

Adfam Submission: Transforming Rehabilitation

About Adfam

Adfam is the national umbrella organisation working to improve the quality of life for families affected by drug and alcohol use. Adfam works with a network of organisations, practitioners and individuals who come into contact with the families, friends and carers affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use and works extensively with professionals and Government to improve and expand the support available to families.

Adfam also provides direct support in a number of prisons, working with offenders and their families to build and rebuild positive relationships and prepare for release.

Overall points

Family relationships are the bedrock of the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, so families – parents, partners, children, siblings and other relatives – should be at the heart of any measures to transform rehabilitation.

The Minister's foreword brings this into sharp focus: 'I want offenders to have a mentor in place, to be met at the prison gate, to have a place to live sorted out, to have a package of support set up, be it training or drug treatment or an employability course'. It is very difficult to imagine any of this happening without the involvement and support of families.

Family members are the ones most likely to meet offenders at the prison gate, and 86% of adult male prisoners who have accommodation arranged on release go to live with their families¹. Drug treatment is more likely to be effective if families and carers are involved², and families also help to secure employment outcomes: 'little provision for employment had been organised for young [offenders] on release, and in the main any employment that had been arranged had been done so by the family rather than the appropriate services'³. If the needs and resources of families are ignored then efforts for positive reintegration will surely be undermined.

In the context of short-term sentences (said to be an average of 2.2 months in the consultation), there is clearly greater scope for reform outside prison than inside it – so the family's role can be even more crucial.

¹ Home Office (2003) *Resettlement outcomes on release from prison in 2003*

² HM Government (2010) *Drug Strategy 2010: Reducing demand, restricting supply, building recovery*

³ HMIP (2011) *Thematic Report: Resettlement provision for children and young people: accommodation and education, training and employment*

Consultation responses

B2: How can we use the reform of offender services in the community to enhance the broader range of social justice outcomes for individuals?

Offending behaviour does not exist in a vacuum, and it is good to see this recognised in the consultation. Support for offenders should be better integrated with services around a variety of other needs, including mental health, drug and alcohol dependency and housing problems – but again, all of these services will also be improved by working alongside offenders' families.

More than half of the 140,000 people entering custody each year are problematic drug users⁴. Given the prevalence of drug and alcohol problems amongst offenders, it is particularly important that criminal justice and substance use services become better integrated. This can be particularly true for offenders on short-term sentences, where a single service can have a limited window of time to support the offender. Of course, the one constant in these instances may be the support of family members, who should be at the heart of the 'through the gate' provision mentioned in the consultation, and who can help to coordinate services prior to, and after, release.

B3: Should any additional flexibility be built into the community sentencing framework to strengthen the rehabilitative impact of community orders, and the reintegration of offenders into society?

It is welcome to see some flexibility built into community sentencing, and again, the impact of these measures on the family should be a topic of focus. New providers should be able to work alongside the family to help discuss as a unit the possible challenges and opportunities that community sentencing can cause. Some measures, such as curfews, can have detrimental impacts on families⁵, which can harm the chances of long-term reintegration; they should have the opportunity to voice these kinds of concerns.

C7: What steps should we take to ensure that lead providers manage and maintain a truly diverse supply chain in a fair, sustainable and transparent manner?

As the consultation recognises, a 'diverse supply chain' is needed which can address the myriad issues involved in offending behaviour. Family support should constitute part of this supply chain, and be integrated fully into these new contracting arrangements. Rather than being an optional extra, family support should form a core element of commissioning for services to help reduce reoffending.

Fair - The consultation notes that 'the great majority of community sentences and rehabilitation work will be delivered by the private and voluntary sectors, who have particular expertise in this area'. However, it can be problematic to group together the 'private and voluntary sectors' as if they are one homogenous entity, simply because they share the characteristic of not being the public sector. They have different ways of working, different histories and different motivations, and

⁴ RAPt (2010) *RAPt position paper: The Rehabilitation Revolution*

⁵ Action for Prisoners' Families (2011) *Response to Breaking the Cycle Green Paper*

relationships between a large, private provider and a smaller subcontractor from the voluntary sector may not always be cordial or equitable⁶. Adfam therefore welcomes the provision of grant funding to develop a capacity-building action plan for the voluntary and community sector to support work under Payment by Results frameworks.

Sustainable – working practices, partnership arrangements and service providers will all undergo significant change under the new system, and there are inherent risks with such upheaval. Some of the ‘innovative’ programmes may not work as intended, and brand new providers in the criminal justice arena may not achieve what they want – or are contracted – to do. New approaches should be monitored in an ongoing way – not just at lengthy intervals – to track progress so that the system can adapt, practices can be amended and new organisations (including family support services) can be brought in as necessary.

Creating a diverse supply chain should indeed be a sustainable model, and not just a one-off. Small voluntary organisations (such as family support services) should not be locked out of involvement with the ‘rehabilitation revolution’ just because they are not able to secure an immediate role in the first round of contracts. For example, some may be unable to take on financial risk, they may find proposed subcontracting arrangements unsatisfactory, or they may simply not be invited to the table by a large lead provider keen to trim costs wherever possible. However, there should still be opportunities for them to take on a role in the future.

Transparent – Adfam welcomes the creation of the Justice Data Lab. It is crucial that organisations have full information on what is working (or not working), where and why, in order that practice can be amended, developed and learned from.

C9: How can we ensure that the voluntary and community sector is able to participate in the new system in a fair and meaningful way?

It is Adfam’s view that all contracts aimed at reducing reoffending should include a requirement to involve support for offenders’ families.

Voluntary and community sector organisations should have the opportunity to feed into commissioning processes in a meaningful way and explain their role and contribution on their own terms: they should not simply be named or listed on the bid documentation of large providers, or be used as ‘bid candy’ which advertises the involvement of the voluntary sector and then allows it to fall away when the contract is awarded⁷. Ongoing evaluation, checks and balances should include not just the outcomes that prime providers claim to be securing, but also the experiences of subcontracted organisations in the voluntary and community sector. In the interests of transparency and learning for the future, it would be beneficial to examine the mechanics of partnership work under these new arrangements so that strengths can be built upon and challenges identified.

⁶ ACEVO (2011) *Third Sector Work Programme Survey*

⁷ ACEVO (2011) *Third Sector Work Programme Survey*

C19: Do you have any further comments on our proposals for Transforming Rehabilitation in this document?

Recognise the needs of families, as well as their contribution: As this response has shown, recognising the positive influence families can have on rehabilitation is extremely important. However, this should not come at the expense of supporting families for their own needs connected to the imprisonment of a loved one and the detrimental impact this has on their own lives.

The punishment of offenders, whilst a necessary part of any justice system, can also mean the punishment of families and children. Families can be ‘victims of crime’ too, and should be entitled to support to deal with the issues this presents.

The burden on families: Families can be a key pillar of support for offenders, and they can help improve rehabilitation outcomes. But they cannot do this without support for their own needs too. Just as they should not be treated as a ‘free resource’ in improving the outcomes of drug or alcohol treatment, they should not be taken for granted in the ‘rehabilitation revolution’.

It is necessary to avoid a situation in which families are placed under undue pressure to support outcomes which a private company is then paid by the state for securing. For example, if ‘stable accommodation’ were an outcome in a payment by results contract for reducing reoffending, then with money on the line, providers could be tempted to secure this outcome through the easiest possible route: living with the family. This could be against their wishes, and the decision has to be made collaboratively. Families can be a fantastic resource in helping turn lives around, but they are not just there to be exploited, and benefit from their own support structures too.

It is important to note that offending behaviour can be the cause of dysfunctional family relationships, but it can also be a product of them, and this distinction is rarely a simple one. Whilst many families can and want to play a supportive role in rehabilitation and recovery, this will not be appropriate for all families and there may be surrounding issues like domestic violence and family breakdown.

Adfam’s work: Adfam runs support services in the visitors’ centres of several prisons. This work focuses on rebuilding family relationships and preparing for release, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss further the nature and impact of this work.

Contact

Adfam would welcome the opportunity to discuss this response further. Please contact Joss Smith, Director of Policy and Regional Development.

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