



## RR3 Quarterly December Minutes

### Attendees:

- Anne Fox, Clinks
- Angela Lucas, Clinks
- Elizaveta Strelnikova, Clinks
- Sam Julius, Clinks
- Abbi Ayers, Together Women Project
- Andrew Neilson, The Howard League
- Bettina Crossick
- Catrina McHugh, Open Clasp Theatre Company
- Daniel Mills, Switchback
- David Higham, Warrior Down LERO
- James McEwen, HMPPS
- Jemma Rix
- Jess Mullen, Alliance for Youth Justice
- Joanne O'Connor, Junction42
- Jon Collins, Prisoners Education Trust
- Josh Stunell, bthechange CIC
- Kelly Greham, Revolving Doors
- Laura Steanga, MoJ Policy
- Leesal Malhan, MoJ Policy
- Louisa Alvis, MoJ Policy
- Martha Blom-Cooper, HMPPS – Our Future Probation Service (OFPS)
- Matina Marougka, Together for Mental Wellbeing
- Matthew Gould, Prison Demand & Release Policy
- Matthew Randle, Catch22
- Paul Grainge, Recoop
- Paula Harriott, Unlock
- Rebecca Williamson, MoJ Policy
- Richard Rowley, Working Chance
- Richard Knibbs, Nacro
- Rosanna Carbutt
- Summer Alston-Smith, Advance
- Tammi Owen, CUBE
- Vicki Markiewicz, Change Grow Live
- Vicky Baird, Spurgeons

### 1. Introduction

- Anne briefly introduced the session, highlighting that the group will be hearing from Rebecca Williamson on the probation-related clauses in the Sentencing Bill, from Matthew Gould on recall-related clauses in the Sentencing Bill (which gained Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament in January), and an introductory session with HMPPS CEO James McEwen.
- Anne introduced Summer Alston-Smith as the new RR3 Women's seat holder

### 2. Sentencing Bill – Rebecca Williamson

- Rebecca introduced herself, the Probation Policy Leads who cover key probation measures in the Bill, and Martha Blom-Cooper, the programme director of the Our Future Probation Service programme
- Leesal began the presentation by discussing the progression model within the Sentencing Bill. Although it does not explicitly appear as a concept within the

Bill, they are legislating for some of the model's elements within it. Namely, the new release points and new licence conditions Leesal went on to describe the structure of the Progression Model for Standard Determine Sentences (SDS), explaining that it will be split up into thirds.

- The first third will be spent in custody, where days can be added to a person's sentence via the adjudication system for serious prison rule breaking.
- The second third will be the intensive supervision stage, which will be delivered through an uplift in tagging, and new restrictive measures including driving prohibition, public events ban, mandatory random drug testing, and the power to set restriction zones. Restriction zones will operate differently to other licence conditions. All additional licence conditions must be necessary and proportionate to manage risk, but there will be different eligibility criteria for restriction zones which will be set out in guidance in the future.
- The final third will be the licence stage, where those convicted under certain offence groups and those assessed as high and very high risk of serious harm (such as those on Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements levels 1-3 and people convicted of terrorist offences) will continue to be actively supervised by probation. Licence conditions will be retained for everyone, including any restrictive measures where necessary to manage risk. Probation will have the power to reactivate supervision if people newly meet the exemption criteria and recall them back into custody if they cannot be safely managed in the community.
- Standard Determinate+ Sentences (SDS+) will now have a minimum release point from custody at the halfway point of their sentence. Like for SDS, days can be added to the sentence via the adjudication system for serious prison rule breaking. Following the halfway point of their sentence, people serving an SDS+ sentence will enter the intensive supervision stage in the community, which will be delivered through an uplift in tagging and the same restrictive measures as for SDS sentences, such as driving prohibition.
- Leesal handed over to Louisa who focused on the three community-focused measures in the Bill. She explained that first, post-sentence supervision (PSS) will be removed, with the exception of live breaches of PSS conditions before they are officially repealed. Second, the requirement to complete Unpaid Work Orders in 12 months will also be removed to address an inefficient process. Lastly, the Rehabilitation Activity Requirement will be replaced with a broader 'Probation Requirement,' which allows probation teams to more flexibility target rehabilitation activity to where their assessment of risk and need would suggest it is needed, as opposed to the court setting the maximum number of activity days.
- Louisa then handed over to Laura, who spoke about incentives in community sentences. Laura went over the Unpaid Work (UPW) reduction scheme, where

individuals can earn a reduction to their UPW hours by demonstrating sustained compliance with UPW. Individuals must complete a qualifying period of 25% of their total hours, without an unacceptable absence of failure to comply before they are eligible to start earning a reduction. Once they are eligible, they would earn a 30-minute reduction for every hour of UPW completed, which means that the maximum reduction that can be earned is 25% of their UPW. Any unacceptable absence or instance of non-compliance would result in disqualification from earning any further reduction, but any credits earned already would not be lost. Laura clarified that any penalty UPW hours added following breach would not be in scope.

- Laura then continued on to explain the community sentence progression scheme, noting that community orders and the supervision period of suspended sentence orders will terminate automatically once a person has completed their sentence plan. This includes the completion of all court-ordered requirements. The courts will continue to set the length of the order and the requirements at the point of sentencing. Orders will not be terminated earlier than the court-set date if the person has outstanding requirements or sentence plan objectives. This scheme is intended to encourage early engagement, compliance with sentence requirements, and would enable the probation service to focus on more complex or serious cases.
- Laura then handed over to Martha Blom-Cooper, who provided an update on the implementation of the Our Future Probation Service (OFPS) Programme. This programme was established to address significant workload pressures on operational probation services which pre-dated the sentencing reforms. It will also implement the sentencing reforms and ensure the necessary capacity in place to successfully deliver those. She explained that her team is working on developing a range of digital, policy and process measures aimed at tackling these challenges by rebalancing demand and capacity and reducing workloads.
- Martha explained that frontline staff and stakeholders are central to this work, and bold system-wide reform will be needed to meet the challenge. She explained that her team has established a Senior Stakeholder Group (SSG) to engage strategically with partners, including Clinks, on the OFPS Programme's vision, direction and design.
- Implementing these measures at the right time is necessary to ensure that there is enough capacity to meet expected demand. It is also essential to prepare for fixed-date changes, such as those related to the presumption against short sentences, while phasing other reforms so probation regions can manage demand and realise capacity gains safely. This will mean significant changes for frontline staff and CJS partners throughout 2026. In concluding the presentation, she explained that her team is planning to carefully manage this transition, ensuring staff are supported and delivery is coordinated.

- Anne thanked Rebecca and her colleagues for their presentations and briefly introduced Jon Collins as the new Prison Education seat holder.
- Anne opened the floor to discussion based on the discussion questions provided by Rebecca and her colleagues. Anne asked the group if they have any specific research or material which Rebecca and her colleagues could use as a part of their implementation design. She also asked how we can better facilitate access to support services to allow probation to make timely and effective referrals, and what needs to change or improve or be maintained when it comes to communication between probation and the voluntary sector.
- Joanne O'Connor articulated her concern on statutory services' understanding of the implications of the Connected to Work agenda. She sought clarity around how probation would engage with the third sector given that its ability to facilitate this has been reduced due to lack of alternative funding mechanisms being available.
- Vicky Baird highlighted that within the families network, they have had a range of experiences with the probation service. However, as a key takeaway, she has noted that recognition of the role of the voluntary sector has been consistently proven to be crucial to success.
- Vicki Markiewicz explained that from a drugs and alcohol perspective, they are quite excited about the progression model and how it will pan out. She is very keen to see the incentives to engaging in drug and alcohol treatment, and a three-sided system of working which includes probation, drug and alcohol service providers, and people who have been convicted of an offence. For this to happen, there need to be more effective communication and timely referrals. However, there first needs to be a relationship between probation staff and drug and alcohol service providers both in prisons and in the community. Anne asked Vicki to explain what would facilitate this relationship.
- Vicki explained that there needs to be regular communication between local probation teams and local drug and alcohol service teams so that they can start building this relationship, and that this communication must go both ways. Probation teams should also build their understanding of what treatments and services are available in the community to make more effective referrals and build shared knowledge.
- Jess Mullen mentioned that one of the key items of focus in their research is the consistency of support as young people transition from the youth system to the adult system. They have done a piece of research previously on experiences of racially minoritised people transitioning between the systems, which highlighted the importance of having support from organisations led by and for racially minoritised communities. She emphasised the importance of this research given the nature of the conversations at the previous RR3 Quarterly meeting around some of the potential for worsening disproportionality from the introduction of

certain measures in the Sentencing Bill, such as the progression model. She stressed the need for additional support to be given to people from racially minoritised backgrounds and how this will be addressed. She offered to share this research with Clinks for wider distribution.

- Tammi Owen commented on how the Sentencing Bill's measures are landing within the community. She mentioned that one of the key implementation challenges is how these changes are perceived by the community, since these perceptions undoubtedly impact people's chances at resettlement and their experiences in coming out of the prison and their families. She wondered if there was a plan to address how the Sentencing Bill's measures are landing so that they do not inspire fear or concern for the average person in the community. Anne praised Tammi's point and reiterated the importance of her concerns about community perceptions.
- Summer Alston-Smith flagged the importance of doing risk and needs assessments in a dynamic way for women, given their high likelihood of having experiences as victim-survivors. Two-way working between probation and the voluntary sector is more integral than ever to do this and to properly support and protect women in the criminal justice system, particularly those who have been through the revolving door of prison multiple times, so that women can understand what the changes proposed by the Sentencing Bill will mean for them. Doing so would support these women's mental health and their rehabilitative journey.
- Anne reflected that Clinks had hosted a session and previously written a report on how we can save probation time, and explained that to do so, we must engage in information sharing. In terms of information sharing, at a presentation given by the HMPPS Independent Advisory Forum, Anne mentioned that she had suggested that they consider how AI tools could operate within the voluntary sector, so that we can all use the same tools and save time.
- Anne then moved on to the next set of questions offered by Rebecca's team, asking the group what they believe will help ensure that these new incentive schemes are accessible, understandable and are motivating for the people they support, and how the third sector can work alongside probation to support rehabilitation and engagement in these schemes. She also asked the group what they think will be the biggest barriers for people on community sentences in benefitting fully from the schemes.
- Paul Grainge flagged that 'digital solutions' has become a frequently used term. However, considering cognitive decline and a lack of dementia screening tools, people who are coming out on licence from the older and longer-sentenced cohort face a barrier in not being able to understand technology that would be used to provide incentives.

- David Higham commented that he has done research on how to support people coming out of prison to a lived experience approach. In terms of working with probation, it is essential for probation services to be working directly with the community to understand what the people who are coming out of prison are going back in to.
- Vicky Baird explained that 'practical elements' can act as barriers to people on community sentences completing necessary programming and courses. These elements include things like courses being located too far away and transport being inaccessible or unaffordable. As a result, people on community sentences can find it easier not to engage with the programming or courses, even if it results in recall, because they do not have the capacity or means to be able to address these challenges. However, as Vicky suggested, making courses and programming more accessible will have a significant positive impact on individuals and their families.
- Tammi Owen added to Vicky's point, explaining that in Wales in particular, public transport can often be hit-or-miss. Relating to digital inclusion, Tammi mentioned that some areas of Wales do not have good enough Wi-Fi. So, if a part of a person's community sentence needs to be done through some form of programming or course work that is online, it may not be achievable. She mentioned we need to think about how we can support individuals in the community to make appointments with probation, and how they can support their colleagues. She is concerned that there may not be the same voluntary sector organisations in place in the next few years to support people on community sentences
- Vicki Markiewicz spoke about access to stable and safe accommodation that is close enough to where they are receiving their drug and alcohol treatment, particularly for people on community sentence treatment requirements. Vicki echoed the comments made by Vicky and Tammi on travel and transport. She also emphasized the importance of clarity and understanding of what community orders entail, for probation, the voluntary sector and the person on a community sentence.
- Joanne O'Connor explained that the limitations that transport costs pose to people's engagement with interventions and the subsequent perpetuation of these people being punished for non-compliance should not be underestimated. Citing examples of organisations in her local area, she explained that meeting individuals' transport costs has increased organisations' engagement with clients. Joanne also emphasised the importance of maintaining adequate communication between the voluntary sector and probation officers. Probation officers need to get a better idea of what services are available in the community and who is eligible to receive them.

- In closing, Anne commented that licence conditions can often be given arbitrarily and explained that people may want to be more involved in the processes which sets their licence conditions to ensure that their licenses are workable and can help them rehabilitate.

### **3. Recall – Matthew Gould**

- Anne then moved on to introduce Matthew Gould and his session on changes proposed to recall under the Sentencing Bill. She noted that he is keen to hear views on factors which support considerations not to recall an individual. Anne explained that for this portion of the session, the group will be joined by members of the Recall Reform Coalition, who will contribute to the discussion.
- Matthew began his session by explaining that as a part of the prison capacity crisis that the new government has needed to address, the recall population has doubled in recent years, even though people on licence have not become twice as dangerous. He noted that he is very keen to find sensible ways to tackle the recall population.
- For some time, there has been a push toward fixed term recall, rather than standard recall, which started under the previous government, with 14-day fixed term recalls mandated for sentences of under 12 months. However, as of Autumn 2025, there has been a move to mandating 28-day recalls. One of the reasons for this, as he articulated, was that they cannot change the number of days without primary legislation. They wanted to move towards fixed-term recalls partially because of prole board delays, they saw people stay in the prison for a very long time when they were given standard recalls. Under the Sentencing Bill, most individuals on Standards Determinate Sentences (SDS) will be receiving fixed-term 56-day recalls in the future. There will no longer be any 14 or 28 day recalls, and for most people, there will be a very little chance of receiving a standard recall. There will be mechanisms to change this however, and to terminate the recall in cases where a recall has been made mistakenly. There will also be exceptions made, for individuals who are on MAPPA 2 or 3 for example, will automatically get a standard recall, and people who are recalled because they have received an additional charge will also receive a standard recall. Anyone on an Extended Determinate Sentence (EDS) will be excluded from being eligible for these fixed-term recalls.
- Matthew explained that the reason fixed-term recalls have been extended to 56 days as a recommendation from David Gauke's Independent Sentencing Review because this longer time period would help ensure that there is a bit more time to address the challenges an individual faced which led them to being recalled, whether it was related to mental health, a drug use or anger management.
- Matthew mentioned that he hoped this change will slowly be delivered to ensure that the system is able to make this transition smoothly.

- Returning to the Independent Sentencing Review, Matthew explained that he has suggested a structure-process change, rather than a cultural change. Once the Bill reaches Royal Assent, it will be essential to think about the non-legislative steps that can be taken to reduce the use of recalls, to help work toward them being used as a last resort. Matthew explained that he is very keen to hear ideas as to how we can make sure that recalls become rarer.
- Anne urged the sector to reach out to Matthew with any ideas they may have. She then moved to the discussion portion of the session. She asked the group what they think drives the high number of recalls.
- Daniel Mills expressed that he is very glad to hear Matthew say that people on licence have not gotten more dangerous or non-compliant, and especially not at the rate at which recalls occur. Numerous people who are recalled could have had their non-compliance, particularly when it is very minor, dealt with in a different and more productive way.
- Daniel explained that one of the reasons why the recall rate is going up could be related to the pressure faced by probation officers related to being held individually accountable for recall decisions and the fear of not recalling people who then go on to commit a serious further offence. They also struggle with the volume of their caseloads, lack of experience and the amount of necessary paperwork. Probation officers often have to make recall decisions based on paperwork and information on a computer screen, which limits their understanding of mitigating factors that may provide a better picture of what is going on in a person's life.
- Kelly Grehan agreed with Daniel, stating that based on her experience, probation officers make too many unnecessary recalls. She added that probation officers may face increasing pressure from their managers to recall individuals, even if they do not show explicit signs of meriting a recall. However, these pressures to recall may be mitigated if probation officers feel more supported. It is also necessary to define the real purpose of recall and build better relationships between probation officers and the individuals they supervise. A good relationship may help probation officers rationalise and understand the reasons behind a person's behaviour and may steer them away from choosing to recall them.
- Kelly explained that at times, it may feel counterintuitive for individuals to come to their probation officers if they feel that they need help, as this may put officers in a position to need to recall the person that came to them. In essence, the culture that we have around recalls has caused risk to rise rather than fall.
- Matthew responded to the points made by Daniel and Kelly, noting that it is important to reduce the amount of blame that probation officers are feeling. He agreed that there need to be cultural changes and an emphasis on human relationships and human connection between probation officers and the people

they supervise. He explained that there are certainly cases where recalls are made in error, which disrupts rehabilitation, and can diminish a person's ability to turn their life around.

- Vicki Markiewicz mentioned that in her experience, she has seen that there is a real culture of probation officers seeing recalls as the only option without further inquiry into what happened. She explained there are often cases where a person does not know where they are supposed to be and when, and that a lack of suitable accommodation can often negatively influence this, particularly if their accommodation is very far away. The recall culture has a very tangible negative impact on a lack of confidence in community sentences being able to help a person rehabilitate, and people often have their trust being broken by the people that are meant to help them. Vicki wondered how compliance can be managed more effectively without resorting to recall, and how information sharing between probation and voluntary organisations can help keep individuals in the community.
- Andrew Neilson asked Matthew about the final third of the progression model, and what supervision will look like under the exemptions listed under this final third, and whether it will be similar to the second third of the model. He wondered how big the group of exemptions will be and what recall will look like for them.
- Matthew responded to Andrew by explaining that with regards to the progression model, they will be taking a slightly different approach to what was recommended by David Gauke in the Independent Sentencing Review. Unlike what was mentioned in the Review, there will be more supervision in the final third of a person's sentence. For example, individuals convicted of offences under MAPPA 1 will continue to be supervised until the end of their sentence. The model progression model that they have put forth before Parliament will be a lot more nuanced than the third-based model in the Independent Sentencing Review. In the final third recalls will be less likely with less supervision but will still occur if the recalled person commits a further offence.
- Andrew responded to Matthew by clarifying his initial point, asking if people's experience of supervision in the final third will be any different than in the second third of their sentence. He wondered if it will be as intensive as in the second third.
- Matthew explained that there are still some details that must be finalised in order to make this determination, such as the availability of tags and the frequency of supervision. These details are linked to spending allocation decisions. Returning to the example of people on MAPPA 1, he explained that the progression model will likely not feel like three equal thirds.
- Matthew welcomed views and suggestions on this, noting that he would be able to feedback to Adam Bailey, the Probation Policy Director.

- Abbi Ayers commented on the impact of recall on women, noting that the introduction of probation reset has led to some women experience devastating impacts on the continuity of their support. Women can be re-traumatised through the recall process given their experiences as survivors of abuse and criminalisation. Abbi urged that there should be more focus on how we can use the third sector to support women and reduce the recall rate. If the third sector can be more involved in recall decisions and if probation is better able to be located within women centres and make better use of women's spaces, this will help meet women where they are and help readdress the incidences of recall, which, as they have seen, are largely due to non-compliance. Strengthening the working relationships between probation officers and key workers working with women through probation will really help to address their rehabilitation.
- Matthew reflected on Abbi's point, articulating the need for better alternatives in the community for women that are not currently available.
- Richard Knibbs shared that many of the concerns that Abbi raised also exist in the men's estate. He explained that there is something that can be done about the current commissioning approach and how things work for probation officers currently, who have a lack of options to drive people into support. Investment in the third sector to be able to support people through proper holistic support options is currently missing. There also need to be more conversations had between probation and the voluntary sector to communicate how far a person has come and how much progress they have made.
- Anne moved on to discuss solutions. She asked the group if there are any measures that can be implemented cost-effectively to reduce the numbers of people recalled, if there are pre-recall steps that can be taken, and if improved resettlement support can drive better compliance with licence conditions. She also asked what the alternatives are to recall.
- Summer Alston-Smith mentioned that they are in the middle of conducting research on getting lived experience voices of young women in particular on their experiences of navigating licence conditions, managing risks of recall, specifically looking at securing stable housing as a key component of this. She told Matthew that she would be very happy to pick up a conversation with him on a pilot they are looking to launch in 2026 on housing for women, to create a supported housing alternative to recall. Summer mentioned that it is their intention to present this housing alternative to probation officers.
- Vicki Markiewicz explained that there are pre-recall steps that can be taken, particularly with people who are accessing drug and alcohol treatment support in the community. She mentioned that this would all go back to communication, and putting in additional licence conditions for people to continue to engage in drugs and alcohol services. For people to do well in these services, adequate accommodation which meets their needs being accessible to local support

services is essential. There would also need to be enhanced communication for people who are at risk of recall to prevent them being sent back to prison.

- Matthew Randle discussed Catch22's new ACE pilot, components of which he believes were able to address points raised about the need for cost-effective solutions and co-production on licence conditions. Some of the feedback that they had gotten was that people did not understand licence conditions or what the wording meant. As a result, Catch22 created an intervention called 'Understanding your Licence' to help individuals understand their licence. This intervention really resonated with participants in this pilot.
- Daniel Mills echoed what Matthew Randle mentioned about licence conditions, citing similar findings, with people often not understanding what licence conditions mean. He articulated that it is essential to get communication right when it comes to licence conditions, thinking about alternative ways of communicating and co-creating licences.
- Daniel also explained that it would be beneficial to try and take some of the pressure off of probation services, as this would likely reduce the recall rate. He called for there to be more independence in the recall decision-making process, advocating for non-emergency recall decisions to be approved independently either by the magistrates' court or public casework teams. He also explained the need to give newer and less experienced probation officers decision-making frameworks to help guide decisions whether to recall a person or not, and ladders of escalation to address non-compliance, such as warning letters.
- Josh Stunnell emphasised that continuity of care plays a massive role in reducing recalls, particularly during a person's first week in the community. Anne mentioned that this is exactly what Release Mates does. She echoed the importance of only handing out licence conditions which are feasible for an individual to complete and letting people co-produce their licences.
- Paul Grainge flagged that getting the basics right, such as understanding cognitive decline and aggravating factors related to technological understanding, is essential to consider, particularly since one in five of people in prison are over the age of 50.
- Kelly Grehan highlighted the importance of probation officers feeling safe. Serious further offence reports need to be more focused on learning rather than blame. For people that are being recalled, they need to build up a relationship of trust with their probation officers, and in the first instance, need licence conditions to be written clearly and understandably, particularly considering the amount of people with literacy problems. Kelly mentioned that she has been working with the MoJ on producing a video which people can watch and listen back to, to better understand their licence conditions.
- Daniel Mills mentioned that on 56-day recall, there is very little due process which happens when people are recalled. According to Switchback's research,

approximately two thirds of people did not have a meeting with their probation officer and two thirds mentioned that their community probation officer didn't stay in touch during recall. Daniel urged Matthew Gould to think about extant policies and what they are actually doing to achieve our goals.

- Anne emphasised that it is the person who has the licence conditions is the person who pays the price of not being supported, having things explained to them clearly, not having a suitable place to live, or not having appropriate licence conditions in the first place. Their rehabilitation journey would be completely upturned if they get recalled.
- Anne closed Matthew's portion of the session by urging the Recall Reform Collation to send in any more information that they want to get across to Matthew directly to Sam Julius.

#### **4. James McEwen**

- Anne introduced James McEwen as the next speaker, welcoming him to the session, and handed over to him.
- James mentioned that he welcomes scrutiny of HMPPS, and wanted the organisation to be more forward-looking and accepting of challenging and constructive criticism. He introduced himself to the group, providing some context about his background and career history, noting that he has had delivery at the heart of what he has been doing. He mentioned how keen he is to bring his experience to his new role at HMPPS, and how we can bring the feedback from the group to make some positive changes.
- His goal is to run a system which promotes reducing reoffending outcomes, changes lives for the better, and keeps the public safe. Delivering this goal requires great partnership and investment in third sector organisations. However, he recognised the sector's frustration with lack of funding.
- James then invited the group to ask him any questions they have for him. Anne prompted the group to consider some of the burning issues they have which they want James to hear about.
- Jess Mullen mentioned that her members are deeply concerned about conditions in youth custody and children going into custody, especially since she believes that it is largely unnecessary in the majority of cases. In 2024, a huge amount of work was put in by members of the Alliance for Youth Justice and colleagues across the sector to feed into the strategy for children in custody. She explained that her members had expressed to her that they were deeply disappointed that the engagement process that had been set out did not materialise and that the strategy was never externally published and currently remains for internal use only. She asked James if there are any plans to revisit this strategy in a way which would align with plans from Ministers and to ensure

that there is engagement with the sector to address any issues surrounding the strategy that may come up this time around.

- James mentioned that both David Lammy and Jake Richards are very interested in the challenges in the youth justice system and want to create some space to put together their own youth justice strategy and their plan for tackling it. Although he has not directly done work to refresh the strategy, the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) is interested in making some statements to articulate his view of what is happening in the youth justice system and what must be done to address issues within it in the first half of the new year.
- Summer asked James about the duty to collaborate and economic constraints across the system, inquiring about his thoughts on cross-departmental working, specifically on moving toward co-commissioned models.
- The DPM is working towards collaborating more and working more with his counterparts in other departments such as Education. He believes that this topic may be picked up and given further scrutiny by Sir Brian Leveson in the second part of his report on the efficiency of the criminal justice system, and the Crown Courts in particular, as well as in another upcoming report on drugs in prison.
- Vicki Markiewicz expressed that one of the key messages from the drugs and alcohol sector is the need for consistency across approaches in prisons, in the community and across different regions as to how decisions are made. She also noted that there needs to be some form of joint guidance for how orders might be managed in the community and what a minimum standard would look like.
- James responded by explaining that inconsistency is a symptom of the level of strain that the system is under. Since the exact ideal level of consistency needed to meet local health needs is unclear at this time, there are conversations that need to be had moving forward on this topic. He explained that related to a recent report on the health of people in prison, on probation and in the secure NHS estate in England, he has met with the author, Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty, and garnered many interesting insights about how governmental branches can work together more effectively.
- Richard Rowley asked James about vetting, noting that back in October, Phil Cople mentioned that there will be a new policy framework for risk assessing people with lived experience. He asked if this is still on track and asked James for his views on whether there needs to be vetting for people working in the criminal justice system, but in a community-based role.
- James mentioned that he has previously met with the team working on lived experience, noting that he is continuing to support their work. He mentioned that he will need to come back to Richard on this.
- Jon Collins explained that the delivery of prison education contracts has come under real pressure with new contracts, whether it's an overall budget cut or not, it has been experienced as a cut in terms of frontline delivery staff, with

redundancies and courses being cancelled. People on the frontline have taken this to be a sign that prison education has been deprioritised. He believes that if there is an opportunity to have ministers or senior management restate the importance of prison education and its value, this should be taken, so that the organisations providing education services feel that what they do is valued.

- Echoing what Summer said, Jon urged James to think about opportunities to work with the department for education (DFE) and the department for work and pensions (DWP) to think about how we can better link up education provision within prisons and into the community, including developing specific partnerships between prisons and local education providers. As prison education has shrunk, it will become narrower and more inward looking but now is not the time to miss out on opportunities around apprenticeships, lifelong learning entitlements and other funding and provision that can support people both in custody and through the gate.
- James responded stating that he agrees with Jon on both of his points. He explained that it is a priority for James Timpson to think about making the best use of the money that they have. He believes that there will need to be conversations had about the conditions that they find themselves in in the estate, and what the greatest impact is that they can have with the amount of funding that they have.
- David Higham expressed the importance of incorporating lived experience within the prison and probation sectors and investing more into them. He emphasised their value and social impact of organisations working in this space, and their ability to support people with addictions and help prevent them from reoffending.
- Paula Harriott reiterated David Higham's points regarding the value of Lived Experience. Because these organisations tend to be smaller, she mentioned that having a separate set of funding streams and grants would be incredibly helpful for these organisations so that they do not need to compete through the commissioning process.
- In closing his portion of the session, James acknowledged the importance of the points raised about lived experience and vetting and noted that he believes it's important that more is done to employ people with lived experience at HMPPS and in the wider sector.

## **5. Member/HMPPS updates/AOB**

- Anne moved to ask the group if they had any member or HMPPS updates or any other business they wished to raise.
- Paula shared that Unlock will soon be publishing its report on the right to be forgotten. It will cover the longstanding impact of reporting in the press and how digital records of a person's criminal record impede their social mobility and

trying to strengthen lobbying around Clause 35 of the Sentencing Bill, and its negative impacts.

- Anne promised to get more clarity for the group on spending review allocation decisions as soon as she hears more about it.
- Josh Stunnell commended the points made by David Higham, reiterating the point that the involvement of lived experience organisations, particularly in mentorship roles, has led to the best outcomes for people who have gone through the criminal justice system. He articulated that he believes that people with lived experience and the organisations they work in should be uplifted as much as they can be moving forward.
- Anne explained that she felt very hopefully after speaking to James, particularly on vetting.
- Jess Mullen mentioned that she is anticipating positive news in the future surrounding children and the youth estate. However, conversations around racial disparity issues have been less positive. She explained that she did not feel like there were any concrete plans made, nor has this issue been taken up in the way she believes it should be.
- In closing the meeting, Anne mentioned that the next meeting will be on Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2026, online. She mentioned that she will be in touch about upcoming SIGs in the meantime.