



THE NEW FUTURES NETWORK

AUGUST 2017

About this report

The RSA (the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) believes that everyone should have the freedom and power to turn their ideas into reality. Through our ideas, research and 28,000 strong Fellowship, we seek to realise a society where creative power is distributed, where concentrations of power are confronted, and where creative values are nurtured.

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The RSA's [Future Prison Project](#) outlined the potential for wholesale prison reform, addressing some of the wider failures of the justice system. It recommended increasing governor autonomy and local commissioning, supported by a leaner, clearer, central accountability framework and a new duty to reduce risk through rehabilitation.¹ Our proposals informed what was the emerging government's prison safety and reform agenda, and the November 2016 White Paper. As part of our engagement with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and prison service, we recommended the creation of a new body to support prison leaders to respond to reform, with an emphasis on education and employment, and on local leadership. Ministers asked for the design of such a body to be independent of Whitehall, to encourage broad and deep engagement, genuine innovation, and positive challenge to the status quo. This paper outlines this work and its conclusions.

The [New Futures Network \(NFN\)](#) team comprised Rachel O'Brien, who leads the RSA's prisons work², Pamela Dow, former MoJ Director of Strategy, and RSA researcher Jack Robson. Between January and May 2017, we worked with over 100 people working within prisons and probation and beyond, from the private, public and charity sector. This helped to identify the structural and cultural barriers to improvement, and in particular, the demand and supply side opportunities for supporting more prisoners into a decent job. We would like to thank all those involved, in particular: the reform prison directors and their leadership teams; the staff, prisoners and partners at HMP Wandsworth, HMP Coldingley, HMP Durham and HMP Norwich; Anthony Green and his colleagues at the MoJ; and Anne Fox and Louise Clark at Clinks. Finally, we are grateful to the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Tudor Trust, and the RSA for funding this work.

¹ *A Matter Of Conviction: A Blueprint For Community-Based Prisons* (RSA 2016).

² *The Learning Prison* (RSA 2009), *Transitions* (RSA 2011), *Building on a Rehabilitation Culture* (RSA 2014) and *A Matter of Conviction* (RSA 2016).

The need

MoJ figures released in July 2017 show that 225kg of drugs and 13,000 mobile phones were recovered across the prison estate in England and Wales in 2016.³ Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons latest annual report concluded that prison reform would not succeed unless the violence and prevalence of drugs in jail are addressed and prisoners are unlocked for more of the working day.⁴ This added to mounting evidence of the decline in safety in recent years, including the rise in the number of assaults, suicides and incidents of self-harm.⁵

David Lidington, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice – the third incumbent since the RSA began its Future Prison Project in early 2016 – has acknowledged that there are deep, long-term challenges that successive governments have failed to tackle. He stressed the government's commitment to reform, which includes:

- A central emphasis on rehabilitation and safety;
- The recruitment of additional frontline staff announced at the end of last year;
- The creation of 'reform' prisons, to test greater governor freedoms in relation to recruitment and the commissioning of education, employment and health, with the aim of rolling this out to the broader estate; and
- The creation of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) with a clearer demarcation between operational and policy roles between this and the MoJ.

- 75,000 prisoners are released each year, 75% to unemployment.
- 47% have no qualifications.
- 16% have an education or training place on release.
- 46% of adults are reconvicted within one year of release; for those serving sentences of less than 12 months this increases to 60%.
- Reoffending costs between £9.5bn and £13bn.
- 97% of prisoners want to stop offending. Asked what would be important in stopping them, 68% said a job, 60% said a place to live and 40% said support from their family.

Prison Reform Trust (2016) Bromley Briefings.
[www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/
Publications/Factfile](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Publications/Factfile).

³ "Crackdown on drugs, drones and mobile phones in prisons". Press Release, MoJ 9 July 2017.

www.gov.uk/government/news/crackdown-on-drugs-drones-and-mobile-phones-in-prisons

⁴ *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons' Annual Report 2016-17* (HMIP July 2017).

⁵ Safety in custody: quarterly update to December 2016, MoJ 27 April 2017.

Changing culture

The [RSA has long argued](#) that putting a commitment to rehabilitation at the core of our prison system is the best way to tackle risk, reduce reoffending and protect communities. This is why we welcomed the 2016 Prisons and Courts Bill as potentially an historical shift in thinking about the purpose of prisons and how they are run. In the absence of legislation (the Bill fell prior to the general election and was scrapped after) and the continued struggle to recruit and retain frontline staff, the need to address capacity and culture challenges and work effectively with partners and communities is more pressing.

Ultimately, rehabilitation is not a process; it is something that emerges through providing people with the right environments, opportunities and support in custody and in the community. Achieving this will require greater stability in prisons and consistency in political leadership and will take time. The speed of travel and the depth of progress will depend on the extent to which prison leaders, staff, prisoners and the partners they work with are enabled to understand the potential of reform and empowered to practically respond. In developing the New Futures Network (NFN) we have sought to:

- Assess what type of organisation would be most likely to increase prisons' capacity and willingness to respond to reform.
- Focus on practical support that would help prison leaders test their freedoms, drive innovation and create strategic partnerships that support rehabilitation.
- Recognise that progress is dependent on collaboration with a range of players at the local, regional and national level; and
- Develop a realistic and sustainable model, understanding the importance of momentum, good governance and early priorities in any 'start up' phase.

“As well as depriving people of liberty, our prisons must also be places of reform and rehabilitation.”

David Lidington, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, July 2017

The process

Jan - Feb 2017.
Testing
assumptions and
initial consultation

Key system influencers, providers and potential partners

Online survey and case studies

Design day with reform governors and senior teams

Building community
around idea using
on and offline,
brokering,
championing and
sharing ideas across
stakeholder groups.

Mar – May.
Road testing draft
work strands and
governance models

Design day with mixed group of stakeholders

Pre-apprenticeship and employment discussions

Clinks' membership regional events

Case study visits to HMP Durham and HMP Norwich

Face to face
meetings with key
players including
private sector
prisons, HMPPS,
MOJ etc.

The feedback

Conditions of success

Ensure good governance and impact. MoJ sponsored with enough independence to challenge and innovate. Credible leadership and to ensure traction and legitimacy.

Add value. Distinct in purpose and approach from infrastructure organisations, think tanks and campaigners.

Be pragmatic and challenging. Practical focus with 'feedback loop' to policymakers to ensure frontline experience shapes decision-making.

Get out of London. Covering but not based in London and able to strengthen local, regional and national partnerships.

Be networked. Sustaining momentum by uniting a wide range of people and resources, while creating mechanisms for these to work operationally.

Be clear, consistent and flexible. Clear work strands but with flexible menu of options. Financial and operational stability from inception.

Barriers to reform

The Leadership gap. New freedom and accountability measures require governors to be more involved in commissioning of education, employment and health and to change how they lead staff and work with prisoners, justice partners, employers and communities. Some governors are already doing some of this. Others do not yet have the capabilities.

The Communications gap between the ambitions of reform and the communication of this. Parts of the centre have not changed their approach and some governors feel that reform is something that happens 'to' them rather than being the drivers of change.

The Workforce gap. The need to link reform to the competencies needed amongst staff and their purpose. The challenge is to provide clarity around what they should no longer be doing, and to provide the permission, development and opportunities to demonstrate what reform means for them and how they benefit.

The Stability gap. Both within prisons and policy/political stability so people can be confident that direction of reform and ongoing support are here to stay.

The Integration gap. The emphasis on rehabilitation and preparation for release provides a clear steer that, as one governor put it, "some of the things we *like* to do become things we *must* do". Success depends on integrated working with partners in the community, in particular community rehabilitation companies, the national probation service, cross sector providers of through the gate services, and employers.

The Learning gap. In addition to 'vertical' communications challenges between the centre and frontline, there is a 'horizontal' challenge of translating 'what works' evidence into practical work on the ground and many prisons struggle to share innovation, effective outcomes and to learn from experience across the estate and beyond

The vision

Drive partnerships and innovation to boost people's chances of leaving crime behind.

Broker sustainable, strategic, effective cross-sector relationships to support rehabilitation and employment.

Champion good practice that supports rehabilitation through informing, engaging and persuading.

Provide a channel of communication between frontline services and central government.

Greater integration between justice sector and cross-sector employers, driving up the number employing people from prison, more of whom secure sustainable, meaningful work.

Broader and deeper community understanding and engagement in reform, including increased secondments and employment.

Empowered governors, staff and prisoners able to create their own sustainable innovations and, through 'learning by doing', drive culture change.

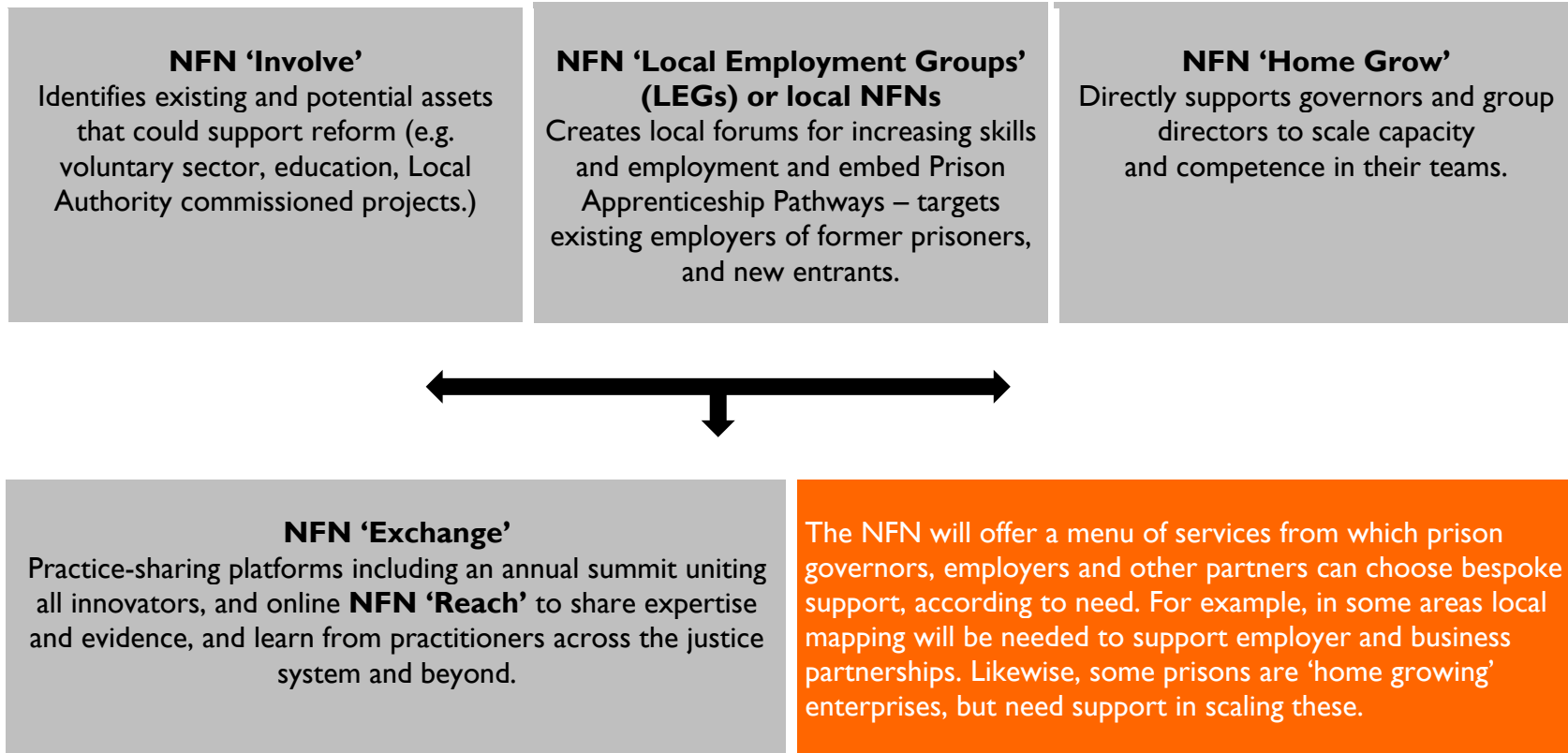
Employers bound together with reformers from prison service, education and business, establishing a shared milestone and resource for rehabilitation and system improvement.



Increase prisons' capacity to respond to reform.

Create self-improving prisons within a self-improving justice system.

The work strands



Local employment groups (LEGs)/NFLs

The Gap

- There are not enough effective partnerships between employers, prisons, probation and trainers; prisons can put a lot of time into partnerships that fail or underperform.
- One3One Solutions, the part of HMPPS responsible for growing work in prisons, is poorly understood and perceived by many as rigid and disconnected to local need.
- Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are embracing their ‘and Crime’ remit, working with criminal justice boards (CJBs) to bring together prisons, police, community rehabilitation companies (CRCs), the National Probation Service (NPS), the Crown Prosecution Service, courts, health, housing and the third sector to develop a single vision, data sharing and integrated priorities. Employment is a shared priority amongst these stakeholders who; want effective ways to help people to secure jobs; can champion the role of employers in reducing crime and promote the contribution prisoners can make to the economy. They lack the levers or capacity to create employment networks or drive practice delivery.

NFN Response

- The RSA believes that the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) would support PCCs funding local posts to provide a bridge between the CJBs and NFN work on practice development and employment. Alternatively, HMPPS could allocate resource as part of its Group Director structure. A combination of both, including piloting shared funding should be considered.
- The NFN will work to enhance LEGs or, where absent, create local NFNs. Shaped locally, these will have a shared overall purpose and include: employers; Chambers of Commerce; Institute of Directors local members; Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs); social enterprises and employment-related NGOs, local authority employment and enterprise leads; further education, higher education, prison learning providers, the National Careers Service and local DWP.

In practice

Identify roll out areas starting with discussion in Durham, Cleveland, Humber, Wrexham and Norfolk (with London model developed with MOPAC) focused on:

- Understanding the commercial needs of employers by building on local employment and skills strategies linked to commissioning.
- Developing, delivering and scaling the Prison Apprenticeship Pathway, and ensure prison Centres of Excellence are sustainable and impactful.
- Develop local strategic partnerships and social enterprises that increase the number of employers involved in training and employment inside prisons and committed to opening up jobs to those leaving custody and on licence.
- Co-design ‘triage’ mechanisms that develop criteria and a filtering process to speed up delivery of effective employment partnerships.

NFN Involve

The Gap

Prisons need to strengthen strategic relationships that:

- Support rehabilitative cultures.
- Drive reform beyond CJS.
- Increase capacity.
- Forge sustainable partnerships.

This includes individuals and organisations who do/can play a role in supporting prisons in achieving outcomes, whether NGOs or volunteers.

NFN Response

- Develop a replicable mapping process that identifies effective alternative delivery partners, allies and reform champions beyond the ‘usual suspects’. This includes wider local authority functions (for example vulnerable families, sustainability and enterprise leads); community (families and service user groups); local further and higher education and the third sector.
- Prototyping the mapping tool with HMPs.
- Increase secondments and internships, providing SMT training and capacity to work strategically with the third sector, volunteers and ‘in-kind’ support.

In practice

- Develop SMT programme, possibly delivered by Clinks, on working with the third sector and identifying potential secondment and volunteer needs within prisons and external partners willing to participate.
- Work with the Centre for Entrepreneurs and the Exceptionals mentoring programme, matching entrepreneurs and self-employed business people with prisoners near end of sentence.
- Work with the Prisoners’ Education Trust on mutually beneficial academic and research partnerships.

NFN Home Grow

The Gap

- Prison innovation and projects need to be less dependent on short-term funding, weak impact measures and governor moves. This results in stop/start episodic change, poor evaluation, lack of scale and frustrations for prisoners, staff and partners.
- Currently much of the work clearly defined as ‘rehabilitative’ is undertaken by external providers, cutting staff off from valuable opportunities to learn by doing. Strengthening the culture of rehabilitation – and improving the retention and skills amongst staff – should include enabling senior managers, staff and prisoners to where appropriate innovate, create and embed home grown initiatives working with partners and evaluators.

NFN Response

- Advice, practical support and capacity to improve existing, and create new, initiatives focused on reform, sustainability and impact.
- Practical support on ‘in sourcing’ innovation, enabling staff and prisoners to develop social/enterprises.
- Advice on ambitious plans such as setting up special purpose vehicles that allow for long-term partnerships, investment and revenue raising.
- Explore the potential for a NFN Innovation Fund, to support good ideas to get off the ground and to scale: 1) a Feasibility Grant to allow smaller organisations and individuals to undertake initial R&D work and 2) A Start Up Grant to develop R&D into credible pilots.

In practice

- Ideas Mine and mutual team in HMP Coldingley and North East.
- Draw on HMP Humber and HMP Full Sutton work on co-designed prisoner, family and community engagement strategies.

NFN Exchange and Reach

The Gap

- An issue repeatedly raised throughout the consultation was the communications gap between – those responsible for driving reform from the centre in MoJ and HMPPS – and prisons and their workforce. This is in part because of the significant amount of change in leadership but also because of the closed nature of prisons. The speed of reform will depend upon inculcating amongst prison leaders, staff, prisoners and their range of partners that they are listened to and have a central role to play in shaping progress.
- There is also a ‘horizontal’ challenge of translating what works evidence into practical work on the ground. Very few staff engaged in this process were aware of the What Works initiative and there was an appetite for greater focus on learning ‘how to’. Too many new initiatives are begun without a clear sense of who else has already trailed such approaches, the process involved or how to design in impact. Many prisons struggle to share innovation, effective outcomes and learn from experience across the estate and beyond.

NFN Response

- The NFN Reform Summit will share and scale success bringing together all those contributing to prison reform by establishing an event in the annual calendar. This will unite and spread reform champions across sectors by building a network with a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges. This will be supported by NFN Reach, a dynamic and accessible learning space, encouraging more and better bilateral links and using multiple media platforms to unite a wider audience, building the reform community and including a mechanism for feeding back practice experience to policymakers and identifying blocks in the system.

In practice

- Learn from ResearchED in providing a space for staff at all levels to exchange ideas and practice in a cross-sector, multi-disciplinary environment.
- The NFN will secure funding for Summits from a range of organisations but will require certainty post general election. This will aim to be a mix of corporate and philanthropic.

Organisational model

The government can take some credit for enabling an environment for many existing new organisations linking prisons, probation and employers to emerge (e.g. Tempus Novo, The Exceptionals, Offploy, Prosper 4 and Code 4000). Greater clarity, leadership and practical assistance are needed to sustain this ecosystem and prove impact.

The NFN can play a significant role as an enabler, boosting current entities and evaluating what they do and how, without constraining the very flexibility and courage that explains their early success. It should not set out to replace either the innovative ‘disrupters’, or existing infrastructure like One3One. However, central to our findings was the belief that to be effective and authoritative within the prison service and outside – PCCs, CRCs and employers – the NFN should in the first instance be sponsored by the MoJ and supported by the HMPPS. This will enable it to navigate and, where necessary, cut through bureaucratic inertia. As such the NFN cannot and should not be independent, by Charity Commission definition. However, there was a strong view that NFN should have a degree of independence delivered by a non-political Chair with authority and expertise in either criminal justice or business leadership, and from outside Whitehall. A steering group or advisory board should include senior MoJ and HMPPS members and draw on expertise from across the public and private sector.

In time the NFN may evolve into a trust or mutual, with funding put out to tender. Ideally this process would avoid the sclerotic and technocratic approach sometimes associated with such exercises, with relevant credible host organisations invited to describe how they would build on work to date. This might be a simpler way to evolve NFN into an independent organisation, making it easier and quicker to ‘spin out’. In the meantime, conversations with the most exciting innovators make it clear that supporting the emerging frontline bodies to be greater than the sum of their parts would be a valuable aspect of the NFN. This raises the option of creating an NFN leadership cadre, formally (like a mini-CBI for employers of ex-offenders), supported by a minimal corporate centre to ensure it is open, practical and effective, but could evolve into a membership organisation, open to all.

Moj/HMPPS Support

- Legitimacy, clarity and mandate from the Secretary of State and the Chief Executive of HMPPS.
- The preference was for a hub and spoke model with a small ‘hub’ outside London – possibly based at Newbold Revel – structured to mirror HMPPS oversight (North, South and Wales), with early development of NFN London.
- Interim team, including secondments, of four or five people committed for six months to do start up. Followed by funding small ‘hub’ for at least three years, NFN resource within new Regional Groups and a dedicated post or part time post in each establishment.
- Brand capital and reach.

The 'Hub'

Steering group

Supports management team in key strategic decisions. Oversight of finance and governance.

Operations and Finance Manager

Responsible for finance, people and compliance.

Director

Responsible for strategy, governance and management.

Communications Officer

Responsible for day-to-day online management, materials and media.

Engagement Manager

Responsibility for consultations, engagement, communications and brand, including events.

Administrator and Events Officer

NFN Area Managers

Responsible for direct engagement, co-design and consultation.

NFN Associates



Mix of skills and experience

- Detailed knowledge of prison system.
- Detailed knowledge of probation system.
- Knowledge of CJS policy and wider policy process.
- Detailed knowledge of business and enterprise models.
- Knowledge of CJS third sector and commissioning.
- Experience of complex strategy and innovation.
- Detailed knowledge of health and substance misuse services.
- Communications, online and off.
- Governance and finance.
- Experience of CJS/prison as service user.

Next steps

We started this paper by highlighting some of the negative trends facing prisons in England and Wales. Cutting resources has played its part in undermining safety for those who work and live in prisons. While trends in drug use and mental health also help to drive some of these acute problems, these issues need to be addressed alongside leadership and culture change if prisoners and staff are to be given a sense of purpose, progress and hope.

We end on a more positive note. Throughout, we had conversations with governors, prisoners, officers, employers, charities, businesses and social enterprises. While all brought different perspectives to the project, what was striking was the consensus around key issues: the need for central government and the prison service hierarchy to lead better and enable and trust its governors more; an appetite for commissioning that allows for greater local freedoms to develop sustainable partnerships and impact measures while drawing on the experience of others; and the desire for prison leaders to be able to spend more time looking outwards to communities and downwards to staff and prisoners when it came to ideas, innovation and delivery of rehabilitative approaches.

We have discussed this proposal with officials at the MoJ and it has been welcomed by Ministers as part of the government's wider safety and reform strategy. This proposal will be considered alongside the MoJ's employment strategy, due to be published later this year. This is welcome; in the short term at least, whilst the RSA recommends that the NFN be sponsored by MoJ, it must be allowed to flourish under an independent chair and expert advisory group. This would allow it to both work with and challenge the system and to gain the credibility needed to support its wider aim of culture change and its immediate focus on increasing employment in and around prisons.

The New Futures Network (NFN) project can be found at www.thersa.org/new-futures-network
If you would like more information about the consultation process and case studies please visit the site above or contact Jack Robson on jack.robson@rsa.org.uk