

Briefing Paper 57

Scoping the involvement of third sector organisations in the seven resettlement pathways for offenders

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Introduction

The role of the third sector and the scale of its activity in the resettlement of offenders have become considerably more prominent in recent years (Ministry of Justice (MoJ), 2010a). Services provided by third sector organisations (TSOs), such as employment, housing and drug and alcohol treatment, are recognised as being essential to efforts to reduce re-offending (MoJ, 2008, MoJ/NOMS, 2008a). *This paper aims to map out the landscape and extent of the third sector involvement in the resettlement of offenders, with a specific focus on the seven 'pathways' of resettlement (Home Office, 2004). Using existing datasets, it estimates the size, number, geographical distribution and total income of third sector organisations involved in offender resettlement.* The quality and variety of data sources and the operational definitions used for measurement by these datasets are also critically examined as these can provide varying estimates of the sector's involvement in work with offenders.

Background

In 2002, the Social Exclusion Unit's (SEU) report on *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners* (SEU, 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). The report identified nine factors that influence re-offending, which were

then transformed into the seven reducing re-offending pathways formulated by the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan (Home Office, 2004).

The seven resettlement pathways:

- 1: Accommodation**
- 2: Education, training and employment**
- 3: Health**
- 4: Drugs and alcohol**
- 5: Finance, benefit and debt**
- 7: Attitudes, thinking and behaviour**

The Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan aimed to guide service provision and promoted partnership working with third sector organisations as means to achieving the best results. The role of third sector organisations in providing a range of services to offenders and their families, both in prisons and the community, is historically well-established, but their involvement has been placed on a more formal footing as they can be commissioned to provide services at a local and regional level. The numerous benefits of TSOs' engagement with offenders and their families are well rehearsed in literature (Meek, et al., 2010) but to date no comprehensive estimates have been generated as to the extent of such involvement.

Aims

In order to give a comprehensive picture of the involvement of TSOs in resettlement and to enable any gaps in provision to be identified, we examined six factors:

1. the number of third sector organisations currently working with offenders;
2. the percentage of these organisations which work in each of the seven resettlement pathways;
3. the main geographic areas of operation for third sector organisations which work with offenders;
4. their annual income;
5. their sources of funding and the nature of funding received (grants, contracts, etc.);
6. the number of third sector organisations working with vulnerable groups of offenders (women, young people and black and minority ethnic (BAME) populations).

Two data sets were used: the Charity Commission dataset (CC) and the 2008 National Survey of Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO). These were supplemented and strengthened by information obtained through the Clinks¹ Working with Offenders Directory, a free online resource that aims to identify organisations that support offender rehabilitation in prison and in the community.

Findings

Using keywords and applying exclusion criteria to the Charity Commission data immediately identified over 750 charities working with offenders. These charities are likely to be the ones which consider work with offenders as one of their key aims and worth highlighting in their aims and objectives. The analysis of the NSTSO dataset, as expected, revealed more

varied estimates. Approximately 11% of TSOs identified offenders, ex-offenders and their families as one of their client groups, a total of 18,380 nationally, but only 3% (4,916) identified criminal justice as one of their areas of work. A more careful examination indicated that only 1% of organisations identified offenders, ex-offenders and their families as one of their main client groups, that is 1,744 nationally. As many as 40% of organisations which identified criminal justice as one of their areas of work did *not* necessarily work with offenders, ex-offenders or their families, so these have not been considered in this paper.

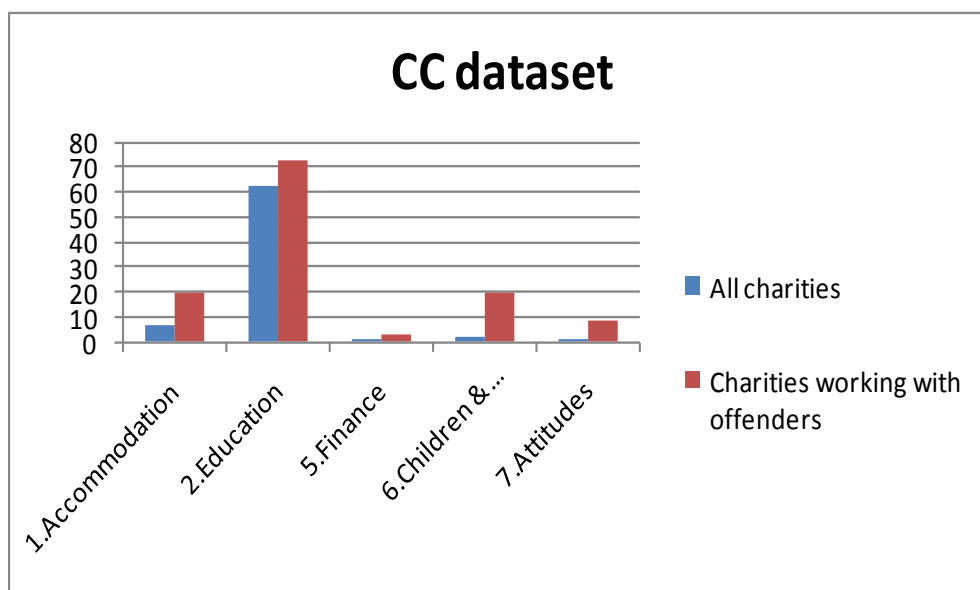
Estimating how many TSOs work in each of the pathways is more ambitious, because the pathways' remits do not correspond directly to the categories used either by CC or NSTSO. The results are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. The full paper looks at each pathway separately, discussing the results as well as the analysis.

The percentage of TSOs working with vulnerable offenders, such as women, young people and BAME populations, is over-represented in each pathway compared to all TSOs. Considering the scope and diversity of their needs this finding is somewhat to be expected. The exception is accommodation, where the percentage of TSOs providing accommodation to vulnerable offenders is only about a half of the community figure, or in the case of women just over a third.

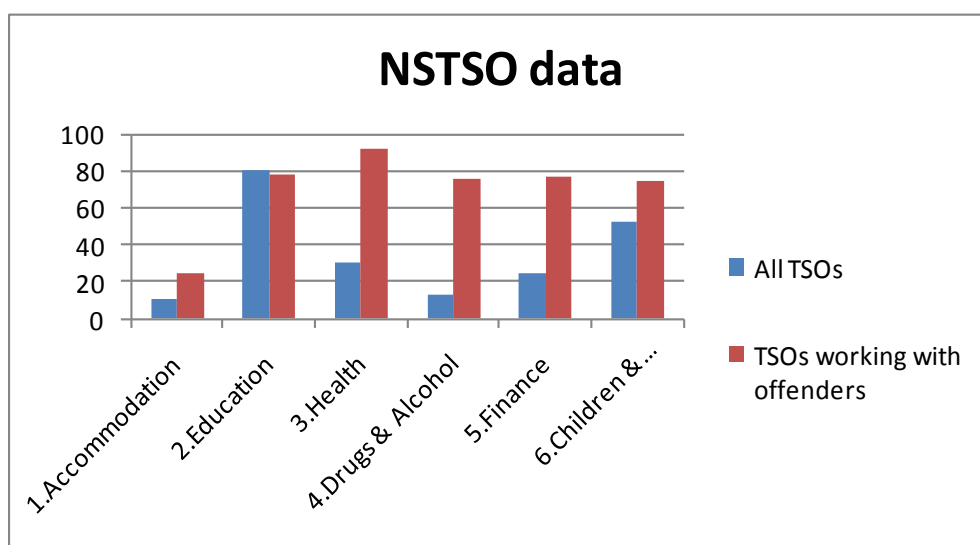
Accommodation is, however, one of the essential links in the reducing re-offending chain, and in the case of women offenders who often have children and need accommodation to ensure they can care for those children, it can be especially important. We would therefore urge further action to improve accommodation opportunities for these vulnerable groups.

¹ national umbrella body that supports the involvement of voluntary and community organisations in the criminal justice system.

Figures 1 and 2: Percentage of charities by Pathway (Charity Commission-CC* and NSTSO data)**



*Due to the categorisation of data in the Charity Commission dataset, it was not possible to estimate the figures for Pathways 3 (Health) and 4 (Drugs & Alcohol).



**Due to the categorisation of data in the NSTSO dataset, it was not possible to estimate the figures for Pathway 7 (Attitudes, thinking and behaviour).

The source and nature of funding for TSOs working with offenders was also investigated. Analysis of the data obtained from the NSTSO indicated that as many as 56% of TSOs which work with offenders, ex-offenders and their families depend on public sources of funding as their primary source. This figure is slightly higher for TSOs which have this group as their main beneficiary (59%) and compared to other groups of users this figure is rather high. The proportion of income obtained from grants or core funding for TSOs working with offenders is 17%, over twice as much as the figure for all

TSOs, which stands at 8%. The other notable source is the income from contracts, accounting for nearly 13% of TSOs' income. Comparing these to the national figures of only 6%, it can be concluded that TSOs working mainly with offenders, ex-offenders and their families are heavily reliant on grants and contracts for survival.

Looking at the annual income of TSOs whose main beneficiaries are offenders, ex-offenders and their families, we found that 61% have an annual income of £100,000 or less, compared to 80% of all TSOs. Furthermore, 27% of TSOs

whose main client group is offenders, ex-offenders and their families reported very little or no income at all, compared to 17% of all TSOs. This suggests that the income pattern for TSOs working with offenders is a rather uneven one, polarized between those with very little or no income and those with a more substantial income.

Conclusions

Establishing the number of TSOs working with offenders in England and Wales is a complex and challenging task. Depending on what constitutes 'working with offenders' we arrived at three figures:

1. those with offenders as their main beneficiary group (1,743 TSOs);
2. those that identified offenders as one of their beneficiary groups but not necessarily the main one (18,380 TSOs);
3. those that identified criminal justice as their area of work (4,916 TSOs).

The figures also varied considerably when we looked at charities alone or at all TSOs. For example, the NSTSO dataset included not only charities but also social enterprises, community groups, non-charitable housing association, cooperatives, etc., which can explain the difference in estimates between the two datasets.

These figures illustrate the mainstreaming of work with offenders, with nearly 20,000 organisations providing services to this population in some form. There are at least two interpretations for this finding. Arguably, there is a move to integrate offenders further into mainstream community interventions. An alternative view is that organisations report working with offenders and other vulnerable groups because this is likely to increase their chance of securing funding.

This paper contributes a new perspective on the role and profile of TSOs involved in the seven Resettlement Pathways for offenders. The general over-representation of TSOs working with offenders in the seven areas compared to the national figures mirrors the level of need in this population, particularly in relation to its most vulnerable groups such as women, young people and BAME. It is therefore even more surprising that accommodation TSOs are less likely to work with vulnerable groups of offenders than vulnerable groups in the community and the reasons for this anomaly remain unclear.

According to the data available, it was found that TSOs working with offenders are much more reliant on grants and contracts than TSOs generally. A high number are also dependent on public sources of funding, and are thus likely to be vulnerable to public sector funding cuts. A recent survey by Clinks has found that more than three quarters have had grant income cut, and just under half have experienced a decrease in earned income, with the majority expecting further cuts to come (Clinks 2011). Such decreases in funding are likely to have an impact on the services TSOs can provide to this high need group and may ultimately affect the degree to which re-offending can be reduced.

The authors have sought to address some of the issues identified in this paper by conducting a national survey of nearly 700 prisoners to explore their knowledge of and engagement with TSOs which provide resettlement services in prisons. This survey is part of a larger project which consists of eight prison case studies and one probation area, and which aims to investigate the involvement of TSOs in work with offenders. A subsequent paper in this series will build on the findings presented here, by reflecting on the experiences of prisoners and how they perceive the relationship between demand and supply in relation to TSOs involved in resettlement.

This paper is part of the Third Sector Research Centre – Briefing Paper Series see www.tsrc.ac.uk for more details and a copy of the full Working Paper 57.

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