



We change lives

Nacro response to the Justice Committee inquiry into prison governance

About Nacro

We are a national social justice charity with more than 50 years' experience of changing lives, building stronger communities and reducing crime. We house, we educate, we support, we advise, and we speak out for and with disadvantaged young people and adults. We are passionate about changing lives. We never give up.

Nacro is a strategic partner to Sodexo in the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) programme, and we are a service delivery partner within the supply chain of four Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs): we are a delivery partner for Sodexo in BeNCH, Essex and South Yorkshire; and for Seetec in Kent. In addition, we support people who are supervised by CRCs or the National Probation Service (NPS) through other programmes in London, Durham Tees Valley, Northumbria, Staffordshire and West Midlands, and Cheshire and Greater Manchester. For instance, we run an enhanced through-the-gate service for people with mental health concerns leaving HMP Belmarsh, HMP Thameside and HMP Isis, funded by The Oxleas National Health Trust. Our response to this consultation is based on the experiences of our practitioners and staff.

Please contact Andrea Coady, Policy and Research Officer, for more information on our response: andrea.coady@nacro.org.uk

Our response

In responding to this consultation, we have confined our response to the final two questions, as these relate to the work that we deliver.

Question 2.d Is there effective collaboration between prison, probation and other community services and what are the challenges to improving this?

People leaving prison often have multiple and complex needs, and need access to high quality rehabilitative and resettlement services and need consistency of support. We know from our work at Nacro that having somewhere to live, financial support, a job or training, access to healthcare and family and support networks are all crucial to resettlement and reducing reoffending.

Through the Gate (TTG) services work with people in their transition from custody to community, to facilitate effective resettlement and divert them from reoffending. In order to meet the aims of TTG, services provided need to be flexible and sufficiently intensive to meet the diverse needs of a complex cohort.

HM Inspectorate of Probation noted in 2016¹ that TTG services were not providing enough assistance to people in prison to resolve debt, find accommodation, employment or education. The Inspectorate concluded that work at the low level of intensity that they found was unlikely to achieve the aims of resettlement and reducing reoffending. They were also concerned that the risks of harm to others was not recognised.

At Nacro, we know that where collaboration between prisons, probation and other community services is poor it has hampered the ability of CRCs and their delivery partners to successfully deliver TTG services.

Prison regime impacts on ability to deliver services

HMIP concluded² that the strategic vision for Transforming Rehabilitation did not include joined-up IT, or information sharing between community probation services, prisons and resettlement staff. TTG services are poorly integrated into mainstream prison systems and no clear guidance has been given on how greater integration should be achieved. The complexity and incompatibility of the IT systems used by staff in preparing prisoners for release are major obstacles to effective working. This can result in unnecessary duplication of effort, or vital information being missed.

It is not possible for CRCs to track the outcomes for all of the prisoners they have worked with, so it is hard for them to evaluate the impact of their work. Reoffending rates are a problematic measure, as they are not altogether within the CRC's control, success in individual cases is by no means guaranteed even when everything possible is done, and there is a significant time lag before 'success' can be measured. Quality outcomes which provide the structural elements of resettlement such as housing, access to health services and employment, require more complex performance measures to show distance travelled. Prisons and CRCs should track outcomes together.

It is important not to underestimate that for many, the path to a positive, crime free future is not linear and takes time. Measures should include steps and progress towards change and desistance which may include programme completion, reduction in severity of offending and making progress with personal issues such as drug and alcohol misuse. Providing the right funding structures and investment to support quality services will drive sustainable outcomes. Additionally, measurements based on volume and static outcomes means a lot of staff time in such services is spent on measuring these, detracting from time spent working with individuals. Performance measurements need to accurately evidence the quality of work undertaken without being overly onerous on the provider.

Basic custody screenings part 1 (BCST1), which are completed at the start of their sentence by HM Prison staff, draw only on what the prisoner self reports, often at a time when they are adjusting to entering custody.. Resettlement plans (basic custody screening tool part 2) are completed by CRC staff within 5 days of the screening with an aim to address individual resettlement needs which can include finance, benefit and debt and accommodation. However, .the time resettlement workers have been able to spend with individual prisoners or doing work on their behalf has been limited and at times the quality of information gathered through screening tools has hampered their ability. The introduction of enhanced resettlement outcomes this year has, so far in our experience, gone some way to improve this. We would recommend that these are continued and strengthened to ensure the highest level of resettlement services are provided and. measures based on service quality in addition to simply completing processes are embedded.

¹ <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/cji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/09/Through-the-Gate.pdf>

² Ibid

We would also recommend that a fundamental review of the BCSTs is undertaken so that it provides ongoing assessment of both the needs of the person in prison and any risk of harm they present to others.

Creating structures that reduce duplicate assessments so that the individual does not have to repeat information and circumstances to multiple agencies will help to aid engagement and make the true and meaningful purpose of supervision clearer.

We know from our work in resettlement that relationships between Offender Management Units (OMU) and resettlement teams can vary greatly. For example, we have heard that in some prisons it is difficult for resettlement workers to find the time to meet with the people they are working with, as attending education or employment is prioritised by the prison as it is 'purposeful activity' and is therefore subject to measurement. Resettlement work is not categorised as 'purposeful activity' and so there is risk that resettlement work does not happen where it would clash with education or employment. In addition, people in prison earn income from attending education or employment, and so may be reluctant to sacrifice this in order to attend to their resettlement needs. There are also often logistical issues with seeing people for their resettlement needs, both in relation to the movement of prisoners being limited due to staff shortages, and the lack of suitable, private space for discussions to be held.

Shared objectives and outcomes

It is important that closer working between CRCs, prison staff and others is promoted so that there is continuity of resettlement support and oversight throughout the sentence. Resettlement planning should begin at the point of reception into prison, and be part of integrated sentence planning through the whole term of imprisonment. It is Nacro's view that prisons, probation and community services should have shared objectives and outcome measurement for reducing reoffending and resettlement, as this would raise the priority given to achieving successful resettlement, with an emphasis throughout the custodial phase of punishment, and beyond. If prisons are more involved in (and held accountable for) the long term outcomes for people leaving custody, it would promote a more joined up approach across the relevant criminal justice agencies involved in the vital resettlement work.

All resettlement planning and activity needs to be fully integrated across prison and probation systems. We support the introduction of Key Workers within the new OMiC model, as we believe that this model has the potential to facilitate improved resettlement planning. Although the OMiC model is in its early stages of implementation, we have seen, in some areas, a positive impact on the resettlement outcomes for people coming out of prison. In providing prison staff with additional opportunities to engage and understand the needs of people in custody, it creates opportunities for staff to liaise with resettlement workers and support resettlement work. We have seen that a personalised approach has had a positive impact on the resettlement work being done prior to release.

It is also our experience that it can be difficult for resettlement workers to engage collaboratively with health care within prisons, and we would suggest that shared objectives and outcomes focused on the success of resettlement would assist this relationship. In addition there need to be clear information sharing agreements between prison healthcare and resettlement staff in order to best plan for release, taking into account health needs alongside resettlement needs.

Nacro has recently published briefings on two practical barriers to effective resettlement, namely:

- Ending Friday releases from prison
- Identification for prison leavers

From our experience of supporting people on release from prison, we know that being released on a Friday, or being released without ID can be significant barriers to people moving on with their lives. We believe that, if prisons had shared objectives for resettlement outcomes and so had a stake in the outcomes after release, a focus on these practical steps would be more easily facilitated, as it would be in the interests of all parties to find solutions to such practical barriers.

Intensive work

HMIP concluded³ that work at the low level of intensity that they found is unlikely to achieve the aim of resettlement and reduced reoffending. In the Greenwich project Nacro (in partnership with Centra) provides support with the transition from prison to the community for those men in the Greenwich prisons (Belmarsh, Isis and Thameside) who have significant mental health concerns during their transition from prison to the community. It has been commissioned as part of the prison healthcare service provided by Oxleas NHS Trust to provide an in custody and through the gate support to those prisoners who are most vulnerable to ensure that they have clearly defined release plans and there is an immediate link with community based support services when they leave custody. In providing this additional support and continued provision, through the gate, service users can be encouraged to increase engagement with community services, improve their health and wellbeing and desist from criminal activity.

Interim evaluation (not yet published) of the Greenwich project has shown very positive outcomes for those men referred for additional support. . Of the 41 people supported and whose support was⁴ completed in 2017/18 :

- 97.6% were supported to retain or gain secure accommodation
- 92.7% registered with a GP
- 24% registered with a dentist
- 100% were supported to engage with other services
- 90% were supported to receive ongoing intervention from substance misuse services (of those presenting with this need)
- 58.5% were supported to re-establish positive relationships
- There was a 75.6% reduction in recidivism (rate) and type of crime

We have therefore seen that intensive supervision can work very effectively providing more capacity to facilitate practical solutions to resettlement issues with a physical presence at appointments, and can be a bridge between the prison and community services. We therefore support the expansion of enhanced TTG services to all prisoners with resettlement needs, and specifically those with multiple and complex issues.

Even after a short time in custody, release to the community can be challenging and traumatic, particularly if employment, accommodation or relationships have been affected or lost as a

³ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/09/Through-the-Gate.pdf>

⁴ The total number of referrals was 49, but 8 refused to engage and so 41 people were released onto our caseload

consequence of incarceration. The use of Release on Temporary Licence could help to ease transitions into the community.

A cross-departmental approach

Nacro have consistently argued for a cross-departmental approach to resettlement – there are significant barriers in finding accommodation, accessing benefits and critical health services. Without this provision, work done by probation services is limited. Working with MHCLG, DWP and others to improve access to these should be a priority for MOJ. We welcome the introduction of the Reducing Reoffending Board, and this approach needs to be embedded not just at Ministerial level, but replicated at lower and local levels. Many of the most crucial barriers to resettlement, such as access to accommodation, need a robust response which most come from agencies beyond the criminal justice system. The Homelessness Reduction Act imposes a duty on prisons and probation to refer someone to the local housing authority, in order for them to provide support where that person is at risk of homelessness. We would urge the MOJ to work closely with MHCLG to review how this is working in practice.

Question 2.e To what extent are existing arrangements in place for the commissioning of services, such as health and education fit for purpose? Are there appropriate oversight arrangements in place for these services?

There are a number of models that could be considered to facilitate access to the wide range of services needed.. Central to any supply chain model should be ensuring access for all sizes of voluntary sector providers, such as making contracts an appropriate length to ensure business sustainability. A mechanism of ongoing review around the types of services needed and accessed is also essential. A model that did not create onerous or overly bureaucratic processes for providers could facilitate this.

The cross-departmental Reducing Reoffending Board was established to ensure relevant government departments take responsibility to support people to move forward with their lives, including effective resettlement. We believe the remit of this group should include review of commissioning across health and education and to make this as efficient and impactful as possible. We would argue that this should be replicated at local levels. Ongoing review of what is and is not working at a local level, including co-commissioning and regular needs assessments would ensure resettlement needs are met more efficiently and effectively through co design with service users and providers. Voluntary sector partners need to be central to these discussions.