**Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Reference Group**

**Thursday 23rd March 2017**

**Event Summary**

The West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner’s (PCC) Reducing Reoffending Strategy Board is a newly established partnership forum bringing together those who are involved with the criminal justice system to further develop an integrated reducing reoffending strategy. It is exploring how we can continue to develop services across agencies including, how we can actively involve offenders and ex-offenders to inform these services.

In 2014, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) identified that the proportion of offenders in West Yorkshire who reoffend is 26.5%, which is 1% above the average in England. Reoffending rates for those serving sentences less than 12 months is higher (65%), than for those who have served over 12 months (41%).

This event, which was facilitated by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), aimed to identify with third sector partners what the key priorities are to reduce reoffending, how to increase voluntary, community sector and service user engagement and what the PCC can do to support this.

The event was attended by over 50 delegates, including partners working across a variety of the reducing reoffending pathways; housing, substance misuse, domestic violence, education and others.

The event involved keynote speaker Angela Lucas, from CLINKS; a national infrastructure organisation which supports voluntary organisations working with people who are involved in the criminal justice system and their families. She highlighted the Reducing Reoffending Pathways; accommodation, children & families, debt & finance, among others and also provided advice on what service user involvement should aim to be in order for it to be effective.

Ruth Kettle, from Community Links, was the second keynote speaker and discussed her role as a Third Sector Advocate on the PCC’s Partnership Executive Group (PEG). She highlighted findings from The Bradley Report, which found that 26% of detainees reported to have mental health needs and that 5% of detainees had been arrested four times or more.

**Please see link to The Bradley Report:**

[**http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/Mentalhealth/TroubledInside/BradleyReport**](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/Mentalhealth/TroubledInside/BradleyReport)

**Please see the link to the event presentation slides:**

**Working Together**

The delegates were asked to discuss in groups a series of questions. This feedback will be integral to the Strategic Board and will be presented by the Third Sector representative. The following are the key outcomes to take forward from the discussion groups.

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| **Key Discussion Points** |
| **Key Priorities**   * Providing suitable housing and having placements organised before offenders leave prison * Taking a strategic approach to securing paid employment opportunities for offenders * Tackling substance misuse and addictions to drugs and alcohol * Providing more frequent access to mental health services in prison * Extending relationships with healthcare services to explore opportunities for early interventions * Being aware that we need to use ‘different tools for different communities’, including providing interpreters and encouraging English lessons whilst continuing to promote a positive action recruitment drive |
| **Opportunities for Support**   * Coordinating an E-Newsletter focusing on working with offenders in West Yorkshire * Providing networking opportunities such as breakfast meetings to allow partners to make ‘business connections’ * Researching community resolution opportunities to reduce short sentences which are deemed to be ineffective for providing rehabilitation whilst in custody * Mapping the services which currently exist within West Yorkshire to encourage partnership working * Encourage sustainable paid employment opportunities for ex-offenders as well as volunteering opportunities |
| **Proposals for Ongoing Third Sector Engagement**   * Funding streams which encourage collaboration not competition * Increase service user involvement, consulting with service users and their families to improve services * Tackle preconceived ‘labels’ limiting ex-offenders and inhibiting them from gaining employment (and other opportunities) because of the restrictions which currently stand |

From these valuable discussions, some points which will help to direct the strategy including exploring the following:

**Next Steps:**

* Encourage organisations to register with Bluelight for OPCC funding opportunities
* Explore free networking opportunities on social media platforms (LinkedIn Groups etc.)
* Identify dates for future meetings on a quarterly basis
* Appointment of a third sector representative to sit on the Strategy Board

**To Find Out More**

Please contact David Smith, the Third Sector Advisor at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner:

Call 01924 294000 and leave a message, or call him direct on 07595 006087.

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*Delegates were asked permission at the event to have email addresses circulated.*