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**Study Title: Voluntary sector adaptation and resilience in the mixed economy of criminal justice.**

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This research project is independently funded by The Leverhulme Trust. We are university based researchers, working with Clinks who are our partners in the sector.

**Aims of the Research**

We will be conducting a survey, interviews, focus groups and case studies with those working in the field of offender support and resettlement. This will include staff and volunteers from voluntary sector organisations, their partners, as well as local and national policy makers and commissioners. The aim is to understand the impact of policy and funding changes, the challenges and opportunities, and the strategies that are developed for working in new environments.

**Why have I been asked to take part?**

You have been asked to take part because you work in the field of offender support and rehabilitation, or work in partnership with voluntary sector organisations in the field. We aim to include over 400 participants during the course of the project, from a wide variety of organisations, in order to capture both breadth and depth of experience. Participation is entirely voluntary, your identity and that of your organisation will be kept confidential, and all information provided will be made anonymous. You may withdraw yourself at any point, and you may withdraw your data up until the point it is anonymised; this will not compromise you in any way.

**What will happen if I agree to take part?**

If you agree to take part, you will have the choice to participate in an online survey, focus group, interview, case study, or a combination of those options. All arrangements for participating will be made as convenient for you as possible, at a time and location which is suitable to you. An interview normally takes between 30 and 90 minutes, a focus group is between 60 and 90 minutes, the survey should take no more than 30 minutes. A case study involves site visits in addition to conducting focus groups and interviews with staff. During interviews and focus groups, we will ask questions about your experiences of working in the field of offender support, your priorities, the challenges you face, the funding landscape, and your day to day role.

If there are issues or themes which we haven’t raised but that you think are relevant or important, we would be grateful if you tell us about them. If there are certain questions you would rather not answer, just say and we will move on to another topic. We can take breaks if and when you want them and you are free to end the interview or withdraw from the focus group at any time.

At the end of the survey, interview or focus group, we will ask participants if they would like to take part further in this study; this is purely optional.

If your participation in this study raises any difficult personal issues, we will be able to provide you with a list of organisations that might be able to help. Also, if you have any concerns or would like to add something after the interview or focus group has finished, we provide our contact details at the end of this document so you can get in touch with us.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Often when research is conducted in the voluntary sector it is interested in talking to offenders, victims, or their families. This study is different because it is interested in the experiences of change of those working in the field. As such, it offers the chance to speak to an interested, independent person outside of your organisation. We will deliver the findings from the study to the voluntary sector, as well as government and policy makers, in the hope that it will guide future improvements to the environment you work in.

**What are the possible risks or disadvantages of taking part?**

There are no obvious risks to taking part in this study. We understand that talking about work in the offender support sector can raise sensitive issues, however, we will ensure that you will not be identifiable in any reports and neither will your organisation. Further, if you feel like you want to retract, clarify or add anything after our meeting, you will be able to do so by contacting us.

**How will my information be used?**

Your interview or focus group will be recorded and transcribed, while survey data will be collected online and analysed using a computer programme. We will print out and analyse interview and focus group material, along with background information about your area of work (e.g. mentoring, family support, housing, mental health etc.) and the sector. We will use some statements from participants as quotes in the reports and publications. These will be written up in the form of a report and as presentations. It will also be used to write articles for journal publication, conferences, and two feedback events will be held to which stakeholders will be invited.

**How will my confidentiality and anonymity be protected?**

All personal information about those taking part, such as your name, age, or other identifying details will be held in the strictest confidence and in accordance with the data protection legislation. The names of all persons who are interviewed, or referred to, will be changed, as will the names of the organisations which you work for. We, the researchers, and the person who transcribes the interviews/focus groups will be the only people who have access to data which has not yet been anonymised; transcribers will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. If your role or project is easily recognisable, we will discuss with you how you wish to represent your views.

Anyone else will read about your views in the context of short descriptions or quotations which will appear alongside those of other people who are interviewed. If you have any concerns about your confidentiality and anonymity, please contact us so we can discuss them.

We are required to retain all research data for 5 years. All the information we collect will be stored in a locked cabinet or on a password protected computer. After 5 years, the data will be securely disposed of.

**Who do I contact for more information?**

If you would like any further details about the project, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator: Mary Corcoran

 research.corcoran.resilience@keele.ac.uk

 01782 733104

Or the Research Associate: Kelly Prince

 k.l.prince@keele.ac.uk

 01782 734865

**Who do I contact if I want to make a complaint?**

If you are unhappy with, or wish to feedback regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the Research Governance Officer at Keele University:

 Nicola Leighton

 n.leighton@keele.ac.uk

 01782 733306