

Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management

The added value of Voluntary and Community Sector partners in Integrated Offender Management arrangements

April 2012

Resource 1 of 7

1. Introduction

This is the first in a series of resources that draw on the learning from *Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management*, a programme that was funded by the Home Office and managed by Clinks.¹

It is primarily intended as an introduction to the series, to help key stakeholders involved in local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements to review the role of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners, but it may equally help VCS organisations to think about the range of roles they could undertake, individually or collectively.

The other resources in the series include:

- Resource 2** Mapping and engaging with potential local VCS partners
- Resource 3** The potential brokerage role of Local Support and Development Organisations²
- Resource 4** How VCS organisations can engage with local IOM arrangements and other Criminal Justice System (CJS) structures
- Resource 5** Strategic partnership working
- Resource 6** Operational partnership working
- Resource 7** IOM: the rural partnership challenge

The series is accompanied by a number of online supplements which provide additional material to support all seven resources:

- Supplement 1** Integrated Offender Management: A briefing
- Supplement 2** Overview of the project: *Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management*
- Supplement 3** Glossary of acronyms
- Supplement 4** Bibliography and linked resources

¹ Clinks is a national membership organisation that supports the work that Voluntary and Community Sector organisations undertake within the Criminal Justice System of England and Wales. Their vision is to see an independent, vibrant and well-resourced Voluntary and Community Sector, working in partnership to promote the rehabilitation of offenders. For more information see <http://www.Clinks.org>

² LSDO: Local Support & Development Organisation – a charitable body such as a Council for Voluntary Service that typically provides a range of support services for all the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations within its area. This might include help with organisational development, funding advice, training, and co-ordinating the sector's engagement with and representation on local strategic groupings. Many LSDOs have Volunteer Centres attached to their organisations or work very closely with them.

2. Background

Levels of VCS involvement in IOM appear to vary considerably from place to place.³ A 2009 NOMS-commissioned evaluation of VCS involvement in four national IOM pioneer sites found that although in three of the four sites a number of larger VCS organisations were closely involved as full delivery partners within IOM arrangements, a much wider set were only engaged with more sporadically as referral agencies.⁴ The same three sites involved at least one VCS organisation on their project steering groups, but across all four sites the involvement of the Sector as a full strategic partner was negligible.

It was against this background that Clinks was invited to work in partnership with the Home Office between November 2010 and April 2011, to strengthen the role of the VCS in IOM in four different 'development and demonstration' areas: Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole; Croydon; Gloucestershire; and Leeds.⁵ Crucially, it was stipulated that grants could only be awarded to projects led by local VCS organisations. Statutory partners involved in IOM needed to give their support to the proposals, but could not hold the funds or direct the work undertaken. The Home Office was keen to use this mechanism to give the VCS a stronger foothold, and to see how far it enabled the VCS to develop a more equal role in strategic local IOM arrangements.

Each local programme of work was overseen by a VCS-led, multi-agency steering group. In three areas the lead agencies were Local Support and Development Organisations (LSDOs); in the fourth, the leading role was taken by a key local VCS provider. A wide range of activity was funded across the four areas, which could broadly be categorised under four main headings:

- Establishing strategic partnerships and capacity building within the VCS to engage with local IOM arrangements;
- Developing and delivering innovative services to offenders managed under IOM arrangements;
- Providing opportunities for volunteering and mentoring with and by offenders managed under IOM arrangements;
- Piloting the use of small seed-corn grants to involve small VCS organisations.

The Hallam Centre for Community Justice at Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned by the Home Office to undertake an evaluation of the project.⁶ One of the aims of the evaluation process was to capture the very diverse experiences of all the organisations involved in the programme which could be used to help others to develop the role of VCS partners in their local IOM arrangements. These factors were analysed and collated as part of the evaluation and have very much informed the development of this series of resources.⁷

³ See Supplement 1 for more information about IOM.

⁴ Kevin Wong & Christopher Hartworth. 2009. Integrated Offender Management and Third Sector Engagement: Case studies of four pioneer sites. Online: <http://www.barefootresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Integrated-Offender-Management-and-Third-Sector-Engagement%E2%80%A6.pdf> [Last accessed 24/1/12]

⁵ See Supplement 2 for more information about the project.

⁶ Kevin Wong, Caroline O'Keeffe, Linda Meadows, Joanna Davidson, Hayden Bird, Katherine Wilkinson & Paul Senior. 2012. Increasing the voluntary and community sector's involvement in Integrated Offender Management. Online: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/horr59/> [Last accessed 14/03/2012]

⁷ This resource draws heavily on the practice learning from the evaluation of Building Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Involvement in Integrated Offender Management, undertaken by the Hallam Centre for Community Justice at Sheffield Hallam University. See also Kevin Wong et al. 2012.

3. The added value of Voluntary and Community Sector partners in Integrated Offender Management arrangements

Both statutory and VCS organisations involved in Building VCS Involvement in IOM identified real progress in consolidating local relationships and involving a more diverse range of VCS organisations in the strategic planning and operational delivery of IOM arrangements.

The added value of involving the VCS in IOM as identified through the programme includes:

- **Specific skill and knowledge located within the VCS:** VCS partners are able to contribute distinct knowledge and skills, including extensive professional networks and local databases of service providers. They can readily collaborate as equal partners and make a significant contribution to IOM, strategically as well as operationally, thereby challenging the perception of the Sector as 'well-meaning amateurs'.
- **Strong links to local communities and awareness of local needs:** VCS organisations are usually already embedded within local communities and provide access to invaluable informal intelligence on the unique features of local areas, and the challenges within them. They can be a catalyst for community development and are also able to consult service users and promote good practice in user involvement to inform IOM approaches.
- **Addressing specific gaps in meeting offender needs:** The VCS is well positioned to support and address the diverse nature of locally identified offender needs, helping to deliver more holistic, individually tailored approaches. Seed-corn grants may be especially helpful in this respect, as they allow a diverse range of smaller, grassroots community organisations, with expertise in niche areas, to apply for funding to meet identified needs of this kind.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness:** Key stakeholders involved in IOM arrangements particularly value the ability of the Sector to work flexibly and responsively, without being slowed by the perceived bureaucracy associated with the statutory sector. VCS partners can bring a fresh perspective to the IOM agenda which complements the more traditional approach of statutory agencies. In addition, because VCS organisations do not have a formal enforcement role, they are well placed to build more trusting and empathic relationships with the offenders they are working with, and thereby provide important support for desistance.

4. Building operational involvement

Although VCS organisations were already involved to some extent in local delivery of the IOM arrangements across all four areas, the project activities that were undertaken have significantly enhanced the depth and extent of Sector's engagement within IOM arrangements, not only as delivery and referral partners, but by opening up opportunities for much wider engagement with grassroots community groups and with service users themselves. The following case studies provide brief examples of activities which partners undertook and which they perceived as effective ways of achieving more effective operational VCS involvement in local IOM arrangements.⁸

The role of LSDOs in mapping a wider set of interested VCS stakeholders and brokering engagement with operational teams under IOM arrangements

In three of the four areas (**Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole; Croydon; Gloucestershire**), Local Support and Development Organisations (LSDOs) acted as the lead local VCS agency.⁹ They took responsibility for bringing together a consortium of other VCS organisations, submitting grant applications, chairing steering groups, brokering linkages with senior IOM managers and other key statutory players and, on the basis of their existing work with and for the whole of the VCS in their areas, developing mechanisms to map and involve a much wider set of interested VCS stakeholders.

For example, Croydon Voluntary Action held a Market Place event which provided an opportunity for statutory agencies in the area to meet with a variety of small VCS organisations and increase their awareness of one another in terms of working practices, activities and services. Many of those VCS agencies who attended reported that the event was the first time they had spoken to representatives from statutory agencies. Many also indicated that they had subsequently been contacted by Offender Managers about potential referrals and areas for joint working as a direct result of attendance at the event.

Work of this kind was described by a number of statutory partners as 'absolutely pivotal' to the success of the programme and the development of improved engagement with the VCS, although at the outset few of them were very aware of the potential of their LSDO to support their work in this way. These LSDOs are all now continuing to develop their brokerage roles in relation to IOM and the wider CJS.

A Prison-based IOM 'Hub'

In **Leeds**, West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy and Foundation worked with HMP Leeds, Police and Probation, and a larger grouping of VCS organisations, to establish a multi-agency IOM 'hub' at the gate of HMP Leeds. The Hub aimed to identify priority prisoners due to be released and co-ordinated 'wrap-around' services on release, tailored to their individual needs. The Hub is now fully operational, supported by more focused work to co-ordinate referral and service delivery arrangements with VCS partners both inside prison and through the gate.

⁸ See Resources 3, 4 & 6, for further learning and case studies

⁹ See footnote 2.

New Service Opportunities

The programme inspired a number of innovative projects that tested new operational opportunities linked to IOM arrangements, many of which have proved sustainable, for example:

In Gloucestershire, two sustainable **social enterprises** that support offenders managed under local IOM arrangements have been developed, one around education, homelessness and unemployment and one providing job opportunities for offenders in a cleaning service for social housing providers. The latter has already won several cleaning contracts and is operating in a much more business-like way than the organisation has been accustomed to in the past. A sustainable business plan has been developed for a partnership of VCS organisations providing a new **family-focused support package**. A loose coalition of VCS organisations that had started a **Restorative Justice Project** have also now come together to form a Community Interest Company, **Restorative Solutions**, which will enable them to bid for funding and operate in a more business-like way.¹⁰ This has resulted in the organisation securing funding from the Ministry of Justice Victims and Witness Fund and the Underwood Trust to develop a neighbourhood Restorative Justice programme.

In Croydon, a **court-based triage service has been put in place for women** with a broad range of complex needs entering the CJS from a variety of points. Croydon Voluntary Action also set up a **volunteer brokerage service** to work with mainstream VCS organisations to develop volunteering opportunities for offenders managed under IOM arrangements and to support them into volunteering; and a **mentoring training programme** to motivate offenders in establishing long term sustainable social relationships.

Small Grants

Two areas used seed-corn grants to stimulate and enable smaller VCS organisations to work with offenders. They proved to be an effective way of enabling small, community-based community groups to demonstrate efficacy in delivering services.

In both areas seed-corn funds were distributed and managed by the lead VCS agencies and allocated through a competitive application process.

In Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, £35,000 was distributed to seven organisations for the development of new volunteering activity with or by offenders managed under IOM arrangements, through grants which ranged from £480 to £7,362. This included support for personal budgeting, an allotment project, a wood recycling social enterprise, mentoring support for resettlement, a football project, and a job club in a prison.

In Croydon, seed-corn grants were limited to a ceiling of £2,000. Fifteen projects were initially funded, then another eight were funded using programme under-spend. Of these 23 projects, seven projects involved BAME-specific organisations and two worked specifically with women offenders. The majority of these awards were made to smaller community-based VCS organisations. The types of activity funded included financial advice to offenders; support for offenders who were likely to be fathers; support for BAME/migrant women released from custody, diverting young boys at risk of becoming gang members, gardening, and a lunch project for offenders.

¹⁰ See Restorative Gloucestershire website and newsletter at: <http://www.restorativegloucestershire.co.uk/>

User involvement in IOM arrangements

Enabling service users to have a voice within IOM arrangements is being sustained in **Gloucestershire** through an IOM Reference Group that was established as part of the programme. This was an idea which arose from an existing Client Reference Group, facilitated by Stonham, which consults ex-offenders via monthly meetings. The research undertaken with service users as part of the project has also been collated into a report which will be used to shape and influence IOM arrangements in Gloucestershire. The group had a profound impact on the individuals involved in it: from having very low confidence and self esteem at the start of the project, they were able to give a presentation to a packed multi-sector conference six months later and facilitated the most popular workshop of the event. Moreover, one member of the group, an ex-homeless drug user, is now employed by Stonham as a support worker.

In **Leeds**, six service users were supported by West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project to participate in making and editing a DVD, *Returning*, produced by Lippy Films. The DVD highlights the challenges and barriers they faced on release from HMP Leeds, and the kinds of support that had made a difference to their efforts at desistance.

5. Building strategic involvement

Many key strategic partnerships including those within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) clearly have as yet poorly developed mechanisms for involving the VCS as a full strategic partner. The following case studies provide brief examples of activities or initiatives which partners in the programme undertook. These were all perceived as effective ways of achieving more effective strategic VCS involvement in local IOM arrangements.¹¹

Developing VCS voice and strategic influence by establishing a Forum

Strategic engagement between VCS and statutory agencies involved in local IOM arrangements may be enhanced by the development of local fora of various kinds:

- **Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole** have created a **Forum to focus on connecting organisations working with offenders**. The Forum is open to VCS organisations already working with offenders as well as those considering developing offender services, and to service user groupings. Statutory partners attend Forum meetings by invitation. Conducting an initial mapping exercise enabled the identification of potential members. The Forum is now funded by Bournemouth Council. The Chief Executive of Poole Council for Voluntary Service has commented that, “on a very fundamental level the Forum has facilitated networking and communication between voluntary organisations that traditionally have not had the opportunity here to do so. Furthermore the Forum meetings have brought all three Councils for Voluntary Service into contact with some groups that traditionally we have had little communication with, enabling us to provide additional support”.
- **Croydon** has also established a **VCS Supporting Offenders Forum**. The Forum provides a platform for input to the strategic policy making process. Its activities include regular information updates, representation, training, networking, peer support and opportunities to participate in active decision-making. It supports links between groups and sectors with a common interest in reducing reoffending.
- In **Leeds**, two key VCS agencies (West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project and Foundation Housing) have taken the lead in **bringing together a range of partners** to enable the development of collaborative approaches, including the establishment of a **VCS Forum** for organisations and service user groups involved in the CJS.

¹¹ See Resource 5: Strategic partnership working, for further learning and case studies.

Using elections to increase representation and build strategic links between the VCS and key CJS boards and partnerships

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole have succeeded in encouraging and widening the participation of the Sector in key CJS partnerships, using transparent election processes overseen by the Forum, and offering systematic induction and training for elected VCS representatives. They identified the most appropriate strategic partnerships, for example, all the Community Safety Partnerships in the area, and asked the chairs to propose the creation of a vacancy for a VCS representative. Standard Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) procedures for electing representatives via the Forum were then followed. Once elected, representatives had an induction with the Bournemouth CVS Communications Officer, including a meeting with the chair of the group they were elected to, and received training to ensure they felt equipped and adequately prepared to take a full and active role in the partnership. Representatives now seek wider VCS views and provide regular feedback via the Forum.

In Gloucestershire, similar mechanisms were put in place to elect VCS representatives who now sit on the single Gloucestershire Safer Stronger Justice Commission (GSSJC), which now incorporates the work of the county's Community Safety Partnership and Criminal Justice Board, and on the IOM Board which reports to it.

Developing a clear commissioning strategy and guidelines to strengthen partner relationships

The development of a local commissioning strategy and a set of commissioning guidelines has played a critical role in increasing strategic involvement of the VCS in **Gloucestershire** IOM arrangements. The lead agency, GAVCA (the LSDO for the county) employed a consultant to develop the guidelines in consultation with a range of staff in the three main statutory agencies (Prison, Police and Probation) and the Health commissioner. The extensive consultation that took place with both statutory and VCS partners, and the use of an external consultant to provide focus and independence, were important in ensuring a set of guidelines which were acceptable to, and readily signed off by, all the main commissioning agencies and VCS organisations involved in the county's 'Safer, Stronger' e-network.¹²

¹² Further information about this process, and the commissioning cycle developed as part of this work, are included in Resource 5: Strategic partnership working.

6. Undertaking a preliminary audit

The other resources in this series explore in greater detail the learning from *Building VCS Involvement in IOM* about the opportunities and barriers to developing VCS involvement in local IOM arrangements, and make further suggestions about ways to address these.

However, drawing on the case study examples in this resource, local statutory and VCS partners may find it useful to undertake a preliminary audit of the extent to which VCS partners are fulfilling their potential roles in local IOM arrangements at three levels:

- As operational delivery partners;
- As operational referral partners (i.e. not used only as referral agencies but more fully involved in engagement work and plans under IOM arrangements);
- As full strategic partners.

This could form the basis for further discussion by key partners, including the LSDO wherever possible, of any gaps in engagement / involvement, and the development of a shared VCS / community engagement plan.

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Author and editorial group

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Feedback or further information

If you have any feedback on the resources, are seeking further information about the programme, or would like to share your own advice/experiences on involving VCS organisations in IOM arrangements, please contact:

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