

Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management

Strategic partnership working

April 2012

Resource 5 of 7

1. Introduction

This is the fifth 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 strategic partners, but it may equally help VCS organisations to think about how, collectively, they might develop a more strategic relationship with commissioners. The other resources in the series include:

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- 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 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.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 15/03/2012]

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 a strategic partner in Integrated Offender Management arrangements

The importance of effective partnership working between Government agencies and VCS organisations is encapsulated in the Compact, the agreement between the Government and the VCS which outlines a way of working to improve their relationship for mutual advantage, and which was made one of six departmental priorities cutting across government business plans in February 2012.⁹

Undertakings for the Government include a commitment to:

Work with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.

Despite this commitment, many key strategic partnerships including those within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) appear to have as yet poorly developed mechanisms for involving the VCS as a full strategic partner.

Against this background, both statutory and VCS organisations involved in *Building VCS Involvement in IOM* identified real progress in consolidating local relationships and involving the VCS as a strategic partner in planning and overseeing local IOM arrangements. One of the key findings of the evaluation was that “wherever the capacity of VCS agencies allows, VCS projects which work with offenders should be represented on local IOM steering groups at an operational and strategic level”.¹⁰ The added value of involving the VCS at this level, 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.

⁹ Cabinet Office. December 2010. *The Compact. The Coalition Government and civil society organisations working effectively in partnership for the benefit of communities and citizens in England*. Online: http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_compact.pdf [Last accessed 11/03/2012]

¹⁰ Kevin Wong *et al.* 2012.

4. Building strategic involvement

In the four programme areas, the lead VCS agencies (which in three out of four cases were LSDOs) were seen as playing a “pivotal role” in brokering engagement between statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements and the wider VCS, and facilitating and supporting a new strategic relationship that was valued by all stakeholders.¹¹ The following approaches, developed through the programme, were all identified as effective ways of building VCS involvement at this level.

4.1 Developing VCS voice and strategic influence by establishing a Forum

Strategic engagement between VCS and statutory agencies involved in local IOM arrangements was enhanced by the development of local fora of various kinds, and the development of clear Terms of Reference to connect them with key strategic bodies such as IOM Boards and Community Safety Partnerships.

In **Croydon** the lead VCS agency, Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA) facilitated the development of a new **VCS Supporting Offenders Forum** that brought together a wide range of VCS organisations, including small grassroots groups, with an interest in developing stronger strategic links with local IOM arrangements and statutory partners in the wider CJS. CVA also worked with statutory IOM leads and with the Council’s Safer Croydon Partnership to ensure that the Forum had a process to feed into the local IOM Board and the Safer Croydon Board.

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.

The development of the Forum was welcomed by both statutory and VCS partners involved in local IOM arrangements:

It is imperative that there is an independent forum that brings together VCS groups to share information, receive information, and input to strategy. We are all doing a lot of effective work around criminal justice but commissioners do not seem to know about it and we need to collaborate better between ourselves. [VCS representative]

There will be a gap in our strategy if we do not engage with the VCS in a structured manner and improve our awareness of the services that are offered. [IOM Manager]¹²

The agreed Terms of Reference for the Croydon VCS Supporting Offenders Forum are attached at Appendix 1.

¹¹ See Resource 3 - *The potential brokerage role of Local Support and Development Organisations*.

¹² Croydon Voluntary Action. 2011. *New Routes: A project to enhance VCS involvement in IOM arrangements*. Online: <http://www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/iom> [Last accessed 10/3/2012]

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

In all four areas, mechanisms were established by the lead VCS agencies to elect VCS representatives to sit on key strategic CJS boards and partnerships, including IOM Boards, with clear accountabilities to local VCS fora or networks.

In Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, as in Croydon, the lead LSDOs developed a VCS Forum to bring together organisations working with offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending. They have succeeded in encouraging and widening the participation of the VCS 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 (CSPs) in the area, and asked the chair of each CSP 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. The VCS played a key part in driving forward the development of these new partnership structures, providing consistency at a time of many changes in key personnel within the statutory sector partner agencies.

The programme of work undertaken through *Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management* was pivotal in demonstrating the value of working strategically alongside the VCS to senior managers involved in local IOM arrangements. This has led Gloucestershire Constabulary to offer funding to support continued VCS engagement and representation in the coming year.

In Leeds too, a Crime Reduction and Prevention Forum was established, overseen by a strategy group comprised of 8 elected VCS representatives, 3 representatives nominated by the statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements (Police; Probation; Prisons), and a service user nominated by an existing user group. The strategy group acts as the key strategic link between the Forum, the IOM Board and other CJS commissioning structures and partnerships such as Safer Leeds.

4.3 Developing a clear commissioning strategy and guidelines to strengthen partner relationships

One area articulated and formalised its intentions to involve the VCS as a key strategic partner through the development of a commissioning framework. This provides guidance to all partners involved in local IOM arrangements on how the resources of the VCS can be harnessed to help reduce reoffending through improved and joined-up commissioning.

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.¹³ 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.

At a conference in October 2011, the Deputy Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Constabulary said, "It's invaluable that this Commissioning Framework is in place for the arrival of the new Police and Crime Commissioner and it will form the building block for developing the Partnership's commissioning over the coming year."

4.4 Enabling service users to have a voice in service planning

The programme demonstrated the important role that can be played by the VCS in enabling service users to have a voice in reviewing and planning local IOM arrangements.

In **Gloucestershire**, an IOM Reference Group was established, bringing together a group of offenders managed under local IOM arrangements. This idea arose from an existing Client Reference Group, facilitated by Stonham, which consults with ex-offenders via monthly meetings. 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. 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 future IOM arrangements in Gloucestershire.¹⁴

13 Rachel Hankins, for Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary Action (GAVCA). 2011. *Harnessing voluntary and community sector resources to help reduce reoffending in Gloucestershire: a framework for commissioning*.

Online: <http://www.clinks.org/assets/files/PDFs/Harnessing%20VCS%20resources%20-%20a%20commissioning%20framework.pdf> [Last accessed 10/3/2012]

14 David Turner & Tracey Bessant. 2011. *Voice from the Streets: Voice of Change*. University of Gloucestershire.

Online: <http://www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/iom#res> [Last accessed 27.03.2012]

5. An action plan for building strategic partnership working

It is unlikely that statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements will feel they have the capacity or reach to undertake work of the kind described here, in order to build VCS involvement in strategic partnership working. As set out in the Compact, however, they do have a crucial role to play in recognising the value of, and actively supporting, such involvement.

Individual VCS organisations, likewise, may be struggling to identify routes to strategic engagement with statutory agencies and consider that they have only limited capacity to enter into partnership at that level, although keen to develop collective voice and influence.

Experience from *Building VCS Involvement in IOM* suggests that an LSDO, or another lead VCS agency, could be invited to play a key role to play in working with statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements to develop and facilitate strategic engagement with the wider Sector, including service users. (See Resource 3 - *The potential brokerage role of Local Support and Development Organisations*.)

Such organisations will, however, need to consider their own capacity and readiness to undertake this role and what, if any, support / learning they will need in order to become knowledgeable about local IOM arrangements and the wider work of the CJS. (Appendix 2 of Resource 4 - *How Voluntary and Community Sector organisations can engage with local Integrated Offender Management arrangements and other Criminal Justice System structures* - provides a checklist for a VCS organisation to assess its own organisational readiness as a strategic partner and / or broker of relationships between VCS and statutory agencies involved in local IOM arrangements.)

Where necessary, advice on identifying a suitable local lead could be sought from the lead VCS organisation identified by the Safer Future Communities initiative. This national partnership, led by Clinks, is currently developing and supporting a network of VCS organisations in each Police Force area in England and Wales, in order to prepare and support the local Sector to engage with their elected Police and Crime Commissioners and wider commissioning landscape.¹⁵ The vast majority of these network leads are LSDOs, and in 2012-13 they will be actively building relationships with key statutory partners and with the many VCS organisations and groups that have an interest in community safety and crime reduction in all their local areas. They are therefore well placed to advise on the potential to develop strategic partnership working within each local IOM area.

Drawing on the case study examples in this resource, local statutory and VCS partners may then find it useful to undertake a joint preliminary audit of the extent to which VCS partners are already fulfilling their potential roles in local IOM arrangements as full strategic partners, and whether there are any existing fora or networks that have the potential to bring statutory partners involved in local IOM arrangements together with VCS organisations for dialogue / information exchange. Where the need for greater strategic engagement is identified, this could form the basis for initial discussion and agreement to develop a joint action plan for building strategic partnership working.

¹⁵ The list of identified local Safer Future Communities VCS network leads, one per Police Force / PCC area, may be found at: <http://www.clinks.org/services/sfc>

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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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Appendix 1

Terms of Reference for the Croydon VCS Supporting Offenders Forum

Purpose

The Voluntary and Community Sector Supporting Offenders Forum exists to be the voice of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations and community groups working with offenders, ex-offenders and those at the risk of re and offending in Croydon. It is a collective of members working collaboratively and strategically to improve the services offered to individuals, their families and communities in order to reduce re-offending in the borough. The Forum will provide a platform to input into local policy making and will achieve this through regular information updates, representation, training, networking, peer support and opportunities to participate in active decision-making.

The Forum is led by the VCS and supports all those working with offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending along with their families. The Forum will help bring together the statutory and voluntary sectors, with a common interest in reducing offending. The Forum will develop better linkages between VCS and statutory sector partners to implement local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements here in Croydon, via VCS participation on the IOM Group and the Safer Croydon Partnership, and joint working between practitioners achieving alignment between IOM and early-intervention and preventative VCS strategies.

The Forum will:

- Draw membership from VCS organisations providing support and services to offenders, ex offenders and those at risk of offending in Croydon;
- Meet quarterly;
- Be hosted by Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA), facilitated by CVA Community Involvement team and managed by a steering group;
- Invite statutory sector representatives as required;
- Request two elected/mandated members to be its representatives on the Safer Croydon Board (to be agreed);
- Request two elected/mandated members to be its representatives on the IOM Board (to be agreed);
- Develop a three to five year plan with an annual review built in;
- Ensure involvement of young people and those who have offended.

Aims

The Forum will:

- Develop S.M.A.R.T objectives;
- Influence local policy, commissioning and sharing good practice in the field of reducing offending;
- Promote joint partnership working amongst relevant agencies and networks;
- Provide an environment for open discussion, learning and development amongst organisations working within the criminal justice system, in addition to sharing research, good practice and information;

- Work in partnership to reflect the needs of people who have offended or are at risk of offending in Croydon, their families and communities and unify the voice of the voluntary and community sector on such issues;
- Provide an opportunity for members to take an active role in influencing local decisions through meaningful engagement with senior managers and via the Forum;
- Seek to work as a consortium in joint funding applications where appropriate;
- Identify training opportunities for member organisations.

Objectives

The Forum will:

- Seek to build further on the New Routes mapping exercise to identify all local resources to ensure the needs of offenders are matched with appropriate support;
- Clarify and further develop the role of the of the voluntary and community sector within local IOM arrangements;
- Seek to develop a sustainable wrap around service for offenders managed under local IOM arrangements;
- Identify best practice in information transfer to ensure service providers are fully briefed before taking on individuals;
- Develop a consortium of VCS to work in partnership with the statutory sector to identify and apply for available funding.

Indicators

- Produce 3 newsletters per year
- Organise four network sessions per year
- Organise six training and sharing good practice sessions per year
- Representatives to attend eight meetings per year

Proposal for Forum Co-ordinator: Key Responsibilities

- To facilitate the full empowerment and increased effective participation of VCS sector partners in local IOM arrangements in Croydon;
- To work with other partners and agencies to ensure and increase the inclusion of diverse VCS organisations within the commissioning framework for IOM;
- To promote the VCS in Croydon as a key strategic partner and provider in the contribution of additional resources for the borough;
- To strengthen the VCS workforce through accessing training and development opportunities, fundraising opportunities and working in partnership;
- To inform, promote and develop good practice in partnership, policy and commissioning arrangements including safeguarding;
- To highlight issues and emerging themes that need addressing to ensure the offenders, their families and VCS organisations play a full role in providing and delivering services in Croydon;

- To assist in the development of policies which tackle inequality and reflect the diversity of Croydon communities;
- To ensure the effective contribution of VCS stakeholders as equal partners in the development of commissioning arrangements and the development of voluntary sector activity;
- To support Forum representatives to contribute to partnership working and commissioning; convening pre-meetings, arranging briefing and training sessions;
- To be responsible for the management of assigned budgets including: income and expenditure, budget setting and monitoring in liaison with CVA's Head of Community Involvement.