The good prison – why voluntary sector coordination is key

Executive summary

Between September 2016 and October 2017 Clinks supported a voluntary sector member of staff in three prisons to implement a bespoke model of voluntary sector coordination reflective of the needs of each prison’s population.

The staff member acted as a single point of contact in each prison and undertook activities to:

- Map existing services to improve access to them and identify gaps in provision
- Ensure voluntary sector staff and volunteers understand the prison environment, population and regime adequately in order to deliver their services efficiently and safely
- Enhance knowledge of and access to voluntary sector support amongst people in prison
- Develop a strategic role for voluntary organisations working in prison.

The project led to a number of positive outcomes for prisons and the voluntary sector. It has shown that a small investment in joined-up partnership work within a prison can have a significant impact. Our evaluation found that well co-ordinated voluntary sector activity can deliver the following outcomes.

1. Create a more normalised, community-facing prison culture to support rehabilitation through:
   - Bringing outside organisations in
   - Involving people in prison in delivery
   - Breaking down stereotypes.

2. Ensure services are timely and appropriately sequenced, including improved through-the-gate provision through:
   - Improving access to rehabilitative services
   - Assisting joined-up working.

3. Provide evidence of need and what works, including:
   - Identifying duplication and gaps in provision
• Identifying and addressing the needs of people in prison with protected characteristics.

4. Contribute to a safer prison environment, including through:
• Improving information about and access to support and services
• Ensuring partners have good knowledge of safer custody processes and procedures.

Clinks is keen to see the voluntary sector coordination expanded to more prisons. With support from prison Governors, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), it has the potential to be transformative.

Individual prisons can implement the approach using our guide, The Rehabilitative Prison: good engagement with the voluntary sector.1 We have also developed a stepped approach to help prisons adopt and deliver the good practice from the pilot project and the guide, at levels of activity which fit with the prison’s capacity.

We make the following recommendations for prisons, HMPPS, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the voluntary sector:

Recommendations for prisons
Every prison in England and Wales would benefit from:

1. Having a single point of contact to coordinate voluntary sector engagement, preferably from the voluntary sector
2. Adopting the voluntary sector coordination model, either in full or by tailoring the examples of good practice to meet individual prison needs
3. Being open to the principles of partnership working, both internally and externally
4. Ensuring that opportunities for people in prison to engage in the coordination and promotion of the sector are proactively supported at a Governor and senior management team level
5. Utilising the resources (guides, directories, policy briefings and reports) produced by Clinks to support their engagement with the voluntary sector who can serve their prison location and population release areas.

Recommendations for Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service
HMPPS can best support prisons to better engage with the voluntary sector by:

1. Advising prisons to secure and support a named single point of contact to coordinate the voluntary sector, in partnership with senior prison staff. This would support prisons to meet Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons Expectation 80: ‘Prisoners’ needs are met by coordinated rehabilitation services.’

2. Making funding available to support the coordination of the voluntary sector in every prison.

3. Appointing a voluntary sector engagement ‘champion’ (with Clinks support) to promote the model at a strategic level, nationally and regionally. This would enable best practice to be shared at a strategic level and closely tied into regional leads on, for instance, security, safer custody, and resettlement and would support Deputy Directors of Custody in cluster areas.

4. Working with Clinks to support prisons to adopt a best practice approach to voluntary sector engagement.

Recommendations for Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons
HMIP can enhance the impact of Expectation 80 by:

1. Using the Clinks ‘The Rehabilitative Prison: Good engagement with the voluntary sector’ guide for benchmarking Expectation 80 to ensure that the support of the sector and the work of any prison-based coordinator is using best practice

2. Using Clinks expertise, to ensure that HMIP staff and Inspectors are trained in understanding who the voluntary sector is and how its work contributes to a safe and decent prison environment.

Recommendations for the voluntary sector
The voluntary sector can improve their experience of engagement with prisons, by:

1. Utilising the Clinks guide and this review, to encourage the full or partial take up of the model and engagement practices

2. Working closer with partner organisations to improve access to services

3. Improving their knowledge of the prison regime.

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**About this paper**

Between September 2016 and October 2017 Clinks supported voluntary sector coordinators to implement a bespoke model of voluntary sector coordination in three prisons. An external practice review of the project was undertaken and published in October 2017.

This paper distils the outcomes of the project and lessons from practice contained in that review and makes policy and practice recommendations for prisons, Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons and the voluntary sector working in prisons. It summarises learning from the project and outlines how it can be applied—and the outcomes achieved replicated—in order to deliver safer and more rehabilitative prisons.

**Overview - The voluntary sector coordination pilot project**

Clinks developed the voluntary sector coordination project in dialogue with prisons, the voluntary sector, Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and their subcontracted resettlement services. Discussions with these stakeholders emphasised the need for much better voluntary sector coordination in prisons to make sure people in prison have access to the services they need.  

The project ran between September 2016 and October 2017 in three prisons: HMP Dartmoor, HMP Exeter and HMP Guys Marsh. It funded a half time member of staff based in each prison and employed by a voluntary sector organisation, to support better coordination of the voluntary sector.

The staff member acted as a single point of contact in each prison and implemented a tailored model of coordination, reflective of the needs of the prison and its population. This coordination contributed to improved safety and more effective rehabilitation and resettlement services in the three prisons through:

- Better coordination of voluntary sector provision which included mapping services and joining them up as well identifying gaps in provision
- Ensuring voluntary sector staff and volunteers understood the prison environment, population and regime adequately in order to deliver their services

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3 The project built on Clinks’ previous work with the National Offender Management Service (now Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service) to develop Prison Service Order 4190 - Strategy for working with the voluntary and community sector which has been used in the past to recruit voluntary sector co-ordinators across England and Wales.

4 The costs associated with employing a half time staff member during the one year pilot phase were £20,000 with additional costs for the support provided by Clinks.
- Enhanced knowledge of and access to voluntary sector support amongst people in prison
- Development of the strategic role of the voluntary sector in the prison.

The success of the project meant that the coordinators’ posts were extended beyond the one year pilot period by six months in all three prisons. The funding for this was provided by the prisons. The Governors anticipated that the extension would generate further positive outcomes. At the time of publication opportunities were being explored for sustainability of the project moving into the next financial year. For instance in HMP Exeter, the coordinator worked with Clinks and NHS England to apply for funding to establish a social prescribing pilot in the prison.

**Project outcomes – supporting a safe and rehabilitative prison**

The project has shown that a small investment in joined-up partnership working within a prison can have a significant impact for people in prison, prison staff and voluntary sector organisations. Our evaluation found that well co-ordinated voluntary sector activity can:

- Create a more normalised community facing prison culture to support rehabilitation
- Ensure services are sequenced timely and appropriately, including improved through-the-gate provision
- Provide evidence of need and what works
- Contribute to a safer prison environment.

1. Creating a more normalised community facing prison culture to support rehabilitation

Prisons, by their very nature, are closed environments which can make it challenging to create an outward facing culture which is directed towards rehabilitation and eventual resettlement back into the community. The voluntary sector coordinators contributed to a more community facing culture in a number of ways, outlined below.

*Bringing outside organisations in*

The project has brought in new voluntary sector organisations to work in the prison environment and supported better partnership working between voluntary organisations, the prison, probation services and other criminal justice agencies.

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5 Social prescribing involves patients of health services being referred by clinicians to a link worker who works with them to identify and access non-medical activities that may improve their wellbeing.
By employing voluntary sector staff as coordinators the prison gets access to their knowledge of the local sector and how the sector works. The coordinators have access to local networks, including community safety partnerships and Police and Crime Commissioners as well as contacts beyond the criminal justice system with a number of providers, e.g. health, education, housing, family services and equalities groups. This means they can bring outside organisations in and explore new partnerships, bringing relevant organisations into direct contact with the most appropriate staff and departments in the prison.

The model can be adapted to the specific needs of different prisons across the estate. HMP Exeter is a category B local resettlement prison. The average stay is six weeks. Due to the high turnover of prisoners, rather than focusing on developing ‘inside’ provision there has been an emphasis on working with ‘outside’ organisations that can, for example, better support people in prison to maintain employment and housing on release. At HMP Guys Marsh a large number of people in prison are not from the local area, with many coming from across the South West. The voluntary sector coordinator was able to identify and work with organisations based in the local areas that people were returning to.

Involving prisoners

The people who have direct experience of the criminal justice system (CJS) are a vital source of intelligence about how to improve services. Involving these ‘experts by experience’ can improve the quality and impact of services and enable service users to make a positive contribution to the prison environment which can support their rehabilitation.

The project has provided opportunities for people in prison to use their skills, knowledge and commitment to take on responsibility to develop, promote and deliver aspects of the project. The coordinators have supported prisoner representation at voluntary sector forums which has influenced the approach taken by local organisations and prison staff. In doing so people in prison have made a positive contribution to daily prison life – allowing them to have more responsibilities and creating a more normal environment.

People in prison contributed to:

- Producing directories of services
- Delivering training for voluntary sector organisations about prison life
- Gathering feedback on services from other people in prison
- Organising voluntary sector events
- Identifying gaps in service provision through focus groups
- Writing prisoner induction information
- Improving the physical environment by transforming disused spaces into information rooms
- Making provider information accessible through newsletters and information boards.

An individual at HMP Guys Marsh identified the impact both personally and for other people in prison:

“This has really helped me, I have learned a lot from having this role and feel like I can make a difference. Being given the opportunity to do something positive and have responsibility is a really good thing, thank you so much for allowing me to be part of this. The directory will really help with inductions and in the reception, it will be good for all the men to have a copy rather than just in the wing offices.”

Breaking down stereotypes

Many voluntary sector staff and volunteers will have limited knowledge of what to expect prior to starting work in prisons. The staff/volunteer induction training and the prisoner engagement work in all prisons has helped to raise awareness amongst the voluntary sector of the make-up of the prison population (and prison staff), breaking down stereotypes/assumptions which should ultimately improve the delivery of services as well as perceptions of people in prison upon their release.

A prisoner on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) from HMP Dartmoor has contributed to the training for voluntary organisations’ staff and volunteers. He explained the benefits of his involvement:

“I was asked to give talks to the voluntary sector and I thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the training. I was particularly interested in hearing about how prison is perceived from those looking in from the outside. I feel I was able to allay any incorrect perceptions people had about prison and prisoners as well as share my story.”

2. Ensuring services are sequenced timely and appropriately, including through the gate provision

6 A short-term release from prison with the purpose of enabling the prisoner to maintain or rekindle family ties, find work in the community and generally reintegrate with society. Many sentence plans include an expectation for people in prison to work in voluntary sector/community enterprises.
The voluntary sector coordinators have shown that they can assist prisons in meeting the recently refreshed HM Inspectorate of Prisons Expectations which include a clear focus on the role of the voluntary sector in helping to ensure prisoners’ needs are met by a coordinated rehabilitation service.

The expectations provide examples of potential indicators which would evidence that the expectation is being met. The indicators for expectation 80 include:

- The identification of a local rehabilitation strategy
- Good co-operation between departments and organisations delivering rehabilitation
- Sound information sharing
- Centralised and up-to-date case records
- Good working knowledge and promotion of rehabilitative services amongst staff
- Relevant voluntary organisations are supported to work with people in prison
- A named manager responsible for coordinating the work of the voluntary sector.

*Improving access to rehabilitative services*

Coordinators have mapped existing services within each prison to create service directories which provide up-to-date and comprehensive details of services and providers, with contact details and referral procedures.

The directories are playing an important role in raising awareness of voluntary sector services for both staff and people in prison. The information is adapted so there is a version for staff with contact emails and telephone numbers, and a version for people in prison which contains non-confidential information which is distributed around the prison and on induction.

The development and promotion of the directories has been stakeholder-led with prisoner focus group feedback on content and style, and discussions with the prisons and the voluntary sector to ensure information was pitched at the right level depending on the audience. Electronic versions of the directories are now widely available across the prisons for both people in prison and for prison staff.

*Assisting joined-up working*
The coordinators provide a single point of contact for and about the voluntary sector for key stakeholders. By working across organisational silos they act as a vital bridge between departments for information exchange within the prison.

“The coordinator role has become an integral function of the prison and really is helping in coordinating services.” – South West Head of Reducing Re-offending, HMPPS

The project has improved cross-sector communication through regular e-bulletins for all staff working or volunteering in the prisons. This has raised awareness amongst prison staff of the project and voluntary sector services. Coordinators have reported that links with prison staff improved as the project progressed.

Employing a coordinator removes the responsibility for managing relationships with the voluntary sector from existing prison staff. This is invaluable at a time when resources are limited.

“Through being at the prison weekly and working with the men in communal areas (the Volunteer Centre Dorset volunteering project) and visiting the wings means that I am now a familiar face and people – residents and staff – recognise me and see me as a point of contact for the sector. With an increase in referrals and queries I am able to find the answers or solutions without it being an add-on to members of staff who already are often overwhelmed with tasks”. – Coordinator at HMP Guys Marsh

The coordinator model has also improved information sharing and communication of how voluntary sector services can be sequenced to fit together alongside CRC provision. As was stated in the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection report, An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Prisoners Serving 12 Months or More, some CRCS were finding it difficult to integrate their work within the prisons and to make links with organisations providing specialist support services. In contrast, the South West CRC’s resettlement delivery provider Catch 22 has been a valued partner in the project.

“I have found the project to be absolutely fantastic. Prior to this I felt that HMP Exeter often worked in silos, however since this project I feel that communication has improved significantly. Amanda has been a fantastic asset to the prison and has been so positive throughout. The setting up of the events has been great for my team, especially in terms of networking. I felt that the event that I presented at was also very useful, and I developed

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8 Volunteer Centre Dorset manage a volunteering project for people in prison at HMP Guys Marsh, encouraging and supporting them to give their time and skills through volunteering whilst in custody.

9 Criminal Justice Joint inspection. (2017). An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Prisoners Serving 12 Months or More. Online: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjj/inspections/throughthegate2/ (last accessed 01/02/18)
some great links from that event, including Julian House, Learn Direct, and other organisations. I believe that a prison like HMP Exeter is in need of this kind of service. Because of the constant churn and ‘busyness’ sometimes it’s hard to find time to network with organisations, however this has allowed us to do so.” – Cluster Manager, Catch 22

3. Providing evidence of need and what works

Identifying duplication and gaps in provision to assist commissioning

Through forums and networks the coordinators provided opportunities for the voluntary sector and the prisons to communicate and collaborate on service planning and delivery. This assisted with avoiding duplication, identified gaps in provision and assisted in the commissioning of services tailored to the prison population. Through this it has enhanced opportunities for the prisons to work more effectively and strategically with the sector.

“The network is essential to prevent the overlapping of provision and the delivery of activities by the many voluntary organisations working in the prison in collaboration with the staff. We need to know how to cooperate together for the most effective use of our time and resources.” - Volunteer, Friends of Guys Marsh

People in prison also contributed to the discussions, highlighting what would work for them in improving their knowledge of and access to support services through focus groups and through prisoner representatives attending the voluntary sector forums and networks.

At HMP Dartmoor, using the seven resettlement pathways10 (for male offenders) to frame the discussion, the coordinator encouraged feedback on which existing services were most valued and could be built upon and what additional services and interventions were required.

“The project has assisted in finding what works for our prisoner population based on their particular needs. Gaps in provision have been raised and are actively addressed through the establishment of Induction and step-up plans, also through our reducing re-offending meetings.” - Governor of HMP Dartmoor

Voluntary organisations were able to highlight funding and service delivery opportunities to the prisons and contribute to the processes being developed by the coordinators. Once gaps in services were identified the coordinators, as single points of contact, were able to bring

10 Accommodation; Education, training and employment; Health care; Drugs and alcohol; Finance, benefit and debt; Children and families; Attitudes, thinking and behaviour.
new ideas for projects to the senior leadership teams within the prisons and, resources allowing, match need with providers.

For example, feedback at HMP Exeter resulted in Inspiration in Custody\(^\text{11}\) working with Job Centre Plus to deliver CV workshops. They are now linked with the Head of Reducing Reoffending to address employment retention as part of the second night induction system— an issue identified as a key gap for people in prison.

**Identifying and addressing the needs of people in prison with protected characteristics**

As part of identifying gaps in services the coordinators also identified needs and gaps in provision for people in prison with protected characteristics or belonging to equalities groups and explored ways to meet these. Examples include:

- **Older people in prison**
  Through one of the forums at HMP Dartmoor, the coordinator was able to link St Luke’s and Story Book Dads to discuss developing an approach so that older people in prison can provide stories on a CD for their family members.

- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in prison**
  The coordinator at HMP Guys Marsh scoped projects and helplines that could be linked to support and resources. A freephone number to a support organisation was included in the directory. They are also arranging LGBT training for staff.

- **Foreign nationals**
  Following the HM Inspectorate of Prison’s inspection report on HMP Guys Marsh, published in April 2017\(^\text{12}\), the prison accepted a recommendation that learning and skills provision for non-English speakers needed to be developed. Subsequently the coordinator created an opportunity for a volunteer from the Dorset Volunteer Centre to link up with Weston College (the prison’s contracted education provider), so that the language needs of those on the foreign nationals’ wings could be better met.

- **People with learning disabilities**
  The justice inspectorates have found that “little thought was given to the need to adapt regimes to meet the needs of people in prison with learning disabilities who

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\(^{11}\) See [http://www.dcbc.co.uk](http://www.dcbc.co.uk)

may find understanding and following prison routines very difficult.” 13 Coordinators have produced clearer accessible information at prisoner induction using fewer words and more symbols, a guide to prison life in graphic novel format and icon-based resources.

4. Contributing to a safer prison environment

Improving information about and access to support and services

The project has resulted in increased awareness for those entering custody of the prison system and available support. One prisoner told the coordinator at HMP Guys Marsh that it was “so helpful to see the directory” at induction.

At HMP Exeter the directory is now included in all ACCTs documents14, to enable staff immediate access to information on support services that may be able to contribute to care plans.

Ensuring partners have good knowledge of safer custody processes and procedures

The project has established formalised induction processes and regular training for voluntary sector staff and volunteers in all three prisons, which is another requirement of the HMIP expectations. This has enhanced the voluntary sector’s understanding of the prison environment and systems, and improved knowledge and skills in relation to safer custody, and prison life.

“The coordinator has worked alongside our Safer Custody team to ensure voluntary sector staff have had training and support on the ACCT process, violence reduction processes and how to raise concerns about prisoners with the prison. Health and safety, safe systems of work, security and Prison Life training have also been offered in support of overall safety of the establishment.” – Governor at HMP Dartmoor

At HMP Dartmoor the project encouraged the introduction of a standalone computer in the Prison Officer Association Learning Centre outside the main prison, so that voluntary sector personnel without access to the prison computer systems can still access information about policies, for example the health and safety policy. There is also now a folder of information

13 The ACCT document (ACCT v.5) is a series of forms opened in response to concern that an individual in prison is at risk of self-harm or suicide. Any person can open the document to suspected risk (by completing the Concern and Keep Safe Form within the ACCT folder), but once opened there are clear procedures that must be followed.
in the secure staff entrance area, which alerts staff to the individuals who have an open Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) plan and any people in prison who may pose a risk.

**Voluntary sector coordination in your prison – how to get started**

As highlighted in this paper and more extensively in the project’s practice review, the model of coordination works. It responds to some of the key challenges currently facing the prison estate and can be adapted to meet the needs of different individual prisons and the populations they hold. It has demonstrated the benefits of partnership approaches to meeting the needs of both prisons and people in prison, the added value of better engagement with the voluntary sector and a number of opportunities to jointly provide a rehabilitative environment.

Clinks is keen to continue to support this model in individual prisons and with commitment from prison governors, the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS we believe it has the potential to be transformative.

**We recommend that every prison in England and Wales would benefit from:**

1. Having a single point of contact to coordinate voluntary sector engagement, preferably from the voluntary sector
2. Adopting the voluntary sector coordination model, either in full or by tailoring the examples of good practice to meet individual prison needs
3. Being open to the principles of partnership working, both internally and externally
4. Ensuring that opportunities for people in prison to engage in the coordination and promotion of the voluntary sector are proactively supported at a Governor and senior management team level
5. Utilising the resources (guides, directories, policy briefings and reports) produced by Clinks to support their engagement with the voluntary sector who can serve their prison location and population release areas.

To support prisons to practically implement the approach, our guide *The Rehabilitative Prison: good engagement with the voluntary sector* provides further information. We have also developed a stepped approach to help prisons adopt and deliver the good practice from the pilot project and the guide, at levels of activity which can fit with each prison’s capacity.

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Gold: Prison commits to adopting the good practice from the Clinks Good engagement with the voluntary sector guide and the Clinks voluntary sector coordinator pilot project, and works with a funded voluntary sector coordinator to develop strategic and practical engagement with the local voluntary sector through a clear action plan developed from the Good engagement guide. Clinks can provide advice and guidance to the voluntary sector coordinator.\textsuperscript{16}

Silver: Prison commits to adopting the good practice from the Clinks Good engagement with the voluntary sector guide and Clinks voluntary sector coordinator pilot project, using its own staff to develop some of the processes and activities from the guide. Clinks can provide advice and guidance and networking with existing voluntary sector coordinators in other prisons.

Bronze: Clinks provides support to prisons who have expressed an interest in adopting the good practice from the Clinks Good engagement with the voluntary sector guide and Clinks voluntary sector coordinator pilot project, to conduct a small amount of activities/events to develop some initial engagement with the voluntary sector, e.g. partnership event, mapping of services, directory development.

The costs associated with implementing the model at each of these levels depends on a number of factors; for instance whether, if in adopting the Gold model, a coordinator is split between two prisons in a geographical cluster. Clinks is able to provide further details of the potential costs associated with the model on request.

In addition to the recommendations above for prisons we also outline below recommendations to HMPPS, HMIP and the voluntary sector to further support prisons to adopt a model of voluntary sector coordination.

\textit{Recommendations for Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service}

HMPPS can best support prisons to better engage with the voluntary sector by:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Advising prisons to secure and support a named single point of contact to coordinate the voluntary sector, in partnership with senior prison staff. This
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\textsuperscript{16} The role of voluntary sector coordinator could either be part-time, or full-time and split between two prisons in a cluster if geographically possible. As in the project model, voluntary sector coordinators will be supported to work with their local voluntary sector to meet the prison’s rehabilitation aims, providing practical and strategic engagement and liaison with other prison stakeholders, including external statutory partners.
would support prisons to meet Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons Expectation 80: Prisoners’ needs are met by coordinated rehabilitation services.

2. Making funding available to support the coordination of the voluntary sector in every prison.

3. Appointing a voluntary sector engagement ‘champion’ (with Clinks support) to promote the model at a strategic level, nationally and regionally. This would enable best practice to be shared at a strategic level and closely tied into regional leads on, for instance, security, safer custody, and resettlement and would support Deputy Directors of Custody in cluster areas.

4. Working with Clinks to support prisons to adopt a best practice approach to voluntary sector engagement.

**Recommendations for Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons**

HMIP can enhance the impact of Expectation 80 by:

1. Using the Clinks *The Rehabilitative Prison: Good engagement with the voluntary sector* guide\(^ {17} \) for benchmarking Expectation 80 to ensure that the support of the sector and the work of any prison-based coordinator is using best practice.

2. Using Clinks expertise, to ensure that HMIP staff and Inspectors are trained in understanding who the voluntary sector is and how its work contributes to a safe and decent prison environment.

**Recommendations for the voluntary sector**

The voluntary sector can improve their experience of engagement with prisons, by:

1. Utilising the Clinks guide and this review, to encourage the full or partial take up of the model and engagement practices.

2. Working closer with partner organisations to improve access to services.

3. Improving their knowledge of the prison regime.

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