

Building statutory, private sector and civil society partnerships in penal resettlement: some insights from research.

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1. The origins of partnerships determine their nature

Grassroots/organic initiative

- **People** coming together to create better outcomes for beneficiaries (clients), communities and society.
- Local networks
- close inter-professional interactions
- existing systems of mutual reliance and communications.

Political/bureaucratic initiative

- central state or municipal levels of policy making
- greater efficiency in working with offender/client/criminalised person in the course of their sentence and through to aftercare
- public protection, reducing reoffending,
- saving public money
- democratically accountable

The key challenge for partnerships is **how well the state** (local and central) works **with** the statutory sector, civil society and the for-profit sector in **mutually sustainable, accountable ways** which generate the best outcomes for the intended **primary beneficiaries** – clients/offenders, communities, society.

2. Partnerships across penal and welfare fields pose unique, public challenges.

- The obligation to discharge penal functions as an element of intervention poses classic wicked problem of policy, that is, where: ‘care-control is complex, not fully understood by policy makers, highly resistant to change and seemingly immune to any evidence to bring about change for the better, it is driven by ‘what works’ and often not evidence-based [and] increasingly positioned by political expediency and the signalling of politicians’ ‘toughness on crime’” (Czerniawski. G. 2020: 1).
- The political environment provides the frame of reference for reviewing the extent to which desistance and resettlement work is valued and supported (or not).

consensus surrounding the rehabilitative idea is under strain

- *Dispositional barriers* experienced by prisoners which may be linked to their life conditions effects of disadvantage, previous educational exclusion or failure, poor employment, low personal esteem, drug and alcohol abuse, communication, learning and mental-health conditions, poor social capital etc....(these are structural, not personality disorders or the consequences of 'poor thinking' or bad choices on the part of criminalised persons)
- Institutional barriers: housing; legal discrimination (failure to protect persons with criminal records) unemployment; barriers, health. Stigma and unpopularity of the client group.
- Penal populism > retributive and repressive policy solutions. This threatens rehabilitative goals and allows for the framing of rehabilitation, reintegration and legal equity and social justice as permissive, as counter-productive, and as 'do-gooding'.

3. Partnership must be substantive and transformative.

- Transactional or collaborative: what is the nature of your 'partnership' – about delivering a contractual service, or collaborative, involving co-design, co-production and sharing of human and other resources?
- Who calls the shots in the partnership? Does power and influence flow through hierarchical top-down command and control mandates or horizontal networks of interest in collective pursuit of a common end?
- 'Partnership' should facilitate parity of esteem, recognition and continued independence for the voluntary sector.
- The great diversity of partnerships is not to be reduced by simplistic narratives – partnerships are highly complex and varied, but all too often reduced to a monolith in order to make it fit with policy or reformative agendas.
- Sustainability: partners must continuously seek ways of increasing the sustainability of goals and activities.

- Who gets to participate? Who has a voice? How much consultation with citizens and service users took place when setting up your partnerships? How actively do questions of equality, representation of all and social inclusion impact on the design of your programmes?
- The pernicious effects of governance: motivating or killing innovation?
- Our next challenge is to rebuild the structures of resilience – readiness to collaboration, the ability to work to common goals, trust, power of advocacy for justice