

Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management

Operational partnership working

April 2012

Resource 6 of 7

Home Office

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work with offenders and their families

1. Introduction

This is the sixth 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 consider how best to involve local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations as operational partners, but it may equally help VCS organisations to think about how, collectively, they might develop a more effective operational relationship with statutory partners. The other resources in the series include:

The other resources in the series include:

- Resource 1** The added value of VCS partners in Integrated Offender Management arrangements
- Resource 2** Mapping and engaging with potential 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)
- Resource 5** Strategic 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.⁶ 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 project.

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. The added value of the Voluntary and Community Sector as an operational partner 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 developing the potential to involve a more diverse range of VCS organisations as operational partners within local IOM arrangements. The added value of involving the VCS in this way, identified through the programme, included:

- **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 to help prevent future re-offending. 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 significantly enhanced the depth and extent of Sector's operational engagement within IOM arrangements, not only as referral and full delivery partners, but by opening up opportunities for much wider engagement with diverse organisations and grassroots community groups.

Key to this expansion were the initial mapping and engagement activities that were undertaken to enable statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements to identify and build links with a much wider set of potential local VCS partners. See Resource 2 - *Mapping and engaging with potential local VCS partners* - for further guidance on this.

The role of the lead local VCS agency was also considered 'pivotal' in brokering or communicating new operational arrangements on behalf of a wider set of VCS partners. See Resource 3 – *The potential brokerage role of Local Support and Development Organisations*.

The following case studies provide examples of the range of activities that partners undertook and that were perceived as effective ways of achieving more effective operational VCS involvement in local IOM arrangements.

A Prison-based IOM 'Hub'

In **Leeds**, West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy and Foundation worked with HMP Leeds, Police and Probation to establish a multi-agency IOM 'hub' at the gate of HMP Leeds. Two Foundation staff were seconded to the Hub as Project Manager and Senior Housing Support Worker.

The Hub aimed to identify priority prisoners due to be released and to co-ordinate 'wrap-around' services on release, tailored to their individual needs. These services were provided by the statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements and by a wider grouping of VCS organisations linked to the Hub.

Between 1st January and 31st March 2011, 87 men were assessed and offered through the gate services, and 63 accepted support. At the end of the funded period, the following outcomes were identified by partners:

- Improved co-ordination of through the gate support for prisoners being managed under local IOM arrangements;
- Improved partnership working between VCS and statutory partners leading to a better service provided to men leaving HMP Leeds;
- Improved partnership working between statutory partners (e.g. HMP Leeds and West Yorkshire Police);
- Enhanced understanding of the roles of the different partners within the IOM agenda;
- Enhanced view of the effectiveness of the VCS; both as operational partners within this project and in the wider sense.⁹

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. HMP Leeds has also recently been identified as one of the two public sector prisons that will pilot a Payment by Results approach to the rehabilitation and resettlement of prisoners.

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-focussed 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.

9 West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project (WYCCP). 2011. *Final Report from Leeds*.
Online: <http://www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/iom#fin> [Last accessed 14/03/2012]

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

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.

Meeting the specialised needs of particular groups of offenders

The practice learning from *Building VCS Involvement in IOM* identified as a particular strength the ability of VCS agencies to respond to more specialised needs of particular groups of offenders such as women and BAME offenders. Being embedded within local communities enables VCS organisations to understand and articulate the needs of the communities and thus provide an effective conduit to groups of offenders whose needs are not being met or who are otherwise hard to reach.

The statutory agencies involved in the programme particularly recognised the ability of the VCS to provide personalised services to respond to more specialised needs which would otherwise remain unmet by more standard provision. Examples from **Croydon** included the following services, funded through small seed-corn grants:

- F.W.P Hibiscus: support services for BAME / migrant women released from custody.
- African Youth Development Association: assisting ten ex-offenders to develop and practice skills for life and achieve a recognised qualification to prepare them for employment.
- Croydon Chinese Community Services: delivering two bi-lingual workshops on basic Chinese hairdressing and beauty skills to Chinese people who are at risk of offending.
- South London Tamil Welfare Group: work with vulnerable Tamil families to reduce the anti-social behaviour of young people.

In addition to the contribution these VCS organisations made in meeting the particular needs of the groups they were targeting, their involvement was also thought to generate more general awareness, raise the profile of these groups, and increase understanding of their needs amongst statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements.

5. The potential role of small seed-corn grants

Two areas (Croydon; Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole) used seed-corn grants to enable smaller VCS organisations to become more directly involved in work with offenders. In both areas the funds were distributed and managed by the lead VCS agencies and allocated through a competitive application process.

Partners involved in local IOM arrangements in both areas highlighted the importance of the small grants in terms of their capacity to unlock community goodwill and generate a wide range of local resources to support innovative work with offenders, all at very low cost.

In **Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole** the grants were focused on capacity building VCS organisations to work with offenders as volunteers and to develop local volunteering and mentoring services.

Some quite inspirational schemes were started by VCS organisations with little historical connection with the CJS. For example, Dorset Reclaim, a recycling charity that had previously worked with several offenders on Community Payback, used a small grant to establish a dedicated wood recycling workshop where IOM offenders can undertake supervised voluntary work and acquire skills to make items such as bird boxes, picnic tables etc. Because the wood is donated and items made are sold, the workshop can now continue to operate as a self-supporting social enterprise.

In **Croydon**, small grants of up to £2,000 were used flexibly to enable small, diverse, groups to start to engage with local IOM arrangements and other CJS services, and to encourage self-help approaches by offenders and ex-offenders. Grant recipients included:

- Kreative Education Solution, to hold business and enterprise sessions for ex-offenders and those at risk of offending;
- Heathfield Ecology Centre, to involve ex-offenders in building pergolas and archways at the Centre;
- Mighty Men of Valour, to develop a toolkit and DVD on the topic “Your Sperm, Your Responsibility”, to support ex-offenders in being good fathers;
- Croydon Black Boys Can, to fund two workshops for parents and their sons, targeting young boys at serious risk of gang activity / offending.

The Croydon Women’s Court worker employed by Croydon Voluntary Action was also allocated a small grant budget of £2,000 which enabled her to respond very flexibly to the needs of women by spot-purchasing personalised service from small, local community groups that would not otherwise be able to offer support, e.g. from a women’s counselling service or local family support project. This was thought to be a highly effective use of a modest resource.

The practice learning from these experiences suggests that:

- Using seed-corn funding to engage agencies not already providing services to offenders is more time consuming than building on existing activity; if this is the intention of the funding then sufficient time needs to be allocated to enable appropriate links to be made and support provided.
- Using appropriate and well-thought-out eligibility criteria for funding can help to ensure that more specialised or under-resourced services can be targeted.
- The establishment of a multi-agency, multi-sector panel to consider applications and agree grants ensures that different experiences, knowledge and perspectives are brought to bear on the decision making process.
- Small amounts of money can be very effective in stimulating and building activity, particularly with smaller community organisations that can effectively and quickly access under-served communities.
- Criminal justice agencies may be reluctant to refer to organisations where funding is seen as

being uncertain; consideration of longer term sustainability and impact is therefore important even in relation to small seed-corn grants.

- The grant making process also needs to respond to the gaps that partners collectively identify in relation to meeting the needs of local offenders, rather than providing funding to develop additional provision where services are already plentiful.

6. Operational challenges

Partners from all sectors involved in the programme were overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of involving the VCS operationally in local IOM arrangements. In the final Clinks workshop for all four areas to share lessons learned from the programme, the participants' top recommendation / learning point was that:

Involving the VCS in delivery MUST feature in the strategic plans of Partnerships and Trusts.

The evaluation of the programme nonetheless highlighted some particular challenges that need to be overcome if VCS organisations are to become involved as full operational partners in local IOM arrangements:¹¹

- **Mixed levels of understanding of IOM amongst the VCS.** IOM was a new agenda for many of the local VCS organisations involved in the initiative. Those organisations which were new to IOM, in some cases, were found to have a very limited understanding of IOM.
- **Staff buy-in.** While local projects were well supported by strategic IOM leads, some VCS staff felt that frontline staff were less likely to buy into the funded projects. This was problematic for VCS services which relied on offender managers to make referrals.
- **Risk management.** Participants from both sectors identified several issues around how the VCS managed risk. Organisations which were new to working with offenders did not always have easy access to the expertise required to assess offenders and appropriately manage identified risks.
- **Developing appropriate information-sharing agreements.** All four areas reported some difficulty in establishing workable information sharing protocols. Information-sharing agreements which were in place before the initiative started did not always reflect data sharing in the VCS (e.g. limitations around IT equipment and storage).
- **Clarity about roles, outcomes and evidence.** Partners highlighted the importance of Service Agreements to ensure that all parties are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities and what support is available. Expectations around outcomes and evaluation need to be agreed so that ongoing evidence is collected to support possible future funding applications.

¹¹ Kevin Wong *et al.* 2012.

7. Developing an action plan for operational partnership working

Resources 2 - 5 in this series outline a number of different stages in brokering and building relationships and mutual awareness between statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements and VCS organisations, as the foundation for effective strategic and operational partnership working.

For VCS organisations without existing knowledge and understanding of IOM, there are clearly some immediate issues to consider and address before taking on an operational role as an IOM partner. These are more fully explored in Resource 4 - *How VCS organisations can engage with local IOM arrangements and other Criminal Justice System (CJS) structures*.

Experience from this programme suggests that, at the point where a dialogue is being developed about the potential for greater VCS involvement in local IOM arrangements, partners could usefully undertake a joint exercise to audit organisational readiness for operational partnership working, across both sectors.

This might include assessing the following:

- Levels of understanding of the work of statutory CJS partners and of local IOM arrangements amongst the VCS, and vice versa;
- Staff training requirements and opportunities;
- Awareness and mapping of the wider VCS, especially of smaller organisations and grassroots groups capable of reaching into communities and meeting more specialised offender needs;
- Staff buy-in and readiness to participate in operational partnership working and to make or accept referrals to or from new services or partners;
- Perceptions and understandings of assessing and managing risk when working with offenders in different operational contexts and service settings;
- Existing information and data-sharing agreements and their appropriateness to smaller VCS partners.

Partners could then agree a plan that would not only address these issues but also provide real opportunities for collaborative working and the strengthening of relationships, e.g. by organising a mutual awareness rising event; undertaking further VCS mapping work; developing staff communications; holding a joint staff training day; or setting up a joint working group to explore and develop improved risk management or information sharing arrangements. All of these activities would serve to underpin future operational partnership working.

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Author and editorial group

The resources were drafted by Lesley Frazer, Policy Manager at Clinks. The Home Office editorial group overseeing their production included Bernard Lane and Sule Kangulec of the Reducing Reoffending Unit.

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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