

Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management

Mapping and engaging with potential local VCS partners

April 2012

Resource 2 of 7

Home Office

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work with offenders and their families

1. Introduction

This is the second 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 to help key stakeholders involved in local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements to identify and start to involve potential local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners, but it may equally help VCS organisations to think about how to develop a network and make stronger links with commissioners.

The other resources in the series include:

- Resource 1** The added value of VCS partners in Integrated Offender Management arrangements
- 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 (Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole; Croydon; Gloucestershire) the lead agencies were Local Support and Development Organisations (LSDOs);⁶ in the fourth (Leeds), the leading role was taken by West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy project, 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.⁷ 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.⁸

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 programme

6 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.

7 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]

8 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. Mapping potential local VCS partners

One of the key benefits of involving the VCS in local IOM arrangements, identified by the partners, was the opportunity to access their professional networks and local databases of VCS service providers, and tap into their knowledge of many small grassroots community groups. Other local stakeholders were able to draw on these to develop local capacity and support service delivery.

In three of the areas, the lead VCS agency that opened up and brokered these opportunities was an LSDO. Historically the majority of LSDOs have played a key role in identifying and maintaining some form of supportive communication with networks of VCS organisations in their local areas, as well as offering a range of capacity building activities such as help with organisational development, funding advice or training.

With the advent of Local Strategic Partnerships, many LSDOs also developed key roles in leading and facilitating VCS engagement with these structures, by:

- helping the Sector to develop a collective voice (through a range of fora) in order to influence particular local strategies and commissioning structures;
- managing the election of VCS representatives on strategic groupings;
- keeping their wider networks well informed about changes in policy or local service delivery opportunities;
- providing a conduit for two-way information flow between VCS and public sector partners.

As a result of this work, most LSDOs have an excellent network and database of large and small VCS organisations delivering a wide range of services and activities within local communities. However, these do not necessarily encompass all the VCS organisations working with offenders which, because of their specialised focus and different geographical, commissioning and funding histories, may not yet be 'on the radar' of their nearest LSDO. Moreover, many voluntary organisations may not define themselves as working with offenders but do, in fact, include them as users of their generic services. LSDOs may also be knowledgeable about the work of their Community Safety Partnerships, but not about the wider Criminal Justice System, work with offenders, or strategic partnership arrangements such as IOM.

A few LSDOs may therefore have limited capacity / knowledge to respond to the IOM agenda and in some areas may not feel this is work they are equipped to help with. In these instances it may be necessary to look for another local VCS partner to take a leading role in mapping the potential market and fostering engagement, although conflicts of interest that may arise if the lead partner is also a potential provider of services for offenders will then need to be managed.

In the Leeds programme, for example, this work was led by a key local VCS provider, West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project, which had strong links with a wide range of other VCS organisations working in the CJS across the city and had already been instrumental in bringing local VCS partners together to discuss the need for a collective Forum.

Whatever the extent of their existing networks, all four lead VCS agencies identified a need to undertake some preliminary work to map both existing providers and a wider set of local VCS stakeholders that might have an interest in engaging with local IOM arrangements. This required engagement with statutory organisations, to obtain their specialist input and information about existing offender-focused agencies, as well as a range of methods to uncover and engage with a wider set of VCS organisations.

In every case this resulted in a much richer set of contacts that were keen to receive information / make themselves known / engage with other partners involved in local strategic and operational IOM arrangements and also with the wider criminal justice agenda. It also provided the foundation for all the engagement that followed, as described by the Chief Executive of Poole Council for Voluntary Service:

The mapping exercise and the subsequent action we have taken with the information, e.g. the forum meetings we organised, have enabled the LSDOs in this area to develop a better understanding of:

- *the support needs of VCS organisations whose key aims are to support offenders, including the context they work in and how they link to the wider sector;*
- *those organisations that support offenders as part of their broader aims, e.g. assisting people with mental health needs. We were not aware of some of this work and, again, this has allowed us to broaden the support we provide to them;*
- *what established links VCS organisations already have with statutory colleagues, where the gaps are and how we can work in partnership to address them.*

Mapping a wider set of interested VCS stakeholders

Mapping key VCS resources across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (BDP):

In order to map VCS resources across BDP, Bournemouth and Poole Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) - the local VCS programme leads - initially liaised with statutory and voluntary sector partners to combine existing contacts lists of organisations working with/ providing services for offenders in the local area. They then wrote to all the organisations identified, and to all the VCS organisations on their existing 'generic' e-networks, to invite them to sign up to a new 'Working with Offenders' e-network and to receive regular information about IOM and wider opportunities to engage in work with offenders and their families. In signing up, organisations were also invited to complete a short survey to indicate their existing knowledge of IOM and the wider CJS. This resulted in 136 contacts signing up and enabled partners to consider the range of information, training and support that VCS organisations would need if they were to engage fully with local IOM arrangements, and to plan future activity accordingly.

This exercise provided an up to date list of key VCS resources that could be shared with other partner agencies. It was also used to bring organisations together in a Forum, thereby helping them to develop new relationships with statutory agencies and with other VCS organisations involved in local IOM arrangements.

Although time intensive initially, the e-network, once established, has been easy to maintain. The 'Working with Offenders' e-network is now added to a menu of choices for all organisations interested in signing up to receive information from Bournemouth CVS and Poole CVS and the mailing list is added to incrementally as new contacts are made. Statutory partners have been able to use the e-network to update the Sector on their current work plans, advertise secondment opportunities and temporary vacancies, and consult on issues relating to offender need, service delivery and elements of business planning.



In Gloucestershire, the lead VCS agency GAVCA (Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action) worked with partners to identify existing VCS providers of services which directly benefit the offenders managed under IOM arrangements. They also mapped other VCS providers that could potentially work with or benefit the offenders, by phoning VCS organisations on their generic database (including smaller organisations), explaining the programme and IOM agenda and requesting information on their service provision. These data were used to populate the specialist IOM database, RAPPORT (used by Police and Probation case managers), and also their own database of VCS organisations, which can be accessed by any commissioners or case managers looking for services via GAVCA's website

– see <http://www.vconnectssystem.org.uk/GAVCAOnlineDirectory>

All these groups were also added to the membership of the VCS Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy Group, a sub group of the county's VCS Assembly, which provides a collective voice to influence strategy relating to criminal justice issues and an arena for networking and mutual support

– see <http://www.gloshub.org.uk/stronger-a-safer-communities>

In **Leeds**, where the VCS lead role was taken by West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project, a modest mapping exercise had already been undertaken to identify potential VCS membership of a Leeds Crime Prevention and Reduction Forum. The decision was taken by all the partners involved in developing an IOM Hub at the gate of HMP Leeds to develop an IOM portal / website and to invite all known VCS contacts to join the website and register information about their services.

All the partner agencies in the IOM Hub are able to search the database and post information there. Members of the site are automatically sent a reminder each month to update their organisational profile; this tool ensures that the site remains up to date. It also enables organisations to highlight any extensions to the services they provide. The website also has a news and resource section so members can be kept up to date with important news items and can access minutes of the Leeds Crime Prevention and Reduction Forum, together with other useful resources.

4. Engaging with potential local VCS partners

In order to capitalise on the interest stimulated by these mapping activities, and to open up wider opportunities for engagement, the VCS lead agencies in all four areas facilitated events that brought together statutory partners with a wide range of potential VCS providers, small community groups, and in some cases service users, to share information and ideas. These events were all found to be highly beneficial in enabling engagement and fostering a new or different dialogue about local IOM arrangements:

Some statutory stakeholders reported that the local events held between VCS and statutory bodies had provided the 'intellectual space' to identify ways to address re-offending outside of the framework of statutory supervision. This enabled statutory agencies to re-think the way that they could use their resources and skills to build VCS capacity.⁹

Statutory partners valued the opportunity provided by these events to engage with small 'harder to reach' organisations, which might well have specific expertise to contribute to the IOM agenda. These types of VCS organisation were perceived as having the potential to address very specific offender needs, which might not otherwise be met through a traditional commissioning process:

...you might only have two people a year who have that particular need and it would be really hard to commission a service but if you have some sort of direct voluntary sector organisation and some sort of personalisation, spot funding... you can get that need met... [statutory stakeholder]

⁹ Kevin Wong et al. 2012.

The VCS organisations involved also found it helpful to be able to meet other partners, share information about IOM, and highlight their own services and their relevance to local arrangements.¹⁰

We really don't know enough about how probation and other criminal justice agencies work, so events like this help in that process. We need to know more so that we can fully participate and work in partnership. [VCS attendee]

Engaging with a wider set of potential VCS partners

Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA) – the lead VCS agency in Croydon - organised a **Market Place** event in its Resource Centre to showcase local VCS providers, to launch a new network of VCS organisations working with offenders and ex-offenders, and to strengthen VCS links with local partners engaged in IOM.

Those VCS organisations invited were targeted by using CVA's extensive database and identifying those groups known to be working with offenders and ex-offenders but not necessarily seeing themselves as criminal justice agencies. The Market Place event presented an opportunity for organisations to profile their work with ex-offenders and those at risk of offending to the Probation Trust and other statutory agencies involved in local IOM arrangements. It was the aim that this initial contact would lead to stronger working relationships and partnerships between sectors and to increasingly robust Integrated Offender Management arrangements, both strategically and operationally, that are bespoke to the Borough of Croydon.

The event presented an opportunity for a total of 22 VCS organisations to profile their work with ex-offenders and those at risk of offending to the Probation Trust and other key agencies. Over 40 staff and managers from the Probation Trust and Croydon Council attended.

Feedback from the event suggested a need to develop greater awareness within the statutory sector as to how the VCS works, particularly amongst smaller organisations and those from BAME communities. Such organisations do not fit easily into the structures and processes developed by the statutory sector. They are often marginalised from partnership working, but are able to operate with flexibility and responsiveness and to adopt approaches that are relevant to their specific service user group.

Following the event, CVA staff attended meetings with Offender Management leads to identify strategies for a clearer flow of information to the Probation Trust and other key partners about VCS organisations. There was greater awareness among VCS organisations of IOM and the potential to work with offenders managed under IOM arrangements, and VCS organisations began making independent contact with Offender Managers. Partners have since requested a Market Place event to be held on biannual basis.

¹⁰ Quote from Croydon Voluntary Action's final report on the New Routes Project. 2010.
Online: <http://www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/iom#fin> [Last accessed 21.2.2012]

5. Undertaking a mapping exercise / market place event

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, statutory partners involved in strategic local IOM arrangements may wish to review their own knowledge of the local VCS and the extent to which it reaches beyond a small circle of existing, well known service providers.

If partners consider there are significant gaps in terms of their awareness of the wider set of VCS stakeholders with a potential interest in local IOM arrangements, a first step would be to undertake a mapping exercise of the kind described here.

There are clearly advantages in working through a knowledgeable LSDO, or starting to build a relationship with an LSDO in which some preliminary mapping of local VCS organisations is undertaken as part of a developing dialogue. Where the LSDO does not currently have the capacity to engage with the IOM agenda, a viable alternative would be to involve a lead VCS provider that, through its work, is already well networked with others in the local Sector.

A local LSDO or VCS organisation/s seeking greater engagement for the Sector may equally wish to take a lead in convening a meeting with the strategic statutory partners involved in IOM arrangements, with a proposal to identify the full range of potential VCS partners in the area and to develop an effective network.

Mapping is clearly only a first step in building VCS involvement in IOM arrangements. It will provide a menu of organisations and services that commissioners and operational staff can use to make referrals, but will only give a snapshot at that point in time unless the data can then kept up to date. Moreover, it is unlikely in itself to result in greater engagement of the Sector as a full delivery or strategic partner.

The experience from this programme suggests that a Market Place or similar event is needed to bring all potential partners together to learn about one another's work and to stimulate further contact and dialogue. This could be a jointly planned event or could be commissioned from an LSDO or other key VCS partner. Where resources are constrained, a more modest start might be made by bringing partners together in VCS or statutory premises for discussions over coffee. Whatever the vehicle, the key point is to foster engagement, networking, sharing of ideas and involvement in joint planning.

There are clearly advantages in steering this work through a partnership group that includes key statutory partners and the identified VCS lead/s. It was the programme's experience that the relationships and mutual understandings formed through this activity served partners very well in securing VCS involvement in IOM arrangements, and in the wider criminal justice agenda, over the longer term.

In convening all such meetings and groups, however, there is a need for advance consultation with partners about agendas, and early agreement and clarity about outcomes, as a diverse group of stakeholders will inevitably bring very different understandings and expectations to the table.

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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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