPS be sure its “values” are inclusive, and how can it test whether people are truly being heard rather than silenced or assimilated? She urged HMPPS to work with external partners to examine these dynamics closely, warning against self-congratulatory assumptions about progress.
- 4.17. Nicola Drinkwater from Women in Prison reinforced the points raised by others, particularly around the cultural gap between HMPPS and the voluntary sector. She highlighted that lived experience is a central pillar of their service model, but that some frontline staff have encountered resistance or stigma from prison staff toward colleagues with lived experience. Nicola also echoed the importance of clear escalation routes for safeguarding and other concerns. In closing, she linked the conversation back to broader system reform, such as the Sentencing Review, noting that organisational culture will be pivotal in determining how new policies are implemented in practice. Sam acknowledged all the comments and suggested that Nicola connect with Esther from the Disparities Unit for more detailed follow-up, particularly around women’s issues and safeguarding.
- 4.18. Maria McNicholl from St. Giles Trust raised an important point regarding staff training and induction. As the education representative, she emphasised that professional standards begin at the point of entry, during staff induction and training and that voluntary sector organisations should be involved in shaping and delivering these sessions. Maria shared an example of training taking place at the Downview and High Down training centre, where numerous third-sector organisations are already active within those establishments, yet were not invited to participate. She highlighted that early engagement could help challenge assumptions and prevent harmful attitudes from taking root. Maria also called for an emphasis on communication skills in training, noting that the issues she witnesses on landings are often not overt discrimination, but a lack of respectful and effective communication—officers being abrupt or rude, for instance.
- 4.19. Sam responded by acknowledging the power and simplicity of Maria’s point: foundational cultural change often comes down to how people interact, listen, and show respect. He agreed that while “culture” can sound abstract, its effects are very real and often visible in everyday interactions between staff and prisoners. He assured the group that HMPPS is currently working through its training reform programme for prisons, “Enable,” and that diversity, inclusion, and professional standards are being embedded from day one of induction. He also mentioned the new Professional Standards Guide, published in October 2024, which distils key expectations into a clear, accessible format for staff. Sam further explained that new training is being trialled for recently appointed governors, using real case studies to explore how professional standards should be upheld in practice. He emphasised that this is being approached systematically but acknowledged there is still more to do to ensure consistent rollout.
- 4.20. Victoria Baird asked whether visitors, particularly those from minority backgrounds, were being considered in this work. She raised concerns about how visitors are treated in prison environments and whether there will be processes in place for them to report issues or raise complaints.

- 4.21. Sam confirmed that while the Rademaker Review does not contain a specific recommendation for visitors, the core principle applies: HMPPS must create a safe and respectful environment for all people who engage with the system, not just directly employed staff. He acknowledged that prisons are dynamic environments involving numerous partners, contractors, volunteers, and visitors, and that the system's processes must be designed to work for all of them. While he could not offer a complete solution yet, he assured the group that this is on the agenda and being actively considered as part of ongoing reform efforts.
- 4.22. Anne Fox closed the session by thanking Sam for his openness and willingness to engage in such a detailed dialogue. She suggested the group reflect on how to maintain longer-term engagement, including establishing ongoing links with key individuals in Sam's team. She welcomed the idea of themed follow-ups where specific members could contribute their expertise on particular recommendations. Sam reaffirmed his commitment to continued collaboration and invited the group to remain involved as implementation progresses.

5. Member/HMPPS updates/AOB

- 5.1. Anne Fox took a moment to check if any updates from HMPPS were forthcoming. It was confirmed that the HMPPS representative had already left, so the floor was opened for updates from the group's seat-holders.
- 5.2. Josh Stunell noted that he would be sitting on the Professional Standards Board. He expressed cautious optimism, stating that while there's a structure in place for engagement now, past experiences had shown a tendency for early input from external partners to be disregarded later in the process. He cited the example of the DHRV recommendations, where he had contributed at the start but was left out of the loop during final decisions. Nonetheless, he welcomed the opportunity and committed to feeding back regularly to the group.
- 5.3. Anne responded with encouragement, praising Sam's leadership on the professional standards work, noting a shift in tone and reliability compared to previous iterations. She emphasised the RR3 group's collective responsibility, offering the wider network's support to Josh and Katrina if needed, especially if future processes begin to mirror past frustrations, such as when consultations were held, advice was ignored, and the group was still cited as having been "involved," as had happened with PAVA deployment decisions.
- 5.4. Joanne O'Connor then raised concerns about operational pressures arising from the national regimes framework. She explained that prisons are increasingly looking to third-sector organisations to deliver peer-led or purposeful activity in response to regime targets, possibly as a cost-saving measure. Additionally, she flagged a trend of planned regime closures increasing in frequency, partly due to funding constraints. For example, some education providers were renegotiating contracts to reduce delivery weeks, resulting in more prisoners locked up and less access to rehabilitative activity. Joanne wasn't sure if this trend was national or local but believed it merited further attention.
- 5.5. Anne encouraged Joanne and others to feed such insights back to the team, noting that RR3 has direct operational channels into HMPPS and can triage these concerns

appropriately. She highlighted examples like the decommissioning of the Sycamore Tree programme and reminded members that changes in leadership within organisations should also be communicated to ensure continuity of engagement with the system. She assured the group that operational queries could be passed on, especially as she now meets twice yearly with senior leadership and sits on the HMPPS advisory forum.

- 5.6. Tammi Owen then proposed dedicating time in future meetings to sharing each seat-holder's top priorities, especially with new members joining. She believed this would create better mutual understanding and cross-pollination, particularly where goals may align or overlap, such as across regional or thematic lenses (e.g. housing or Wales-specific issues). Anne agreed this was a good idea, suggesting members write down their priorities for sharing. The Clinks team would determine the best format for this exercise, possibly linking it to future in-person meetings.
- 5.7. David Dunn added that one of his goals in the small organisations seat was to develop a national network for smaller organisations working in the sector. Acknowledging that larger organisations often have established relationships and access to information, he hoped to raise the profile and voice of smaller providers through this network. He invited anyone interested to get in touch with him directly.
- 5.8. Andrew Lewin then provided a final update from HMPPS. He announced the launch of the Rehabilitation Grant Scheme, which replaces the previous Innovation Grant. This new scheme will run at £1 million per year over three years and aims to align more closely with outcomes from the Independent Sentencing Review (ISR). While the outcomes are still being finalised, the grant will have a community-facing focus, with some potential for in-prison delivery. Market engagement was scheduled for the week of July 23rd, and more details would be shared soon.
- 5.9. Andrew also noted a regional mapping project underway in the Northeast, Yorkshire and Humber, led by Natalie and her team. This initiative seeks to map third-sector organisations in the criminal justice space, understand their funding and capabilities, and connect them more closely with regional leadership. Over 200 organisations have already been identified, and this work may be expanded nationally under the new infrastructure grant and as sentencing review priorities evolve. Finally, he mentioned the team's involvement in follow-up work on the NPC's Just Foundations report, with more updates to come in the future.
- 5.10. Anne thanked Andrew for the thorough update and his openness to feedback—particularly the acknowledgement that while innovation is important, rehabilitation is ongoing and central. She encouraged the group to help promote and assess the upcoming grants and reiterated the team's willingness to support these efforts.

6. Conclusion

Anne informed the group that the proposed 2025–26 work plan would be circulated for feedback. It will include continuation of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) on community provision and tackling racial disparities, as well as a new SIG aligned with the Women's Justice Board. Additional "pop-up" SIGs may also be convened in relation to the Sentencing Review. Anne formally thanked Alasdair Jackson for his long-standing contribution to the group. Alasdair, who was stepping down, was commended for his dedication to helping people into employment

and championing sector voice. She also acknowledged Vicki and Mark for their service, encouraging Vicki to reapply if interested. Alasdair offered some closing words, urging the group to maintain momentum and expressing his belief that the sector has a genuine opportunity to influence policy with the current ministerial engagement. Anne concluded by wishing everyone a good day and thanking them for their ongoing commitment.