Third Sector Research Centre

Working Paper 61

Offender engagement with third sector organisations: a national prison-based survey

Dr Dina Gojkovic, Dr Rosie Meek and Dr Alice Mills

July 2011

Abstract

This paper is the second in a series that investigates the involvement of the third sector in the resettlement of prisoners. Working paper 57 found that nearly 20,000 third sector organisations reported engagement in work with offenders through seven resettlement pathways. The current paper scopes prisoners' experiences of these organisations by presenting key findings of an all-prisoner short survey distributed in eight prisons nationally. The findings indicate that prisons engage with an average of 20 organisations, but respondents are aware of an average of only four organisations and report engaging with no more than one. There is an apparent mismatch between the stated involvement of TSO in work with offenders in prisons and prisoners' awareness and use of their services. The main policy and practice implications of these findings are discussed, including one proposed solution to introduce more systematically third sector co-ordinators in prisons, who could improve marketing as well as access to these services.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

Contents

Introduction

This paper is the second in a series that aims to scope the involvement of third sector organisations (TSOs) in resettlement provision for prisoners. The first working paper (Gojkovic et al., 2011) presented a secondary analysis of information on some 167,000 charities and 47,000 TSOs to investigate whether and how they work with offenders to meet their resettlement needs and prepare them for the transition from custody to the community. The present paper builds upon and extends this investigation by exploring prisoners' experiences of TSOs involved in resettlement work.

The role of the third sector in the resettlement of offenders has become a prominent one (Ministry of Justice (MoJ), 2010a), offering services such as employment, housing, and drug and alcohol treatment (MoJ, 2008, MoJ/NOMS, 2008). In 2002, the landmark report, Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002) concluded that prisons were failing to turn offenders away from crime, with 58% being reconvicted within two years, costing the state at least £11 billion per annum (for recorded crime). Following on from the conclusions of the report, the Ministry of Justice and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) published the Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan, which stipulated that services be provided to offenders through seven reducing re-offending pathways and co-ordinated by offender managers (Home Office, 2004). The seven resettlement pathways are:

1. Accommodation
2. Education, employment and training
3. Health
4. Drugs and alcohol
5. Finance, debt and benefit
6. Children and families
7. Attitudes, thinking and behaviour

This paper presents the key findings of an all-prisoner short survey distributed in eight prisons nationally, as part of a wider research project which aims to investigate the role and involvement of TSOs in work with offenders. The brief survey was administered prison-wide in order to obtain data on the extent and nature of inmates' involvement with, and awareness of, TSOs in each of the resettlement pathways in each prison. The next section will describe the prison estate and population in England and Wales, before the survey methodology and the basic demographic characteristics of the survey sample are discussed. This is then followed by an analysis of the survey findings in relation to prisoner awareness of and engagement with TSOs, including an examination of the difference between TSOs in different resettlement pathways and between different groups of service users.

Types of prisons

There are currently approximately 85,000 prisoners serving a sentence or on remand in one of the 137 prisons in England and Wales, 11 of which are privately run. The different types of prisons are represented in Table 1, although it is important to note that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to categorise prisons easily, due to many of them performing several functions at different levels of security.

Table 1: Types of prisons*

Type of prisons	Description
Closed prisons	Have a secure perimeter to stop prisoners from escaping. Prisoners' movements are controlled by prison staff.
Open prisons	Do not have a secure perimeter and give prisoners more freedom to move around. Some prisoners may be able to leave prison for a certain amount of time during the day, for instance to participate in work experience. This can be part of their 'resettlement plan'.
Training prisons	Can be either closed or open. They offer courses and training to help prisoners not to re-offend. Training can consist of learning new skills; education courses; offending behaviour programmes.
Local prisons	Prison where a person is detained before a trial or directly after conviction.
High security prisons	These are for prisoners who have been given a category A or B security classification.

*(Source: Directgov, 2011)

Table 2 illustrates the security classification of prisoners and the type of prisons they are held in.

Table 2: Security classification*

Type of prisoner and age	Type of prison	Security category
Adult male prisoners whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public, police or the security of the state.	Closed - high security	Category A
Adult male prisoners (over 21) who are a risk to the public but do not need the highest level of security and the aim is to make escape very difficult.	Closed	Category B
Male prisoners aged between 15 and 21 and female prisoners who are a serious risk to the public.	Closed	Restricted status
Adult male prisoners who cannot be trusted in an open prison but are unlikely to try to escape.	Closed	Category C
Young prisoners aged between 18 and 21 and adult female prisoners who cannot be trusted in an open prison.	Closed	Closed conditions
Adult male prisoners who are a low risk and are unlikely to escape.	Open	Category D
Juvenile prisoners aged between 15 and 17 and 17 year old females who have been given a custodial sentence .	Juvenile	N/A
Young male prisoners aged between 18 and 21 and adult female prisoners who are low risk and are unlikely to escape.	Open	Open conditions

*Reprinted with permission under Crown copyright from Directgov, 2011. Information on juvenile prisoners added by authors.

Nearly 95% of prisoners are men (MoJ, 2010a), and 27% are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, (MoJ, 2010b), compared to 12% of the general population (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Approximately 13% of the prison population are foreign nationals (MoJ, 2009), 12% of people in custody are young people aged between 18 and 21, and 2% are juvenile offenders (aged between 15 and 17) (MoJ, 2010a). The latest estimates indicate that 50% of offenders released from custody re-offend within a year. This figure is even higher for young offenders, where the one year re-offending rate stands at 75% (MoJ, 2010c), indicating a marked need to address the issue of re-offending among those released from prison custody.

Method

The prison case studies

The survey was distributed in eight prisons across England, as a supplement to qualitative semi-structured interviews with prison staff, third sector representatives and offenders, which formed the bulk of the wider study. The eight prisons were chosen to represent the diversity of the prison estate, in terms of the population held, the function of the prison, geographical location and the prison providers. It is not possible to name the prisons for confidentiality reasons, but Table 3 gives details of their function and the category of prisoners they hold, along with the survey response rates for each establishment:

Table 3: Description of case study sites and survey response rates

Prison	Description of prison*		Survey response rate
ID	Population	Type of prison	n (% of prisoners in establishment)
1	Female	Closed	85 (18)
2	Male	Open, training	50 (10)
3	Male	Closed, local	90 (9)
4	Male	Juvenile	19 (4)
5	Female	Open, training	16 (11)
6	Male	Closed	66 (12)
7	Male young adults	Closed	46 (10)
8	Male	Closed, local	308 (25)

* Two of these prisons were privately run

The survey was distributed to prisoners through the Resettlement, Offender Management or Education offices. Copies were distributed by placing them under the cell doors or including them with weekly menus for prisoners. Prisoners were given seven days to complete the surveys which were then collated either by staff or by dedicated prisoner representatives.

Response rates

Approximately 12% of the questionnaires were returned to us completed (680 in total). Compared to customary return rates for self-completed prisoner surveys (Fazel and Danesh, 2002), we consider this response rate to be typical. As shown in Table 3, the response rate ranged from 4% to 25% of the total prisoner population in each prison.

Reasons for low response rates for self-completed prisoner surveys include low literacy levels in prisons [50% of prisoners have reading skills, and 80% have writing skills, at or below the level expected of an 11-year-old (SEU, 2002)], a degree of apprehension among the prisoners about persons who request information from them, and a lack of motivation to complete surveys if there is no perceived immediate benefit to the prisoners. Furthermore, some prisoners may feel that surveys are intrusive and others may be too busy to complete them due to their daily schedules.

In terms of the implications of the potential non-response bias, it is possible that those who did not answer the survey may have acute needs which prevented them from completing it, for instance in literacy, and it may be that these people are particularly targeted by TSOs. Thus, there may be a non-response bias towards underestimating the extent of awareness/engagement with TSOs. Alternatively, non-response bias may be overestimated if those who did respond to the survey are generally more 'engaging' than other prisoners and are therefore more likely to engage with or be aware of TSOs. It is worth noting that these two implications lead in different directions but a 12% response rate itself means that only a small minority of prisoners' contact with TSOs was reflected in this survey.

Despite these limitations, it was recognised that the survey was a valuable tool in gaining a wider picture of the involvement of TSOs with offenders and in supplementing the qualitative interviews. The survey was designed in such a way so as to include predominantly multiple choice questions where the chosen response was ticked or where a number was entered, thus reducing the need and time for writing to a minimum.

All participants were informed that the completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and the questionnaire was anonymous.

Questionnaire content

The questionnaire (for a copy of the questionnaire, see Appendix 1) included some basic questions on demographic information, as well as details of the participant's stay in custody, including status (remand or sentenced), length of stay and their earliest release date. Prisoners were then provided with a list of organisations concerned with resettlement that operated in their prison. This list was obtained from the Offender Management Unit, Psychology team or from the Resettlement office, and ranged from 15 to 31 organisations across the different establishments. For each organisation listed, the respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had heard of or engaged with it. If they had heard of an organisation but not worked with it, they were offered a choice of six possible explanations for why this was so, as well as an additional 'other' choice where they were prompted to report their primary reason. Self-completion questionnaire did not enable the respondents to clarify what exactly the organisations were and what they do, as they would have been able to do in a face to face interview, but this method gave a clear indication to what extent the prisoners recognised the TSOs operating in their prisons. The respondents were also asked open-ended questions such as

whether there were any services which were not available in the prison but which would be helpful to them. The open prisons and the juvenile establishment, which were likely to have voluntary or work placements for inmates, were asked additional questions pertaining to those placements.

Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires was entered into SPSS 17.0 statistical package and double-checked for errors. Due to the data being considerably skewed, it was decided to use medians instead of means to describe some of it.

Results

The sample population

The median age of respondents was found to be 29 years (interquartile range[1]: 15) with a minimum age of 15 years and a maximum of 78 years. Eighty-five percent were male, 3% were juvenile offenders, and an additional 7% were young people aged 18-21. These figures are reasonably similar to the national figures presented on page five. In terms of the establishment type, 10% of respondents were held in open prisons and the rest were in closed institutions. Fifty-nine percent were repeat prisoners, 70% of whom had served a previous sentence in the prison where they were surveyed. A statistically significant difference was found between gender, type of prisoner (first-time or repeat) and type of prison, whereby repeat prisoners were more likely to be men and to be serving in a prison of a higher category of security (χ^2= 17.2, p<.01), (χ^2 = 95, p<.01).

In terms of ethnicity, Figure 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents were White British or Irish. The figures for BAME community (40%) are higher than the national figures (27%).
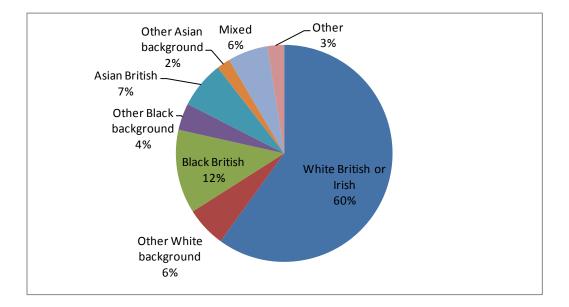
<u>Figure 1: Ethnicity</u>

---

[1] Interquartile range or middle fifty, is a measure of statistical dispersion, being equal to the difference between the third and first quartiles.

At the time of participating in the research, most respondents had been in their respective prisons for an average of three months (interquartile range: 6.5), which suggests that they were likely to have a fairly good grasp of the opportunities and services offered in that particular establishment.

As Figure 2 illustrates, the majority of respondents were sentenced (73%) with a considerable portion of prisoners on remand (19%). These figures are fairly similar to the national prison population figures, whereby 15% of prisoners are on remand and 83% are sentenced (MoJ, 2010a).
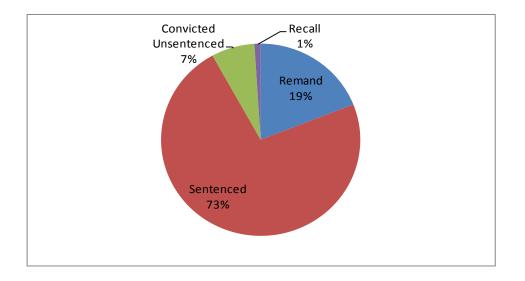
Figure 2: Type of stay in prison

Sentenced prisoners were serving an average sentence of 14 months (interquartile range: 21). Female prisoners were found to have sentences that were, on average almost twice as long (Median=25 months, interquartile range: 26) as male prisoners' sentences (Median=13 months, interquartile range: 23). This is likely to be a result of including only two women's prisons in the sample (compared to six men's) one of which was an open prison and the other a closed establishment with a high-security unit. Women in this establishment were likely to have longer sentences, thereby raising the average figure considerably. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference between sentence length and ethnicity, with people of mixed and Black ethnicity (but not Asian) serving sentences that were on average 25% longer than people who declared themselves as white (t = 8.9, p<.01).
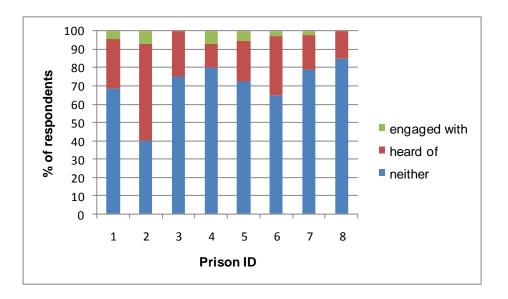
Engagement with TSOs

The number of TSOs that each prison claimed were active in their establishment at the time of data collection ranged from 15 to 31. However, the respondents reported having heard of, on average, just four organisations, and had engaged with an average of one. The results for each establishment are presented in Table 4 and Figure 3. They indicate low self-reported overall engagement levels with TSOs, with minor variations between prisons. One potential area of future study could be to compare these figures to the actual prisons'/TSO's records of the level of engagement.
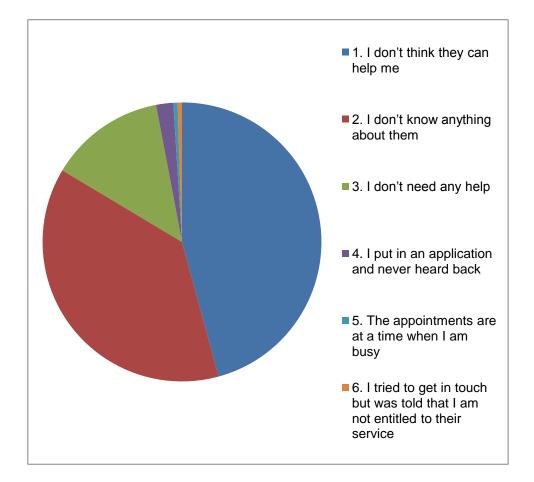
Table 4: Prisoner self-reported awareness of and engagement with TSOs

Prison ID	No. of TSOs per prison	Median no. and range of TSOs that respondents had engaged with		Median no. and range of TSOs that respondents know of	
		No.	Range	No.	Range
1	22	1	0-21	6	0-22
2	15	1	0-6	8	4-15
3	24	0	0-16	6	0-24
4	15	1	0-4	2	0-9
5	18	1	0-4	4	0-17
6	31	1	0-17	10	0-28
7	31	0.5	0-6	6	0-13
8	20	0	0-13	3	0-18

Figure 3: Percent of respondents in each prison that heard of/engaged with TSOs

If the respondents had heard of an organisation but not worked with it, we asked them why this was so. They were offered a choice of six answers and were asked to select the most appropriate one for each organisation. Figure 4 summarises these results.

Figure 4: Reasons for not engaging with TSOs

Pie chart legend:
- 1. I don't think they can help me
- 2. I don't know anything about them
- 3. I don't need any help
- 4. I put in an application and never heard back
- 5. The appointments are at a time when I am busy
- 6. I tried to get in touch but was told that I am not entitled to their service

As shown in Figure 4, the most common reasons stated were that they did not know anything about the service or felt that the service could not help them. There were no significant variations in answers between the seven resettlement pathways.
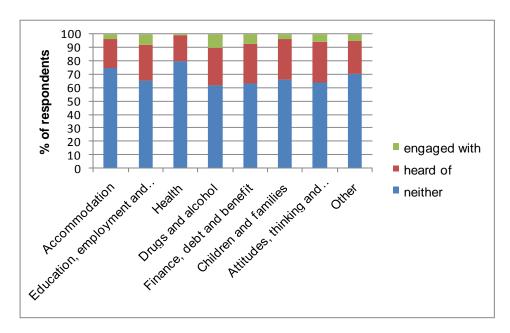
Engagement with TSOs according to pathway

From the information generated from each prison, it was found that a total of 116 TSOs were operating across the eight prison research sites at the time of data collection, with many working in more than one establishment. The TSOs were classified by the authors according to their remits into seven resettlement pathways. Pathway 8 was added for organisations which did not fit any of the pathways and for organisations which were classified according to their main activity, but which provided additional services which could not be classified (e.g. Samaritans, Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern). A number of the organisations included in the study have wide remits which enable them to provide services in more than one of the resettlement pathways. These were counted for each pathway to which they were classified (i.e. more than once). Table 5 presents the number of organisations in each pathway and the proportion of respondents who were aware of their existence. The results are illustrated in Figure 5.

Table 5: Number of TSOs operating in the eight prison research sites, by resettlement pathway

Pathway	No. of TSOs	% of prisoners who have heard of at least one organisation in this pathway	% of prisoners who engage with at least one organisation in this pathway
1. Accommodation	37	21	4
2. Education, employment and training	28	27	8
3. Health	7	19	1
4. Drugs and alcohol	18	28	10
5. Finance, debt and benefit	8	30	7
6. Children and families	17	30	4
7. Attitudes, thinking and behaviour	21	30	6
8. Other	27	25	5

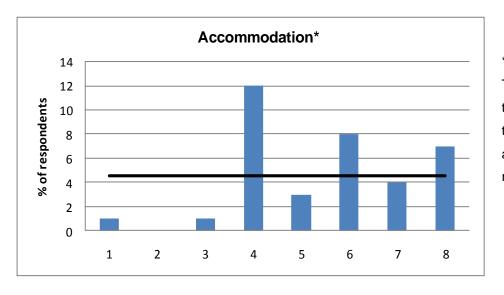**Figure 5. Awareness of and engagement with at least one TSO by pathway**

As shown in Table 5 and Figure 5, levels of awareness of resettlement-focused TSOs in prisons were low, with only approximately a quarter of prisoners on average self-reporting to have heard of the organisations operating in their establishment.

We also investigated the proportion of respondents who claimed to have engaged with organisations across the resettlement pathways, and the extent to which these figures varied between prisons and between pathways (Table 6 and Figure 6). The black line in Figure 6 represents the median percentage per pathway.
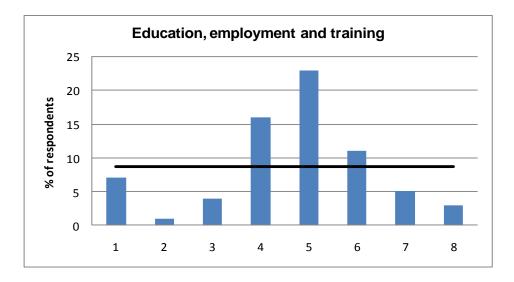
Table 6: Percentage of respondents who report engaging with TSOs in each pathway by prison

Pathway	Prison ID								Median %
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	% of prisoners								*Median %*
1 Accommodation	1	0	1	12	3	8	4	7	*4*
2 Education, employment and training	7	1	4	16	23	11	5	3	*8*
3 Health	5	*	*	*	0	*	0	1	*1*
4 Drugs and alcohol	13	9	13	*	13	12	1	10	*10*
5 Finance, debt and benefit	*	15	6	0	3	15	10	2	*7*
6 Children and families	8	4	8	0	4	2	1	4	*4*
7 Attitudes, thinking and behaviour	6	4	6	5	10	6	3	*	*6*
8 Other	9	*	4	5	6	8	3	3	*5*

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who report engaging with TSOs in each pathway by prison (ID from 1 to 8)

Accommodation*

*Prison 2 has TSOs working in this pathway but they have no users among our respondents.
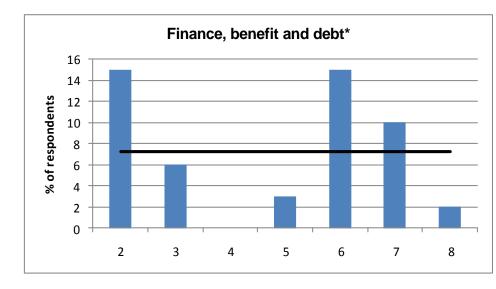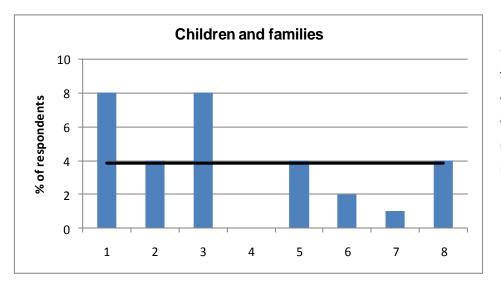
Education, employment and training

Health*

*Prisons 2, 3, 4, and 6 have no TSOs in this pathway. Prisons 5 and 7 have TSOs working in this pathway but they have no users among our respondents.

Drugs and alcohol*

*Prison 4 has no TSOs in this pathway.

Finance, benefit and debt*

*Prison 1 has no TSOs in this pathway. Prison 4 has TSOs working in this pathway but they have no users among our respondents.

Children and families
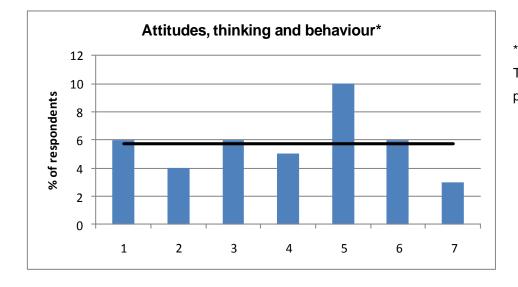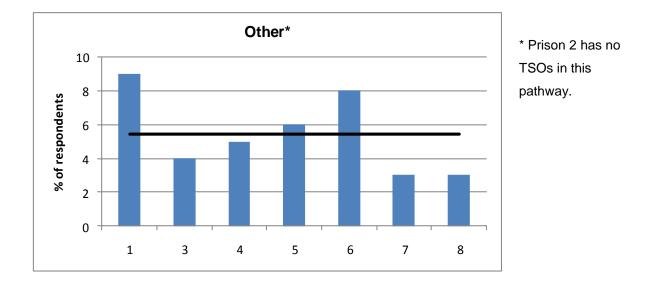

* Prison 4 has TSOs working in this pathway but they have no users among our respondents.

Attitudes, thinking and behaviour*

* Prison 8 has no TSOs in this pathway.

Other*

% of respondents

* Prison 2 has no TSOs in this pathway.

Some pathways such as Health appear to have virtually no TSOs represented in prisons whereas the Drugs and Alcohol pathway has the most consistent representation across the prisons and use by prisoners. This is likely to be due to the involvement of a high number of TSOs in providing CARATs (Counseling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare) services. It was also discovered that five of the prisons had two or more TSOs that none of the respondents reported having worked with or had heard of. These TSOs were most likely to be operating within the Accommodation pathway. Thus, despite the high number of TSOs who claim to work with offenders (Gojkovic, et al., 2011) a large proportion of the surveyed prisoners had not heard of - or engaged with – the majority of the TSOs that each prison claimed to be operating in their establishment. A similar problem was noted in relation to Pathway 2, Education, employment and training and Pathway 5, Finance, Benefit and Debt. In order to explore this discrepancy, these pathways will be examined in detail with reference to data from the open questions included on the prisoner questionnaire. The differences in engagement with TSOs between prisons will be explored in a subsequent paper.

Accommodation

Quantitative analysis of open-ended questions revealed that a lack of TSOs specialising in accommodation was identified by nearly 10% of our respondents as a key area for improvement. It was found that each prison already had a number of organisations which provided advice and assistance with housing such as housing providers and housing advice agencies; yet awareness of accommodation-related organisations among our respondents was low. As shown in Table 2, an average of 20%- 25% of our respondents claimed to have heard of accommodation organisations operating in the prison they were held in.

Out of respondents who identified accommodation as one of the key areas for improvement, nearly 50% emphasised the need for better links with housing organisations, especially those which cover areas outside large cities. The data also suggested that respondents from closed establishments were more likely to work with accommodation TSOs (X^2= 34, p<.01) than respondents from open establishments. It was noted that housing organisations often had very strict eligibility criteria which could hinder access to the services by certain groups of offenders, such as people on short sentences, women offenders with children, people with substance misuse issues and young people.

Women respondents ($\chi^2=$ 33, p<.01) and those from non-British Black, Asian and mixed ethnic backgrounds ($\chi^2=$ 41, p<.01) reported significantly less engagement with accommodation TSOs, despite being equally aware of these TSOs as the rest of prisoners. In addition, young and juvenile respondents reported less awareness of and less involvement with accommodation TSOs than adult respondents ($\chi^2=$45, p<.01). This is in line with the conclusions from our previous research (Gojkovic et al., 2011) which noted the under-representation of housing organisations offering housing to some of the most vulnerable sub-populations of prisoners, such as female offenders, young people and offenders from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, compared to the community figures. Indeed it was estimated that figures for these vulnerable groups of offenders were two to three times lower than figures for all TSOs (Gojkovic, et al., 2011). This may go some way to explaining the lack of engagement with accommodation TSOs amongst these groups, although more research is required to further unpack these findings.

Education, employment and training

Analysis of open-ended questions revealed that 25% of the survey respondents believed that more organisations and services are needed that specialise in providing employment, training and voluntary and paid work placements for prisoners in the community, as these were deemed an important step towards resettlement into the community. This was chiefly the case in the juvenile and young offender establishments. The importance of these placements was also emphasised in open prisons where the number of TSOs which provide services in this pathway was found to be very low, as shown in Figure 6.

It was found that sentenced prisoners and prisoners on recall were statistically more likely to be aware of TSOs operating in this pathway than prisoners on remand (χ^2=26, p<.01). Similarly, respondents from open prisons, more particularly the female prison, were more likely to engage with these TSOs (χ^2=53.6, p<.01) as were respondents on longer sentences (over 12 months), (χ^2=7, p<.05) and women respondents (χ^2=53.6, p<.05).

Many of the prisons in this study operate in partnership with a number of outside organisations to offer employment and training. This is in line with the conclusions of our previous Working Paper (57), but the offenders' engagement and awareness of these organisations remain low. As shown in Table 2, only 27% of respondents on average report having ever heard of the employment and training TSOs operating in their establishment.

Finance, benefit and debt

Further analysis of open-ended questions identified that 8% of our respondents, particularly those in closed establishments, emphasised the need for more organisations that specialise in debt and benefits advice, as they are considerably less likely to engage with these organisations than respondents from open establishments (χ^2=9.3, p<.01). This issue had been dealt with in some prisons by employing a dedicated Finance and Benefits Manager/Officer to fill this gap and others contracting the services of co-operative banks, credit unions and/or financial groups to meet the needs of prisoners. Since financial matters are often linked to housing, it was not uncommon to have the same representative for both finances and housing, regardless of whether they were a member of prison staff, or an employee of a private or third sector organisation. It was found however that the financial concerns of short-sentence prisoners (χ^2=7.3, p<.05) and non-sentenced prisoners (χ^2=26.9, p<.01) were often unmet compared to other groups of prisoners, according to our respondents.

Drugs and alcohol

In terms of Drugs and Alcohol, non-sentenced respondents had greater awareness of and contact with TSOs operating in this pathway than sentenced prisoners (χ^2=23.4, p<.05). Furthermore, respondents from closed prisons (χ^2=24, p<.01), and male prisoners (χ^2=6.8, p<.05) were more likely to be users of these organisations than other respondents. It was additionally found that British respondents, regardless of the race, were more likely to be aware of and in contact with TSOs operating in this pathway than non-British respondents (χ^2=6.3, p<.05).

Children and families

With regards to the Children and Families Pathway, it was found that sentenced prisoners (χ^2=22.5, p<.01) and those serving sentences in closed establishments (χ^2=13, p<.01) were more likely to work with TSOs in this pathway. Additionally, we found that women were more likely to engage with these organisations (χ^2=9, p<.01), as were non-British citizens, regardless of race (χ^2=47, p<.01).

Health

There were no statistically significant differences in access to these services. This is likely to be due to a very low number of health-related TSOs operating in these eight prisons and low levels of engagement generally.

Attitudes, thinking and behaviour

It was found that women had more awareness of and engagement with TSOs operating in this pathway (χ^2=6.9, p<.05).

Conclusions

The findings presented in this paper indicate that the levels of awareness of resettlement-focused TSOs in prisons remain low. The average number of TSOs per prison was approximately 20, yet our findings showed that on average, respondents were aware of only four TSOs operating in their prison and engaged with no more than one, although it should be noted that the survey sample is non-representative and it is possible that the group of non-respondents contained a higher proportion of service users than the survey sample. When juxtaposed against the findings from Gojkovic, et al. (2011) which reported that nearly 20,000 TSOs claim to work with offenders, these findings provide a clearer picture of the actual levels of involvement of TSOs in work with offenders during their time in custody. A number of TSOs had no or very few users among our respondents, despite the prisons reporting a working relationship with them, though this may be due to their narrow focus on particular groups of prisoners or services. For instance, some organisations only take on prisoners who come from a particular London borough. Others offer services only to young people between ages 16 and 25 who come from a particular town or region. This emphasis on formal and informal partnership between the two sectors (MoJ, 2008, MoJ/NOMS, 2008; MoJ, 2010a), can perhaps be explained by the perceived benefits that it brings to both parties. Association with the Prison Service is arguably beneficial for the TSOs, as working with offenders may increase their chance of securing increasingly competitive funding (Mills, et al., 2011; Gojkovic, et al., 2011). It may be equally important for the prisons, who can report their commitment to offender resettlement and engagement with local communities.

The survey findings indicated that there is an established need for access to services provided within the seven resettlement pathways, but that they are often under-publicised. On average, no more than 25% of the prisoners surveyed reported awareness of at least one TSO per resettlement pathway. The reasons for this are currently unclear and are worthy of further study. For example, prison staff may not be aware of TSOs and their services and thus may be unable to refer prisoners to them, or TSOs may be over-reliant on written material to publicise their services in a population which has low levels of literacy. It appears that it might be useful to promote these services more widely in the prison and to improve communication between offenders, staff and TSOs. This should fall within the remit of a third sector co-ordinator's duties (or 'VCS co-ordinator', as they are referred to in policy), as stipulated by Prison Service Order 4190 (HM Prison Service, 2002). Yet this Order has not been implemented in a standardised manner across the prison estate. Many prisons still lack a third sector co-ordinator (Clinks, 2010) and others have co-ordinators who also fulfil other duties in prison, which may lead to role conflict, ambiguity in the extent of their authority and unclear links with senior staff and managers. It would be helpful for the implementation and operation of this role to be reviewed on a national level, especially in terms of its potentially valuable strategic position in building cross-sector alliances. This could be an important stepping stone in ensuring greater awareness of and access to TSOs for prisoners.

The findings identified significant differences in access to organisations, with particular groups being less likely to access certain pathways than others, particularly BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) and foreign nationals, short-sentenced prisoners, non-sentenced prisoners and women and young people. Contracting housing organisations which have complementary remits (that is, cover access to housing across the areas that prisoners are likely to return to upon release), or which house specialist populations might help to cover some of the current gaps in provision. Prisons could also dedicate more resources to the promotion of education, training and employment opportunities within their prisons.

The survey also indicated low levels of engagement with services provided by TSOs, with on average only 5% of prisoners engaging with at least one TSO. This may be explained by the lack of awareness of third sector services highlighted in this paper, but also by the high levels of need within the prison population and the consequent high demand for some services, particularly in the fields of accommodation; education, employment and training; and finance, debt and benefit (see SEU, 2002). TSOs are likely to have only limited resources to meet such demand, and thus the proportion of prisoners that they are able to help will remain low; a situation which is likely to be exacerbated by expected budget cuts (Clinks, 2011). Reasons for non-use of third sector services will be further examined within the analysis of qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews which have been conducted as part of the wider study and which aim to complement the survey data presented here.

It also needs to be recognised when interpreting the results that there are differences in how TSOs approach engagement with prisoners. Some TSOs will only offer services to those who fit their selection criteria, for example if they reside in a particular area. These criteria are often stipulated as conditions of the grant/contract funding. For these TSOs, lack of awareness among general prisoner population may be less of an issue than for organisations which aim to provide services to a broader offender population.

References

Clinks (2010) Clinks' response to the Government's proposals for a 'Rehabilitation Revolution'. London: Clinks.

Clinks (2011) Changing times – challenging times. London: Clinks.

Directgov (2011) Types of prison and security categories. Retrieved from http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CrimeJusticeAndTheLaw/Sentencingprisonandprobation/Goingtoprison/DG_196234

Gojkovic, D., Mills, A, and Meek, R. (2011) Scoping involvement of third organisations in the seven resettlement pathways for offenders. WP57, TSRC.

Fazel, S., and Danesh, J. (2002) Serious mental disorder in 23000 prisoners: a systematic review of 62 surveys. The Lancet, 359, 545-550.

Home Office (2004) Reducing Re-Offending: National Action Plan. London: Home Office.

HM Prison Service (2002) Strategy for Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector. Prison Service Order nr 4190.

Mills, A., Meek, R. and Gojkovic, D. (2011 forthcoming) Exploring the relationship between the voluntary sector and the state in criminal justice. Voluntary Sector Review, vol. 2.

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (2008) Third sector strategy: improving policies and securing better public services through effective partnerships 2008-2011. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (MoJ)/NOMS (2008) Working with the third sector to reduce re-offending: securing effective partnerships 2008-2011. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (2009) Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2009, Statistics bulletin. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (2010a) Breaking the cycle: effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders. London: Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (2010b) Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2008/09. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (2010c) Population in custody: monthly tables August 2010 England and Wales, Statistics bulletin. London: Ministry of Justice.

Office for National Statistics (2011) Population estimates by ethnic group 2002-2009. London: ONS.

Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (2002) Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners. London: HMG Cabinet Office.

NB: Questions 12 and 13 were only asked in open and juvenile establishments. The list of TSOs in question 9 changed for each prison.

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Research ID number (internal use only):

Hello,

We are researchers from the University of Southampton interested in your opinions of the work of voluntary and community organisations in prisons.

We would like to ask you about your experiences of receiving services from these organisations and working with volunteers. This questionnaire is anonymous, which means that we will not ask your name at any point.

Instructions: Where more than one possible answer is given, please circle the one that applies to you. Where lines are drawn under the question, please write your answer, giving us as much detail as you can.

Thanks again for agreeing to complete this short questionnaire.

1. Are you:

   a) *Remand*
   b) *Sentenced*
   c) *Convicted unsentenced?*

2. Length of stay in prison so far _____

3. Length of stay in THIS prison so far _____

4. Earliest release date _____

5. Have you been in prison before?

   YES   NO

6. If yes, have you been in THIS prison before?

   YES   NO

7. Age (in years) _____

8. Ethnicity:

   a) *White British or Irish*
   b) *Other White background*
   c) *Black British*
   d) *Other Black background*

e) Asian British
f) Other Asian background
g) Mixed
h) Other (please specify) _____

9. We would like you to tell us about your knowledge of and contacts with community and voluntary organisations IN THIS PRISON. Please fill in the table on the next page:

Name of organisation	Please tick (✓): **'Heard of'** if you have only heard of them or **'Worked with'** if you have worked with them		If you've heard of an organisation but don't use it, can you tell us why? Please put the letter with the most suitable answer into the table. a) I don't know anything about them b) I don't think they can help me c) I tried to get in touch but was told that I'm not entitled to their service d) The appointments are at a time when I'm busy e) I put in an application and never heard back f) I don't need any help g) Other (please specify below)
	Heard of	**Worked with**	
EXAMPLE: **CARATS**	✓		d
Others (please write below)			

10. Are there any services which don't exist in the prison at the moment but which would be helpful to you?
YES   NO

11. If yes, which ones? (Write on the line)

_____

14. Any further comments?

_____

Thank you for your time!

About the Centre

The third sector provides support and services to millions of people. Whether providing front-line services, making policy or campaigning for change, good quality research is vital for organisations to achieve the best possible impact. The Third Sector Research Centre exists to develop the evidence base on, for and with the third sector in the UK. Working closely with practitioners, policy-makers and other academics, TSRC is undertaking and reviewing research, and making this research widely available. The Centre works in collaboration with the third sector, ensuring its research reflects the realities of those working within it, and helping to build the sector's capacity to use and conduct research.

Third Sector Research Centre, Park House, 40 Edgbaston Park Road,
University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2RT

Tel: 0121 414 3086
Email: info@tsrc.ac.uk
www.tsrc.ac.uk

Service Delivery

From housing, to health, social care or criminal justice, third sector organisations provide an increasing number of public services. Working with policy makers and practitioners to identify key priorities, this work will cut across a number of research streams and cover a series of key issues.

Critical understanding service delivery by the third sector is important to policy making as the third sector now provides a major - and very different - option for public services, which may be more responsive to the needs of citizens and service users. At the same time, there are dangers inherent in the third sector becoming over-dependent on funding from service contracts – particularly in terms of a potential loss of its independence. The centre's research will help to inform the debate on the way in which service delivery is developing, the potential role of the third sector in commissioning as well as contracting, and the implications of different approaches to service delivery on the overall impact of the third sector.

Contact the authors

Dina Gjokovic   **Rosie Meek**   **Alice Mills**

d.gojkovic@tsrc.ac.uk   **r.meek@tsrc.ac.uk**   **a.mills@tsrc.ac.uk**

02380 592482   **02380 597451**

Hosted by:
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM   UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

Funded by:
Cabinet Office Office for Civil Society   BARROW CADBURY   E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL