



# new routes

A project to enhance Voluntary/Community Sector (VCS) involvement in local  
Integrated Offender Management

The project involved three main strands of work: one supporting a Court-based worker for women offenders; another supporting a volunteering and mentoring programme; and thirdly a partnership project linking together these strands through a strategic focus, raising the profile of VCS provision at the Safer Croydon Partnership and promoting VCS service-provision via improved communications and seedbed funding. This report describes: lessons learned overall and what, with hindsight, could have been done differently; the outputs and outcomes for each work stream, and also the sustainability of each area of work.



# new routes

*A project to enhance Voluntary/Community Sector (VCS) involvement in local Integrated Offender Management*

## Women's Court-based Referral Service

The project developed a court-based triage service for women with a broad range of complex needs entering the criminal justice system from a variety of points. This work also included researching local and national organisations that offered services and activities to support women offenders.

## Volunteering & Mentoring Programme

This part of the programme set up a volunteer brokerage to work with mainstream VCOs to develop volunteering opportunities and to support offenders into volunteering; and a mentoring training programme to motivate offenders in establishing long term sustainable social relationships.

## Partnership Development Programme – including Market Place, Forum and Small Grants.

A communications programme achieving wider Voluntary and Community Sector sign-up to Intergraded Offender Management via mapping, conferencing and networking; and a small grants programme supporting community-based approaches for offenders

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# Women's Court-based Referral Service

## Set-up of the project

At the onset of the project the work was based around building a basic understanding and knowledge of the Criminal Justice System. This work also included researching local and national organisations that offered services and activities to support women offenders. This work is still ongoing, building a database of support organisations and services to meet individual needs.

Work was set back slightly due to heavy snowfalls in December, along with the Volunteer Centre being closed over the Christmas period. Some of this time, however, was utilised to develop referral forms as well as developing a process for spot purchasing services which would enable individuals to access other services and activities in a timely way. Meetings took place with the Women's Compliance Team at the Probation Trust, the Court Officers and the Ushers to ensure that they were fully informed of the process and were aware of referral procedures.

In January 2011 the work in the court commenced, with the Women's Court Worker (WCW) being based in the Probation offices at Croydon Magistrates Court 3 days per week. Information booklets were placed on the help desk and posters were displayed around the court in public areas to increase awareness with women, or those representing them, about the service.

At the Court, women in the waiting area were approached and asked whether they would be happy to take 5 minutes to find out about the service on offer. The WCW then invited the women (if they agreed) to participate in an interview and to talk to them about the opportunities for support that could be made available to them. From the outset, they were made aware that engagement with the project was not compulsory

When women decided to participate in the project, they were then asked a number of questions which would assist the WCW in identifying support services that would be relevant to the individual participant. The service on offer is a holistic one which looks at the needs of the whole family as well as specific interest or hobbies of the individual.

The next stage involved the WCW approaching the services or activities that the individual wished to engage with. In cases where the service comes with a cost attached the WCW looked to implement a 'personalisation plan' or spot purchase services with the agreement of the New Routes lead. Once a suitable service had been established, the WCW discussed this with the individual and either made a referral to the service or provided the individual with contact details so they could approach the service themselves. If the individual was not happy with the proposed service, further services would be identified.



## Outputs

The output table below shows the WCW did not receive many referrals from partner organisations. By being present in the Magistrates Court she was able to approach and engage potential service users herself. By the end of the project, organisations had developed a greater understanding of what was on offer and referrals began to come through.

	January		February		March	
	predicted	actual	predicted	Actual	predicted	Actual
Number of referrals received	15	0	5	1	25	2
Number of women interviewed	13	18	18	15	10	12
Number of women engaged in service	7	5	10	8	15	8
Number of women ref to Volunteering	3	5	5	4	6	3
Number of Women ref to Organisation for support needs	5	8	6	7	10	7
number of women still engaged in services 3 months	0	0	0	0	18	14

## Outcomes

The number of women receiving a custodial sentence, and the frequency of re-offending, was reduced as a result of work being carried out with the Probation Trust, including the New Routes Program, into Pre-Sentence Reports although this is a time related process and will need to be monitored over a period of 12months or more.

Families are supported by providing women with access to voluntary services targeted at women with diverse needs. The services will support them to move away from criminal activity. The services have been delivered in a non judgemental way and aim to accommodate all. Women have received support with finance and budgeting,



counselling, volunteering opportunities and a range of other activities. This, again, will need to be monitored over a period of time.

There is greater liaison, involvement and partnership working between the VCS and IOM partners in relation to the specific needs of women offenders. More organisations have been involved in various events and forums delivered by the New Routes Project which has been achieved through supporting individual caseloads. Through this liaison both the VCS and the Probation Trust are aware of the opportunities to work together and some new relationships have been fostered.

### Lessons learned; What with hindsight could have been done differently.

As this was a pilot project, it allowed CVA to test out an area of working that we would not usually enter into, as well as giving the opportunity to the Probation Trust to reach out to VCS organisations. Due to the time scales, key decision makers were not able to meet at the same time, which led to a number of cases where there were delays in the progress of the service. The Probation Trust was also involved in restructuring, which led to confusion in the way the project worked (partly due to restrictions in working practices).

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the different roles, a process of shadowing would have been useful, from all staffing perspectives. There was also a need for the VCS to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities when working with offenders and, in hindsight, training (or an induction) towards the beginning of the project for staff engaging would have been extremely useful. In order for a project like New Routes to work there needs to be longer term, more sustainable, funding in place in order to identify whether the project is able to offer a real alternative for offender management. Future developments for this project could include:

- Supporting a volunteer program within the courts to carry out the support work and increase the signposting element of the service to all entering the CJS (or attending court). This would need to be managed to ensure that volunteers are well supported through induction, supervision and training.
- More intense working with the Probation Trust, identifying re-offenders who could be encouraged onto the programme.
- Linking with Bronzefield Prison, offering support to women returning to the Croydon area, who are serving less than a 12-month sentence (since they would not have a Probation Officer when leaving prison). This support could take the form of mentoring/befriending and initial engagement with the individual could take place before they are due to leave the prison. This would, however, mean developing a stronger working relationship with the prison and the Resettlement Team within the prison. A programme such as this would need to ensure that mentors are managed and supported to carry out their role.
- Having a spot purchasing budget and personalisation program in place, which would enable the project to offer a program of services to meet an individual's needs would be vital to divert women away from crime.
- All of the above could be part of research project which could help identify differences in the areas and the levels of support which can make a difference to individual's lives.



# Partnership & Development Programme

The initial part of this project was to put in place a process for mapping VCS and other services available to offenders and a document to be circulated to all IOM leads and participating VCS organisations. The first draft was made available March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011. The document contained:

- Activities, referral processes, funding, volunteer opportunities for organisations involved in small grants funding;
- Support needs for the sector;
- Identified gaps in provision.

## Key learning points:

Mapping should be an ongoing process linked to the VCS /IOM support forum and updated by the coordinator of the forum; the VCS are generally not aware of the workings of the Probation Trust in relation to commissioning, information protocols and partnership arrangements; the VCS welcomed the opportunity to work closely with IOM leads; the VCS bodies offered a range of services to offenders including:

- mentoring,
- information, advice and guidance,
- training and education,
- debt management and financial advice particularly for women,
- personal and self-esteem development,
- volunteering opportunities,
- practical support,
- family support,
- involving ex-offenders in crime prevention strategies.

The Probation IOM leads required greater awareness of VCS sector; the VCS bodies wanted more information regarding funding opportunities, changes in policy, more collaborative work across the sector and possible formation of consortia; the VCS bodies, mainly from BAME communities, do not see themselves as working in the criminal justice sector, yet consistently work with offenders and families with positive outcomes.

The VCS identified following gaps in services to offenders/ex offenders:

- Debt management and financial support;
- Increased variation of employment and training opportunities;
- Personal development and coaching;
- Increased support for individuals as they leave prison and planned strategies for departure before end of sentence;
- Services run by and for ex-offenders.



## Small Grants Fund

CVA was allocated £30,000 to offer 15 small grants to support innovative work being carried out by new, emerging VCOs delivering services for offenders and ex-offenders.

The process was supported by Croydon Voluntary Action's experienced Grants Administration Team which is currently managing the central government Grassroots programme.

Publicity leaflets were produced and distributed to all on CVA's extensive database to announce the bidding round, with further information and advice on bidding available throughout December and January. The funding was also publicised via outreach events – i.e. at the various community meetings, resident groups, parenting groups, youth groups, disability groups and faith meetings CVA convenes.

CVA staff and volunteers also publicised the budget through the networks and forums that CVA run in Croydon including the Croydon Community Empowerment Network, Mental Health Forum, Croydon Refugee Forum and Children, Young People's and Families Network. CVA staff are skilled in using press articles, e-mails, texts, e-bulletins and links on a range of websites to get the word out when new funding is available.

Organisations were invited to submit applications based on projects that:

- a) Worked with offenders and ex-offenders;
- b) Worked with women offenders and link into the New Routes Croydon Women's Court Service;
- c) Developed innovative new ways of supporting offenders and ex-offenders;
- d) Responded to needs and gaps in service provision;
- e) Encouraged innovative linkages between IOM and smaller local grassroots and community organisations.

The closing date for the applications was January 24<sup>th</sup> 2011. In total New Routes received 44 applications. The New Routes Project Advisory Group acted as an independent panel to approve grant applications.

Following final decisions, groups were informed immediately and cheques dispensed. CVA made training available to all groups regarding working with offenders/ex-offenders.

Clinks identified a further £16,000 in Home Office funding meaning that we were able to fund a further eight projects. The panel had identified a further eight organisations which received funding.

Projects are to be finished at the end of May.

## Outcomes

Those funded included projects which offer a range of services including:

- Debt advice to women who are referred via the Women's Court worker service;
- Practical information, advice and guidance support to those leaving prison;
- Self-development workshops for individuals on Community Payback scheme;
- Social Enterprise development;



- Access to employment and training provision;
- Support to young fathers leaving prison;
- Leadership through sport;
- Family support;
- Work with immigration service;
- Mentoring and coaching.

### Lessons learned; What with hindsight could have been done differently.

- Most VCS organisations that applied did not see themselves as specifically working in the offender management field, yet had offered range of services that worked with such individuals;
- There is a huge range of provision by VCS organisations but a need for funding, particularly in the BAME sector;
- Reassurance was required that the VCS was not required to provide services at low or no cost due to public sector cuts;
- Many VCS organisations offer work in prevention of offending from a young age and also with families and communities;
- Organisations offered bespoke solutions to supposed 'hard to reach groups';
- The level of funding was not high. If more funding is not forthcoming or less funding is available, possibly funding fewer groups would be possible;
- Timescales for completion of the projects were difficult and did not fit in with other timescales. Future funding should give consideration to recruitment, timings and set up;
- More information is required from the Probation Trust as to the nature of Integrated Offender Management and internal dissemination processes;
- There needs to be greater clarity as to internal partnership processes within the Probation Trust. Many organisations wished to develop relationships but felt that they were at a disadvantage because of the lack of previous relationships;
- Offender Management leads were not all in place during the project, meaning relationships were difficult to develop;
- There is a need for support to the VCS organisations to consider consortium type arrangements, allowing for collaboration on applications for funding, commissioning etc;
- CVA involvement demonstrated that it was important that the Grant Administrator has knowledge of and a relationship with VCS organisations and has systems in place to efficiently administer funds;
- Greater awareness is needed amongst Probation Offender Managers about the work of the VCS sector so that commissioning and partnership can reflect its bespoke nature.





## Voluntary and Community Sector Supporting Offenders Forum

In the planning of the Market Place event and the publicising of the small grants programme in January, the VCS organisations were informed of the development of the Forum.

Initially the Forum's aims were to:

- Be developed for volunteer practitioners by volunteer practitioners and to be the voice of voluntary and community sector organisations and community groups working with offenders, ex-offenders and those at the risk of offending in Croydon;
- Support members to work collaboratively and strategically to improve local services offered to individuals in order to reduce re-offending in Croydon;
- Provide an overview of policy, legislation and practice related to the Criminal Justice System to support volunteer practitioners. To do this through regular information updates, representation, training, networking, peer support and opportunities to participate in active decision-making;
- Coordinate and facilitate joint-working with all agencies involved in the Integrated Offender Management Model (IOM) enabling a wider cross-section of volunteer practitioners and voluntary and community officers to input to all community safety issues;

It would also aim to influence local policy and practice in the field of reducing offending through;

- Supporting the personal development of practitioners;
- Promoting joint working amongst relevant agencies and networks;
- Providing an environment for open discussion, learning and development amongst organisations working within the criminal justice system, and all community safety related matters, in addition to sharing research, good practice and information;
- Working in partnership to reflect the needs of people who have offended or are at risk of offending in Croydon and unify the voice of the voluntary and community sector on such issues;
- Providing an opportunity for members to take an active role in influencing local decisions through engagement via the Croydon Safer Partnership.

Initial discussions identified that there was broad support among VCS bodies to have a Forum that gave them:

- Strategic input to the Integrated Offender Management process and community safety policies and services;
- Greater knowledge regarding the IOM process;
- Greater opportunity to develop partnership and funding proposals with each other and the statutory sector;
- The opportunity to represent the views of the sector and those of offenders and ex offenders;
- Provide solutions to the issues faced by so-called 'hard to reach communities'.

Following the Market Place event in February, CVA worked together with Cheryl Wright of the Council's Safer Croydon Partnership to ensure that the Forum had a process to feed into the newly emerging Community Safety Partnership structure.

Interested organisations were invited to the first meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss the terms of reference and aims and objectives. Initial invite for attendance extended to VCS organisations working with offender, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending.



The key areas to be covered were:

- Agreeing the terms of reference;
- Priority areas for Voluntary Sector bodies in relation to criminal justice;
- Understanding Integrated Offender Management and partnership with the Probation Trust;
- Funding opportunities;
- Future meetings.

## Outcomes

Representatives from seventeen organisations attended the inaugural Forum meeting. Organisations were keen to develop further dialogue with statutory sector bodies and the Terms of Reference outlined below are to be presented to both the Safer Croydon Partnership and the IOM management for further discussion. The Terms of Reference were drawn up by those present and CVA was requested to feed these back to the IOM group and Safer Croydon Board. It was agreed that the Forum would meet again in May 2011.

It was agreed that the remit and therefore naming of the Forum should be specific and represent its key aims hence the change in title (terms of reference attached).

## Lessons learned; What with hindsight could have been done differently.

There is clearly a need for strategic input to policy development by the voluntary and community sector and a real desire from the sector to develop capacity to do so. Many organisations work closely with offenders and ex-offenders and have a wealth of knowledge, skills and expertise and this can only benefit the service to individuals;

Organisations have locally based knowledge and expertise that will allow for local solutions to local problems;

A forum requires support and resources. The Forum can act as broker offering statutory sector bespoke services to enhance the management of offenders It also requires a worker to facilitate and act as a broker in relations between the VCS and the Probation Trust, and other statutory sector bodies;

It needs to be recognised that many VCS bodies do not see themselves as providing services around criminal justice but in amongst their core services they offer bespoke provision to community members who either have offended or are at risk of offending and their families;

Developing the mapping exercise and small grants programme, alongside a mentoring and volunteering project, the Women's Court Worker Service offered a holistic model into which VCS bodies could develop an understanding of the workings of Probation and other statutory sector bodies;

To increase the effectiveness of the partnership programme the commissioners of the New Routes project could, prior to submitting a bid, have identified opportunities for future input by the VCS and possible funding streams;

## New Routes



More information was required about the IOM process and how the Probation Trust works, particularly in relation to referrals, partnerships, commissioning and information sharing protocols;

The short term nature of the project did not allow for full discussion amongst statutory sector bodies – particularly in a period of great change – as to the internal changes required to truly develop partnerships with the VCS.



## VCS Market Place Conference – Working with Offenders

CVA organised an event to showcase the VCS providers, to launch a new network of VCS organisations working with offenders and ex-offenders, and to strengthen the VCS links with IOM partners. The conference hosted a VCS Market Place, showcasing service provision and bringing practitioners together in special interest focus groups (mental health; working with women offenders; counselling; BME services etc.) to foster joint working and the setting up of integrated offender pathways.

### Set-up of the project

The New Routes Market Place seminar was held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February at the Croydon Voluntary Action Resource Centre. Those 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 criminal justice agencies. It was the aim that this initial contact would lead to stronger working relationships and partnerships between sectors and an increasingly robust Integrated Offender Management provision that is bespoke to the borough of Croydon.

The event involved attendees participating in a session which focused on a lead officer from the Probation Trust, and other criminal justice agencies, being allocated approximately five VCS organisations. Representatives from these made a brief presentation of their work to the lead officer for their group and there was an opportunity for them to ask questions and to explain their role and the range of work. The sessions were recorded and passed onto the lead who will champion the work of these organisations within Probation and other criminal justice agencies

The morning was introduced by Chair of the Council's Community Safety Forum and the borough's Assistant Chief Executive of the Probation Trust and concluded with a discussion about the work priorities of the newly formed Croydon Community Safety Forum to which organisations were invited.

Following lunch, colleagues from the Probation Trust and other criminal justice agencies were invited in two 'shifts' to attend the Market Place which involved organisations profiling their work at stalls within the Resource Centre.

### Outputs and outcomes

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 criminal justice agencies. Over 40 staff and managers from the Probation Trust and Croydon Council attended.

## New Routes



CVA staff attended meetings with Offender Management leads to identify strategies for a clearer flow of information to the Probation Trust about VCS organisations;

VCS organisations are making contact with Offender Managers independently;

Greater awareness among VCS of offender management and of Probation regarding work of VCS with offenders;

Request for Market Place event to be held on biannual basis;

### Lessons learned; What with hindsight could have been done differently.

There is a great need to bring together the statutory sector face-to-face with the VCS in order to understand the scope of the work undertaken and the connections required;

Whilst having a Probation Trust and Council lead to assist in the process was invaluable, future events to be held require structured input from senior managers within the statutory sector criminal justice agencies to ensure full awareness of staff;

There needs to be a growing awareness within the statutory sector as to how the VCS works, particularly smaller organisations and those from BAME communities. Organisations do not fit easily into structures and processes developed by statutory sector. They are often marginalised from this process; operate with greater flexibility, responsiveness and with methods that are relevant to their specific service user group.



# Volunteering and Mentoring Project

The initial activity was centred on research and gaining an understanding of the workings of the criminal justice system. Firstly, a mentoring programme framework was established working in partnership with the London Action Trust who delivered the training. This was challenging, but despite being late into the programme (25th January 2011), it was aided extensively by an awareness training programme in Volunteering with Offenders in the Community which was offered by Clinks.

The first course was OCN accredited, however the during the follow-up and feedback mentors felt that there was a gap in their training in regard to managing boundaries in the mentor/mentee relationship. Supplementary training was delivered by Lynne Scott, a seasoned trainer who had been commissioned by Clinks, NOMS and other government agencies to deliver similar training. The training was condensed into a much shorter time than originally planned because of the time limitations of the project; therefore this area of the planned budget was under spent.

Probation was slow to appoint someone who could work in partnership with the Volunteer Centre on the volunteering and mentoring aspect of the project. This influenced the effectiveness of the project, specifically in relation to receiving referrals, determining who could actually serve as a mentor in Probation, and issues surrounding CRB checks. By the end of the project we received only a handful of referrals for volunteering. It is not clear whether this is because OMs did not think that offenders where ready to, or could, volunteer and it is clear we need to do some work to encourage referrals.

It became apparent very early on that there was a need to address some issues with Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) around how they worked with volunteers who had criminal records. After some guidance from Clinks we incorporated a free training day for VIOs on managing/supervising these particular volunteers.

After some negotiation a common understanding and guidelines as to who could become a mentor were established. This was challenging for the most part due to the variation in perceptions held by each sector. However, once we were able to find common ground it was agreed that any mentors who were under supervision/licence within the last two (2) years could not be matched with anyone referred by the Probation Trust.

## Outputs and outcomes

<b>Mentoring</b>	Predicted	Actual
Number application for mentor training	40	44
Numbering attending mentor training	40	25
Number of mentors who completed training		22
Number of mentor/mentee matches	20	0*

## New Routes



<b>Volunteering</b>	Predicted	Actual
Number of referrals received by volunteer broker	25	
From Probation		27**
From other		13
Number of volunteer interviews	30	13
Number of referrals to volunteering	30	12***

\*referrals for those needing Mentors came too late for inclusion in this report. OMs will be assigned a mentor; they will manage and match a Mentee to the Volunteer Mentor.

\*\*27 offenders were recommended for volunteering but the OM lead wanted to complete the risk assessments before they were interviewed.

\*\*\*Of the 12 referred 4 were felt not to be ready to volunteer and were referred to other participation activities

The project has established lines of direct communication between the Probation Trust and Croydon Voluntary Action along with a common understanding of how each organisation functions. This has proven invaluable to the quality of service that we are able to offer, and we will be able to work with Offender Managers to access the relevant information to enable us to support offenders to access volunteering that would suit their aspirations and personal development.

Any further development would need to include training and support for Volunteer Involving Organisations.

We have established a relationship with Highdown Prison who we are currently in dialogue with to see if there is any possibility of the New Routes mentoring programme engaging prisoners from the borough of Croydon. The volunteering and mentoring scheme could engage with interested prisoners four weeks prior to their release. This would serve to facilitate the mentor and the mentee developing a relationship prior to the inmate's release, in addition to a prepared action plan from which to work.

Another important benefit is that the profile of volunteering has been raised within the borough to the extent that we are able to have a positive influence on people who are at various stages throughout the criminal justice system.



# Overall sustainability of new partnership approaches

## Court Based Worker

Through working together with the Probation Trust, the courts and Croydon Council we are identifying new ways to improve and further develop services (see Outcome section). CVA has received a promise of funding from the London Probation Trust for this stream of work which will enable the Worker to be funded for a further 3 months. We have also applied to three charitable trusts to extend this piece of work for three years.

## Mentoring and Volunteering

CVA is currently negotiating a small sum from the London Probation Trust to support the development of a volunteer mentor programme within their services. We are also exploring measures through which we can maintain part of the service using some of the trained mentors as volunteer advisors.

In addition, Highdown Prison and the Westminster Drug Project are both interested in collaborating with the project after March 2011 to develop the mentoring aspect of the project further.

## Small Grants

There is a need for a future meeting of the Forum to initiate discussion with the Probation Trust about the commissioning process and the key Offender Manager leads with whom groups may develop a relationship in order to submit joint funding bids;

CVA has systems in place to support Probation/Home Office/Council commissioning processes.

## Forum

There is a will to develop the new approach. From the VCS perspective, the partnership will be sustainable if:

- Dialogue is meaningful;
- Structures are in place to allow for real input to strategy development;
- Resources are available to sustain the Forum's work;
- Information is shared

## Market Place

It is very much dependent on the resources available in order to sustain Market Place events, the Forum and the future funding of VCS initiatives. It is also dependent on the ability of the Probation Trust to be clear about internal contacts and to disseminate information internally;

CVA has opened a dialogue with OM leads to continue relationship building.



## QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS IN CROYDON NEW ROUTES PROJECT

### MAPPING

“We need updated information on the work of the VCS, mapping the small and large initiatives are really important for us so that we can refer our clients onto the appropriate provision”. Offender Manager...

“It is good to know what others in the sector are doing, it makes potential collaboration much easier”. VCS representative...

### MARKET PLACE

“I was totally unaware of the sheer number of VCS organisations in Croydon and the work they do. Events like this certainly help to develop dialogue, awareness and knowledge. There is nothing better than meeting people face to face.” Offender Manager..

“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 representative..

### SMALL GRANTS

“The grant may be small but it will allow us to build on some specific work we have done with ex-offenders. It is important that we build on this work and test its effectiveness. This will help with future funding bids”. VCS representative..

“One key area of importance in relation to the grants programme is that many VCS organisations do not see themselves as solely criminal justice bodies. This will give them the opportunity to profile such bespoke programmes of work under that banner”. Offender Manager...

### FORUM

“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”. Offender Manager...

**The Terms of Reference agreed for the new Croydon Forum were:**

**PURPOSE**

The Voluntary and Community Sector Supporting Offenders Forum (Croydon) exists to be the voice of voluntary and community sector 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 the policy making processes 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 voluntary and community sector 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 the Integrated Offender Management model 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, facilitated by CVA Community Involvement team and managed by a steering group;
- Invite statutory sector representatives as required;
- Will request two elected/mandated members to be its representatives on the Safer Croydon Board (to be agreed);
- Will 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**

- 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 the Integrated Offender Management model
- Seek to develop a sustainable wrap around service
- 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 the Integrated Offender Management process in Croydon;
- To work with other partners and agencies to ensure and increase the inclusion of diverse VCS organisations within the commissioning framework IOM;
- To promote 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;

## New Routes



- To highlight issues and emerging themes that need addressing to ensure the offenders, their families and voluntary and community sector 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;
- Support Forum representatives to contribute to partnership working and commissioning; convening pre-meetings, arranging briefing and training sessions;
- Be responsible for the management of assigned budgets including: income and expenditure, budget setting and monitoring in liaison with the Head of Community Involvement