RR3 Quarterly September 2026

Attendees:

- Angela Lucas, *Clinks,*
- Jackie Lowthian, *Clinks,*
- Lisa Chandler, *Clinks,*
- Sam Julius, *Clinks,*
- Summer Alston-Smith, *Clinks,*
- Aku Adjei, *Active Revolution Coaching,*
- Amber Rudd, *Independent Review of the Prison System Team,*
- Anna Lacey, *MoJ,*
- Bettina Crossick, *HMPPS,*
- Christina Line, *The Nelson Trust,*
- Ikemefuna Adeosun, *HMPPS,*
- Jim Barton, *HMPPS*,
- Joanne O'Connor, *Junction 42,*
- Jon Collins, *Prisoners' Education Trust,*
- Josh Bradlow, *Independent Review of the Prison System Team,*
- Jurga Kaucikiene, *HMPPS,*
- Katrina Ffrench, *UNJUST,*
- Katie Hyneman, *HMPPS,*
- Kathryn Grainger, *HMPPS,*
- Lucy Knowles, *HMPPS,*
- Paul Grainge, *Recoop,*
- Patsy Joyce, *Mokkha CIC,*
- Paula Harriott, *Unlock,*
- Rebecca Friel, *Odd Arts,*
- Rebecca Fynn, *HMPPS,*
- Richard Knibbs, *Nacro,*
- Richard Rowley, *Working Chance,*
- Rosie Carbutt, *HMPPS,*
- Rosie McNamee, *HMPPS,*
- Ruth Legge, *St Mungo's,*
- Sarah Bridgland, *HMPPS,*
- Sofie Lindop, *HMPPS,*
- Tammi Owen, *CUBE,*
- Vicki Markiewicz, *Change Grow Live,*
- Vicky Baird, *Spurgeons,*

1. Independent Review of the Prison System

1.1. Summer Alston-Smith welcomed members, including new RR3 seat holders, Aku Adjei from Active Revolution Coaching, representing the organisations led by and for racially minoritised people and Ruth Legge from St. Mungo's, representing the accommodation seat. Summer highlighted Clinks' recent engagement with voluntary organisations to inform the review.

1.2. Amber Rudd explained that the review would set a strategic direction for the prison system over the next five to 15 years. It would report at pace so recommendations could inform spending decisions and would seek support across political parties.

1.3. Amber outlined the review's principal themes: prison infrastructure and capacity; workforce and staffing; categorisation and cohorts; technology and digitisation; and organised crime in prisons. Each theme would produce a small number of ambitious, practical recommendations.
1.4. Vicki Markiewicz highlighted the relationship between drugs, organised crime, intimidation and vulnerability in prisons. She called for wider access to treatment, purposeful activity, employment and training, incentivised substance-free living, lived-experience support and clearer links between prison and community services.
1.5. Amber agreed that addiction support should be a prominent part of the review and said the work on categorisation and cohorts could help identify more appropriate support and diversion for people with substance use and mental health needs.
1.6. Vicky Baird emphasised that family relationships can support rehabilitation. She asked the review team to consider family involvement in resettlement and release planning, appropriate use of technology to maintain contact, and the effect of prison culture and staff practice on families.
1.7. Jon Collins said education should be treated as core purposeful activity. He raised concerns about reduced provision, particularly vocational learning and support for additional needs, and stressed the importance of literacy, numeracy, digital access and employment-focused skills.
1.8. Paula Harriott called for stronger pre-release and transitional support, including work readiness, financial capability, understanding criminal-record disclosure and clearer communication about licence conditions to reduce avoidable recall.
1.9. Joanne O'Connor said prison design should include suitable space for one-to-one and group interventions. She also recommended greater use of digital learning content, stronger relational and therapeutic skills among staff, and more engagement with community organisations to improve prison culture.
1.10. Katrina Ffrench highlighted racial disproportionality in treatment and use of force, the need for staff training in de-escalation, and the effect of labels on people's experience in custody. She also raised the use of segregation and the need for fair access to faith-based, pastoral and rehabilitative support.
1.11. Summer confirmed that Clinks would collate further member feedback and share it with the review team. Amber welcomed the sector's expertise and said it would inform the review's recommendations.

2. Jim Barton, DG Probation, and his priorities in his role

2.1. Summer introduced Jim Barton in his new role as Director General for Probation and invited him to outline his priorities and planned engagement with the voluntary sector.
2.2. Jim Barton explained that the revised HMPPS leadership structure was intended to create greater senior focus on the distinct pressures facing prisons and probation while retaining a joined-up approach across the system.
2.3. Jim said his central priority was to create the conditions for high-quality probation practice by reducing workload. The Our Future Probation Service programme aimed to reduce frontline workload, supported by digital improvements and a new supervision model that would prioritise higher-risk cases and earlier stages of supervision.
2.4. Jim also identified staff experience, organisational responsiveness, pay, safety and confidence in the employer as important priorities. He wanted HMPPS to act more quickly where operational pressures affected staff.
2.5. On devolution, Jim said the Government's starting point was devolution by default, but he questioned whether major structural change should precede stabilisation of probation performance. He invited the sector to contribute evidence on what should remain nationally consistent and what should be locally flexible.
2.6. Jim acknowledged that probation had become less open to voluntary-sector partnership over the previous decade. He saw an opportunity to rebuild those relationships and to clarify where local and specialist organisations could complement core sentence management.
2.7. Jim summarised the immediate implications of the Sentencing Act, including staged releases, revised supervision arrangements and a greater focus on electronic monitoring. He cautioned that public expectations of electronic monitoring needed to reflect practical and legal limits.
2.8. Rebecca Friel said partnership with probation had become more difficult and argued that place-based, relational and trauma-informed voluntary-sector support could address interconnected needs and improve transitions from prison to the community. She suggested piloting devolved approaches in areas ready to proceed.
2.9. Jim agreed that the sequencing of stabilisation and devolution was a central question. He supported identifying specific barriers in probation–voluntary sector relationships and developing a short, shared set of practical improvements.
2.10. Tammi Owen emphasised the value of co-commissioning and asked for reform and innovation to proceed in parallel. She warned that short-term and shrinking funding could leave voluntary organisations unable to contribute to future reforms.

2.11. Jim recognised the sector's financial fragility. He noted that probation had sometimes been unable to spend staffing budgets because recruitment targets were not met and said there was scope to explore whether some resource could support alternative delivery, while acknowledging significant practical constraints.

2.12. Joanne O'Connor said the voluntary sector was too often treated as optional rather than integral to rehabilitation. She highlighted inconsistent referral relationships and the severe effect of commissioning delays on smaller organisations.

2.13. Richard Rowley asked for greater consistency in recognising specialist employment support as part of rehabilitation. Jim invited further evidence and said national clarification or guidance should be considered where variation could not be justified by risk or individual circumstances.

2.14. Summer summarised the sector's message: voluntary organisations can improve outcomes and efficiency, but their financial position and inconsistent integration into probation limit what they can deliver. Jim offered continued engagement with RR3.

3. Member/HMPPS updates

3.1. Tammi Owen announced a roundtable on third-sector funding in Wales, intended to examine current pressures, effective practice and relationships between voluntary organisations, commissioners, trusts and foundations.

3.2. Joanne O'Connor reported positively on an MoJ event that enabled voluntary organisations to engage directly with prison commissioners about the Dynamic Purchasing System. She suggested similar engagement outside London and encouraged organisations to share evidence of impact.

3.3. Bettina Crossick introduced Kathryn Grainger, the new interim Deputy Director for Rehabilitation Strategy and Interventions.

3.4. Richard Rowley updated members on the anticipated review of the HMPPS vetting framework. He encouraged organisations to prepare evidence on delays, refusals, exclusion, workforce effects and positive experiences, noting that small organisations could struggle with short consultation windows.

3.5. Bettina suggested inviting the relevant HMPPS lead to a future RR3 meeting. Summer added that quantifying the financial and operational cost of vetting delays could strengthen the sector's evidence.

3.6. Aku Adjei asked whether RR3 should consolidate recommendations to the Independent Review of the Prison System in a formal submission or special interest group. Summer agreed that Clinks would explore this with members.

3.7. Paula Harriott highlighted the importance of transitional arrangements when vetting standards change and offered evidence from Unlock's helpline. Bettina

confirmed that HMPPS would provide a clearer update through the appropriate lead.

3.8. Patsy Joyce reported that vetting, funding delays and short response times had a disproportionate effect on small organisations. She said interruptions in commissioning and changes to vetting arrangements could remove experienced staff and threaten organisations' viability.

3.9. Summer welcomed the relaunch of the small organisations network and noted the value of capacity-building support on statutory commissioning and working within supply chains.

4. Rehabilitative Community Offer

4.1. Anna Lacey framed the discussion around prevention, early intervention, diversion and devolution. She said the aim was to avoid people having to move further into the criminal justice system before receiving support and invited challenge on the role of central and local government.

4.2. Rebecca Fynn explained that people in contact with the criminal justice system often had multiple, interconnected needs and fragmented contact with services. The emerging approach sought a system that intervened early, locally and holistically, with a particular opportunity to support people assessed as lower risk although they might have only brief contact with probation.

4.3. Sarah Bridgland summarised evidence that intensive criminal justice interventions for people assessed as low risk could be ineffective or counterproductive. Support should therefore be proportionate, individualised and focused on strengthening protective factors without unnecessarily reinforcing criminal justice involvement.

4.4. Sarah described an exploratory HMPPS framework for understanding rehabilitation across individual, social and material domains. The model considered personal skills and capabilities, relationships and social networks, and practical access to housing, employment, benefits and other resources.

4.5. Rebecca said the offer could emphasise pro-social groups, mutual aid and access to mainstream services while retaining specialist, gender-responsive support where needed. She asked members for examples of effective practice and views on the role of central government in a more devolved system.

4.6. Vicky Baird said the voluntary sector already held relationships and expertise needed to connect people with community support. She called for a consistently available core offer to reduce postcode variation caused by local funding differences.

4.7. Vicki Markiewicz asked how the proposal would align with existing community services, diversion routes and treatment requirements. She stressed the need

for accurate assessment, clear referral pathways and coordination between providers to avoid duplication and confusion.

4.8. Summer suggested that commissioning arrangements should incentivise referrals and cooperation between providers addressing different needs.

4.9. Tammi Owen highlighted restorative and community-based approaches, including the contribution of people with lived experience. She said sustained investment was necessary because organisations essential to future delivery were disappearing from the landscape.

4.10. Rebecca Friel warned that criminal justice funding responsibilities should not simply be transferred to health, housing or generic community services. She called for joined-up commissioning and recognition of the specialist expertise required to support people with experience of the criminal justice system.

4.11. Aku Adjei asked that the model address racial equity, neurodiversity and mental health, including how risk classifications were made, whose outcomes were measured and whether support was culturally competent and accessible in different formats.

4.12. Ruth Legge stressed prevention of homelessness and tenancy loss, the housing implications of exclusion zones and electronic monitoring, and the difficulties created when people are held far from their home area. She also called for better information-sharing, digital inclusion and funding for move-on accommodation.

4.13. Paula Harriott called for equity-led and lived-experience organisations to be identified, funded and supported to participate meaningfully in commissioning. She also encouraged person-centred language that reduced stigma.

4.14. Christina Line said women's centres and whole-system approaches already provided evidence of early intervention and coordinated local support. She called for government backing to extend this work and highlighted the value of trauma-informed, needs-led practice.

4.15. Anna said locally led approaches presented a significant opportunity but must not remove access to specialist services. She invited further written reflections on benefits, risks and the appropriate balance between national leadership and local delivery.

4.16. Summer thanked attendees and confirmed that Clinks would continue the discussion with HMPPS. The next RR3 quarterly meeting was scheduled for 15 December 2026.