Research Report 59

Summary

Increasing the voluntary and community sector's involvement in Integrated Offender Management

Kevin Wong, Caroline O'Keeffe, Linda Meadows, Joanna Davidson, Hayden Bird, Katherine Wilkinson and Paul Senior

Executive summary

- Integrated Offender Management (IOM) aims to reduce re-offending through local agencies taking a partnership approach to the management of repeat offenders. As part of an undertaking to increase voluntary and community sector (VCS) involvement in service delivery, the Home Office set up an initiative to provide small grants to VCS organisations to work with IOM partnerships.

- The initiative used the expertise of the national VCS umbrella body, Clinks, to develop and administer the grants scheme. This 'hands-off' approach to delivering centrally funded resources was considered to be innovative within a criminal justice setting.

- The Home Office commissioned an evaluation of the initiative which aimed to: explore the strengths and weaknesses of the funding model; identify perceived barriers and facilitators to voluntary and community sector involvement in IOM; explore how the Home Office might best work with the VCS to encourage and support their capacity to work in partnership with statutory agencies; and identify any implications for the delivery of future similar projects.

The funding model

- Clinks, a national membership organisation that supports the work of VCS organisations within the criminal justice system of England and Wales, was appointed to oversee the project. Clinks in turn appointed a lead voluntary and community sector agency in each of the four localities selected to test the initiative. These lead bodies acted as a broker between local statutory and VCS agencies, coordinating local bids and overseeing the local delivery of projects.

Contents

1. Context and approach

2. The funding model

3. The funded projects

4. Stakeholder perceptions of the funding mechanism

5. Involving the VCS in IOM - what it meant for the local areas

6. Conclusions and implications

Bibliography

Annex 1: Funding criteria outlined in the Clinks guidance

Keywords

Integrated Offender Management

Voluntary and community sector

Innovative approaches

Service delivery

Home Office

- Three types of organisation bid to undertake local projects: independent voluntary organisations; social enterprises; and local umbrella bodies such as a Council for Voluntary Service. Over half the funding for the project work was awarded to organisations with no previous experience of working with offenders. Seventeen projects were funded across the four areas. The total value of the grants awarded was £497k.

- Projects funded through the initiative focused on **delivering services to offenders** (e.g. work placement opportunities for offenders, multi-agency initiatives for supporting offenders post-release); the provision of **volunteering and mentoring** opportunities for IOM offenders; the **strategic development** of the VCS to engage with IOM (e.g. establishing fora, mapping of voluntary services); or providing **seed-corn grants** to support small voluntary organisations.

- Clinks was empowered to provide the required scrutiny and accountability on behalf of the Home Office. The hands-off approach to funding decisions taken was welcomed by local organisations. The management and bidding processes were perceived to be relatively light-touch and straightforward. The compressed project timescales may, however, have limited the number of VCS organisations which became involved.

- Clinks' links to, and credibility within, the voluntary sector, together with their specialist knowledge, were regarded as important in allowing the swift implementation of the project. The four local lead bodies had good relations with many small VCS bodies in their areas. The fact that Home Office funding for IOM was given directly to the VCS was cited by several VCS stakeholders as helping to raise their profile and build credibility within local IOM partnerships.

Involving the VCS in IOM – what it meant for the local areas

Interviewees identified a number of benefits arising from the initiative.

- **Links between voluntary and statutory sector organisations were strengthened**. The initiative as a whole was perceived to have consolidated local relationships between VCS and statutory agencies

in the criminal justice arena. Several local projects sought explicitly to strengthen these links. Elsewhere relations improved through the setting up of joint governance arrangements for IOM.

- **Changing practitioners' views on the value of VCS involvement in IOM**. The initiative was perceived to have been successful in positively influencing the views of those in the statutory sector on the value of the VCS sector. It had brought about a shift away from the VCS being viewed solely as 'well-meaning amateurs'.

- **The ability of the voluntary sector to address the diverse needs of offenders**. Organisations that bid for funds were encouraged to consider local needs of the IOM population. As a result, projects were developed to address the needs of specific offender groups (e.g. female and BME offenders) which might not have been met through traditional commissioning processes. The use of seed-corn grants was felt to have been effective in allowing smaller VCS bodies, with expertise in niche areas, to become involved in IOM.

Participants identified the following challenges to involving the VCS in IOM.

- **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.

- **Targeting IOM offenders**. There were issues in some projects around correctly identifying which offenders were in scope for IOM. It was not always clear whether VCS agencies were working with members of the IOM cohort.

- **Staff buy-in**. While local projects were well-supported by senior IOM managers, 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**. Interviewees 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**. Interviewees in 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).

- **The ability to sustain services after funding had ended**. With limited opportunities to seek additional funding, it was felt that making services available to offenders for a limited period risked raising expectations that could not be sustained. This in turn risked confirming a perception that VCS services were fragile.

- **Competition within the VCS**. The VCS is both competitive and diverse in its make up. Both factors may act as a potential barrier to collaboration between different VCS bodies. Although the initiative contributed to improvements in collaborative working, there were limits to what could be achieved.

Implications

Key implications for policy and practice are:

- The use of a voluntary sector national umbrella body to develop and administer the initiative worked well in this instance, but it may not be feasible or desirable for all areas. Future application should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- The mix of local and national brokerage organisations was perceived to have played a critical role in delivering this initiative but this may not reflect VCS capacity and capability nationally. If local brokerage organisations are used in future initiatives, departments will need to consider how to build capacity in less developed sectors.

- One challenge for increasing VCS involvement in service delivery is around the level of resource required to build local capacity. Consideration needs to be given to how approaches such as this might be encouraged or sustained without funding incentives.

- Small amounts of funding to voluntary and community sector bodies can make a marked

difference to local activities. The diversity of the VCS market could be supported through commissioning mechanisms, with the VCS being represented on groups responsible for commissioning of IOM services.

- Where capacity allows, VCS organisations working with offenders should have representation on local IOM steering groups, perhaps through a lead local area agency such as a Local Infrastructure Organisation.

- Buy-in to VCS engagement in IOM is important at all levels across both VCS and statutory organisations. Whilst strategic influence is important, buy-in from frontline staff is important and steps to ensure this should be reflected in organisational communications strategies.

- Data-sharing issues in relation to IOM may be eased if the Home Office and Ministry of Justice provided a nationally agreed template to assist local areas in developing arrangements.

- The use of appropriately targeted seed-corn funding can help VCS bodies with no prior experience of working in IOM become involved and help meet the needs of specific offender groups.

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1. Context and approach

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) aims to reduce re-offending through local agencies taking a partnership approach to the management of repeat offenders,[1] offering an approach that combines enhanced supervision and enforcement with improved access to a range of services to address criminogenic needs.[2] In line with the Government's desire to increase the role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in service delivery, the Home Office is seeking to encourage the VCS to have an increased involvement in IOM partnerships. In order to explore how the participation of the VCS in IOM arrangements might be enhanced, the Home Office provided small grants to VCS organisations in four IOM areas through the 'Innovative VCS Involvement in IOM Arrangements Project'. These areas were Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (BDP); Croydon; Gloucestershire; and Leeds. In total, £500,000 was made available for grants to encourage the VCS in the targeted areas to take on a more enhanced and equal role in designing and delivering IOM locally. Following an initial period of planning over the summer of 2010, the local projects ran from November 2010 to the end of March 2011.

The project represented a change for the Home Office from the way it has traditionally delivered funding to local areas. Instead of treating this as an internally driven project, the Home Office used the expertise of a third party, the national VCS umbrella body Clinks,[3] to develop and fully administer the grant process. The use of a third party VCS body to oversee the delivery of this project is widely regarded as an innovative approach to delivering centrally funded resources within a criminal justice setting.

The Home Office commissioned a process evaluation of the Innovative VCS Involvement in IOM Arrangements Project which aimed to:

- explore the strengths and weaknesses of the funding model;

- identify stakeholder perceptions of any barriers and facilitators to the VCS's involvement in developing and delivering IOM;

- explore the views of the VCS around how the Home Office might best work with them in order to encourage local innovation and support their capacity to work in partnership with statutory agencies; and

- identify any implications for the delivery of future projects aimed at supporting the VCS's capacity to work in partnership with statutory agencies and their involvement in public service delivery.

1 Home Office and Ministry of Justice (2009) Integrated Offender Management. Government policy statement. London: COI.
2 Senior, P., Wong, K., Culshaw, A., Ellingworth, D., O' Keeffe, C. and Meadows, L (2011) Process Evaluation of Five Integrated Offender Management Pioneer Areas. Ministry of Justice/Home Office, Research Series 4/11.
3 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 on Clinks see http://www.Clinks.org

There were two overall phases of data collection. The first phase focused on the set-up of the project; data were collected between September and November 2010 using the following methods:

- a documentary review of relevant Home Office and Clinks project documents;

- brief semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the Home Office Project Manager, Home Office Project Worker and a representative from the Home Office Finance Unit;

- observation of Clinks-facilitated discussions including one preliminary information meeting (Croydon) and two project development workshops (Croydon and Gloucestershire);

- observation of the Clinks Grant Award Panel meeting; and

- observation of the Clinks-led workshop for grant recipients.

The second phase concentrated on the project delivery phase and two waves of data collection were undertaken between November 2010 and March 2011 as follows.

Wave one, December 2010

- A project initiation workshop was held in each area.

- Project documentation from each of the sites was reviewed.

- Forty-two interviews were undertaken with 26 VCS and 16 statutory agency representatives.[4] Purposive samples of the main stakeholder groups were obtained through consultation with the HO, Clinks and the lead VCS agencies at the sites.

- Interviews were undertaken with two Clinks staff.

Wave two, February 2011

- Fifty-eight interviews[5] were undertaken with 36 VCS and 22 statutory agency representatives.

- Interviews were undertaken with two Clinks staff.

- Interviews were conducted with four policy staff from the Home Office and Ministry of Justice.

- Three action learning workshops were run involving 47 VCS and statutory representatives.

- Four focus groups were held involving 37 representatives of small VCS agencies and six interviews with small VCS agencies who were unable to attend the focus groups.

- There were 13 observations of project activities funded through the grant programme.

Whilst the fieldwork ensured that data were collected in relation to all of the projects funded across the four areas, seven projects were selected as case studies in order to provide an opportunity for a more in-depth exploration of activity and stakeholder perceptions. The case study projects were sampled in order to provide a geographic spread across the four areas, a mix of targeted offender groups, the involvement of a range of different sizes of VCS organisation and some included projects which were regarded as innovative by the research team (identified with Clinks and the Home Office). These were:

- IOM in rural Dorset;

- Croydon women's court service;

- VCS partnership and development programme in Croydon (incorporating the provision of seed-corn grants);

- Reach social enterprise in Gloucestershire;

- Cheltenham Community Project social enterprise;

- Restorative justice project in Gloucestershire; and

- Leeds IOM prison hub.

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4 Included: probation, police, local authorities and prison.
5 These included individuals interviewed during Wave one and individuals who had not previously been interviewed.

All interviews were conducted using an agreed semi-structured interview schedule and were recorded and transcribed. Observation notes were taken using a thematic proforma and free-notes. The transcripts, observation notes and background documents were analysed using a thematic framework approach.

The scope of the evaluation intentionally focused on a qualitative approach to explore the implications for policy and practice of the Home Office implementing a new model of grant distribution. Therefore, the evaluation did not seek to provide an outcome assessment of the individual projects that were funded through the initiative or any cost-benefit analysis.

In the course of conducting the process evaluation, two limitations of the methodology have been noted. First, the phased approach to the fieldwork was intended to capture early and later experiences from the sites. However, data from interviewees that were involved in both waves of fieldwork yielded limited additional information capture in the second wave, reflecting the short interval (in some cases two months) between the two waves of fieldwork. The intensity of the evaluation activity may also have resulted in research fatigue, with diminishing returns for the data collected, particularly among participants who may have been involved in three or more fieldwork activities.

Second, despite the development of criteria to inform interview, workshop and focus group participant selection, purposive sampling means that more motivated and positive stakeholders may have participated. The researchers' observations of project activities provide snapshots of project-related activity but were also dependent on which volunteers, staff and offenders were in attendance.

The report is divided into the following chapters.

- Chapter 2 describes the funding distribution model used by this project and the key perceptions of the stakeholders in relation to the model.

- Chapter 3 describes how the project funding was spent across the four areas.

- Chapter 4 explores project stakeholder perceptions of the overall bidding process and the funding delivery mechanism.

- Chapter 5 explores project stakeholder perceptions of involving the VCS in IOM, including the benefits and challenges.

- Chapter 6 outlines the key implications for policy and practice arising from the project.

2. The funding model

The Home Office's traditional approach to distributing grants to projects involves setting a clear framework of the outcomes they expect in return for grant payments, with the process being centrally driven and managed by civil servants. In the case of this project, the Home Office deliberately set very broad parameters for the project at the outset and identified a third party, Clinks, to take full responsibility for delivering the grant stream. Clinks was asked to set the detailed scope and outcome framework for the funding, with only light scrutiny from the Home Office. The initial project parameters set by the Home Office were that:

- the project should allow the VCS to take a lead role in IOM;

- the project should require the Home Office to take a 'hands-off' approach in managing the funding; and

- the project should seek to encourage innovation.

The four locations in which the project was focused were proposed by Clinks based on a sampling strategy agreed by the Home Office.[6] In two of these locations Clinks already had well established relationships with local VCS bodies; in the other two areas the local relationship with Clinks was less well developed.

Figure 1: Intermediary/brokerage relationships within the project
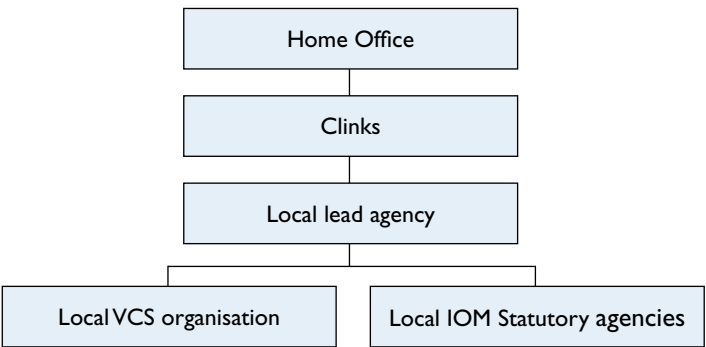
The same local brokerage arrangements were replicated across the four sites

Clinks identified a lead agency in each location to take on a brokerage role between the statutory and VCS agencies, coordinating local bids and overseeing the local delivery of projects, as illustrated in Figure 1. In three areas the lead VCS agency was a local VCS infrastructure organisation,[7] with the fourth area (Leeds) using a VCS agency already delivering services to offenders with established links to local criminal justice agencies and VCS networks. Project areas took different approaches to developing their funding proposals. For example, in one area local projects were developed independently by local VCS agencies and were brought together by the local VCS infrastructure organisation on a thematic basis to construct a coherent bid; in another area the project development process was more collaborative between the VCS infrastructure organisation and the statutory agencies, with some projects specifically developed around gaps in provision identified by statutory partners, but did not have the same engagement from wider local VCS partners. Factors influencing these differing approaches appeared to be the extent to which the local VCS lead agency was already engaged in IOM or wider work with offenders; the strength of historic relationships between the VCS and statutory agencies; and the extent to which Clinks had previously established local links.

Whilst the Home Office and Clinks were clear that they would not apply a strong framework to performance manage the projects, a number of desirable outcomes and principles were used to form part of the criteria for assessing applications (see Annex 1). These broad principles emphasised the fact that the short-term funded projects were primarily being used to develop and learn about the partnership process from a VCS perspective, rather than reducing levels of re-offending.

A number of perceptions of key areas of learning identified through the project set-up stage are discussed below.

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6   The sampling framework included the following criteria: a mix of urban and rural areas; opportunity to build on local partnership activity including IOM; differing levels of local infrastructure organisation activity and capacity to engage in IOM; the level of IOM engagement with services for women offenders; and the opportunity to address the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic populations.

7   Local Infrastructure Organisations are charitable bodies (such as a Council for Voluntary Service) that typically provide a range of support services for all VCS organisations within their area. These might include help with organisational development, funding advice, training, and co-ordinating the sector's engagement with, and representation on, local strategic groupings.

Agreeing funding arrangements within existing HO funding protocols: balancing third-party freedom with accountability

This initiative was the first grant stream that the Home Office delivered seeking a greater involvement of the voluntary and community sector in actually delivering funding; it therefore raised some financial complexities that needed careful consideration. The Treasury sets rules for government finance to ensure regularity, propriety and value for money. Whilst this project aimed to increase VCS involvement and encourage local decision making around the distribution of funding, Treasury rules still required the Home Office to demonstrate how all funding distributed contributed to the achievement of the department's aims. Funding arrangements were ultimately agreed for Clinks to play a key intermediary role in the distribution of monies and they were empowered to provide the required element of scrutiny and accountability on behalf of the Home Office. Some interviewees felt that the processes required to increase VCS involvement in making decisions on the distribution of funding needed development.

The Home Office viewed this project as a vehicle to test a more hands-off approach to funding distribution and learn lessons around the viability, efficiency and effectiveness of this process. Staff involved in managing the project recognised that this approach to the distribution of government grants would not be possible or suitable for all funding streams. If the use of VCS intermediary bodies in the distribution of central grants becomes more commonplace, and more organisations are trusted and empowered to decide locally on spending priorities for public money, a critical aspect for the Home Office will be in getting the right balance between enabling empowerment and maintaining accountability.

Assembling appropriate expertise to oversee the delivery of the early stages of the project

The project operated within an extremely tight timescale, formally beginning in September 2010 with the requirement for the funding to be spent by the end of March 2011. In spite of the compressed timetable, the early stages of the project moved ahead as scheduled. A key contributory factor that was perceived to allow the project to develop quickly was the project management team successfully identifying and bringing together relevant expert knowledge from across the Home Office. Expert knowledge and guidance in this project was provided by relevant Finance Teams, teams with previous experience of working with the VCS and researchers. Drawing on the skills and expertise of these 'specialists' was recognised by officials as an essential step in getting project development and implementation right in the early stages. It was essentially about "having a team of people and knowing who to tap into" (Home Office official).

The right VCS partner

Home Office staff recognised that the amount of time and the level of skill that the national VCS partner dedicated to the initial phase of this project was important in allowing it to be delivered quickly and effectively. The relationship built between Clinks and the Home Office was perceived by Home Office staff as a factor which gave them the confidence to trust Clinks to deliver the project effectively. This perception of trust at an organisational level was undoubtedly enhanced at an individual level through the personal drive and dedication shown by the Clinks project manager, whom Home Office staff said "inspired us with such confidence". Therefore, the extent to which the particular organisations or 'personalities' have been the critical factor in driving the project forward, and whether this could be routinely expected in other contexts, may be worth further consideration in developing future projects of this type.

"I think this model works because [Clinks] wanted to make it work and I don't think that you can just think that you can give the money to any other umbrella body, for anything, and it's gonna work." (Home Office official)

Incorrect assumptions, different terminology and processes used by government departments and the VCS.

One area of confusion that emerged early on in the project was around the payment of a 'management fee' to Clinks. The Home Office identified Clinks as the only suitable national VCS umbrella organisation able to deliver the funding programme without requiring the payment of a management fee. Home Office staff interpreted the absence of a management fee to mean that Clinks would receive no payment for taking on the delivery role and this was an important factor in finance officials agreeing that Clinks could be used legitimately without the need for a competitive tendering process. Following initial discussions between the Home Office and Clinks, each

party came away with slightly different understandings of what constituted a management fee and it became clear that Clinks could only undertake the management of the project if there was some suitable reimbursement of expenses. Ultimately this issue was resolved successfully, but both Clinks and the Home Office highlighted this as an example of where a small but significant difference in terminology had the potential to cause significant problems to the development of the project.

Managing Home Office expectations on progress of the project

The hands-off nature of this project presented a number of challenges for the Home Office around managing expectations internally. One of the consequences of transferring the management of this project over to Clinks was that the Home Office would not know directly, on a day-to-day basis, how the project was progressing. Whilst this was very much an intended consequence of this new method of delivery, operating within the constraints of this limited project knowledge was, at times, a difficult change for Home Office staff. Senior managers were enthusiastic about the project and wanted to hear about how the new approach that it was taking was working; understandably, they were also keen to know what had happened to the funding which formed part of their budgets. Balancing this expectation for information against the necessity to allow Clinks to develop the project independently was challenging for the Home Office project staff in the early stages. Home Office staff felt that this issue was addressed, in part, through the professional approach taken by Clinks and the confidence that they were able to instil in their ability to deliver the project successfully.

'Strengths-based' decision making

Observations of the Grant Award Panel meeting highlighted differences in the approach taken to the grant award decision-making process by the Home Office and Clinks. The Home Office traditionally takes a formal approach to awarding grants, often through the use of scoring systems which are based on defined assessment criteria. In contrast, the approach taken in the Grant Award Panel in this project also appeared to be influenced by the experience and intuition of the panel members and based around detailed discussions of strengths, weaknesses and risk. The VCS panel members also brought with them detailed knowledge of the skills and abilities of the bidding organisations, something which Home Office staff acknowledge they would find more difficult to access.

Members of the Grant Award Panel were clear that the concept of 'risk' is viewed positively by the VCS. They felt that the VCS and Home Office have different understandings of risk and that the VCS are perhaps willing to accept a higher level of risk and fund things that the Home Office might regard as 'risky'. In this instance, the panel regarded some level of risk as acceptable in relation to the innovation and learning opportunity that the Home Office was seeking through the project. This perception of a difference in tolerance levels around 'risk' is perhaps an area which the Home Office needs to be mindful of if devolved grant distribution becomes more commonplace.

The Clinks bidding process was, in the end, largely non-competitive as the vast majority of bids were approved, with further clarification sought on a small minority. This lack of formal competition was mainly seen to be a result of the advice and guidance that Clinks provided to the local areas throughout the bid preparation phase. Whilst the VCS is not reluctant to compete for funding, the Clinks process allowed the applications to be 'reality checked' and gave the project areas a level of confidence that their applications for funding would be approved. Home Office officials perceived this lack of competition for funding, together with the advice and support which the areas received from Clinks in preparing their proposals, to be a key factor which encouraged the engagement and efforts of the local VCS.

3. The funded projects

This chapter describes how the Home Office funding for this project was spent across the four areas. It identifies the types of projects funded; the range of organisations that delivered the projects and their previous experience of working with offenders; and any key achievements that were evident at the time the fieldwork was conducted.

Seventeen projects were funded across the four areas, including two tranches of money which were distributed as seed-corn grants to support smaller voluntary organisations (in Croydon and Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole). The total value of the grants awarded was £496,557 and a summary of the projects funded is provided in Table 1.[8] The level of funding allocated to individual projects ranged from £3,485 to £73,791.82.[9]

Organisations that were successful in their bids to undertake the work fell into three categories: seven projects were delivered by independent voluntary organisations; two projects were delivered by social enterprises;[10] and the remaining eight projects were delivered by a Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO).[11] The proportion of project funding awarded to each type of organisation is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proportion of funding awarded by type of organisation

Local Infrastructure Organisation
Social Enterprise
Voluntary Organisation
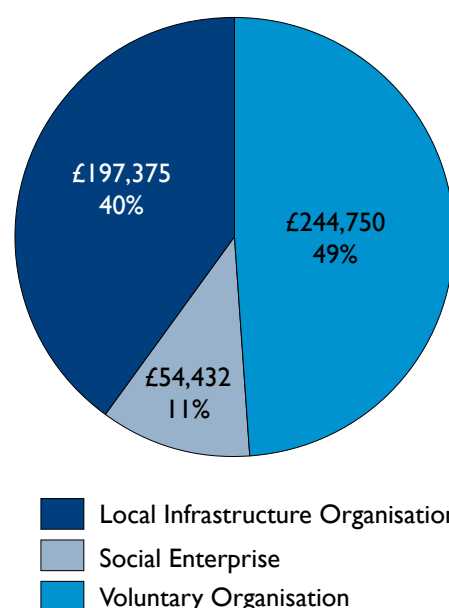
Whilst the social enterprises and independent voluntary organisations all reported that they had previously worked with offenders, the LIOs did not have prior experience and this was a new area of work for them. Funding totalling £260,565 was awarded to organisations with no previous experience of working with offenders and this represented over half of the funding that was awarded for project work.[12]

Size of the VCS organisations

Using numbers of paid staff as an indicator of size of VCS agency, of the 36 organisations which received funding from the programme (as a main project or seed-corn grant project) and responded:

● 26 agencies had between one and 49 members of paid staff;

● six agencies had between 50 and 199 members of paid staff;

● three agencies had between 200 and 499 members of paid staff; and

● one agency had 500 plus members of paid staff.

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8   An asterisk (*) indicates that the project was a case study project for the process evaluation.

9   Within this, the range of funding allocated through the seed-corn grants was from £480 to £7,362.

10 Social enterprises are businesses driven by a social or environmental purpose. As with all businesses, they compete to deliver goods and services; however, the profits they make are reinvested towards achieving their identified purpose.

11 Local infrastructure organisations are charitable bodies (such as a Council for Voluntary Service) that typically provide a range of support services for all VCS organisations within their area. These might include help with organisational development, funding advice, training, and coordinating the sector's engagement with, and representation on, local strategic groupings.

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12 £29,918 of the total funding awarded was spent on management and overhead costs across three of the areas.

Table 1: Summary of funding awarded, by area

Project area and total funding awarded	Type of intermediary body leading the project	Individual projects funded				
		Project name	Project description	Type of bidding organisation	Previous experience of working with offenders?	Project funding awarded
Bournemouth Dorset and Poole £95,338[13]	Local Infrastructure Organisation	Strategic VCS involvement in IOM	Enable the VCS to participate in strategic IOM partnerships by mapping partners, resources, building networks.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£18,170
	Bournemouth Council for Voluntary Service (BCVS)	Volunteering and IOM	Support existing agencies with IOM offenders to do more, support additional agencies to accept offenders as volunteers, assess impact and raise awareness.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£55,000
		IOM in rural Dorset*	Research and awareness-raising programme to work with rural VCS groups of IOM project (Divert), assess viability of VCS to increase Divert's responsiveness and capacity and produce action plan.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£10,000
Croydon £153,910	Local Infrastructure Organisation	Croydon Women's Court Service*	Working with probation, a VCS-led court-based assessment and referral service for women.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£25,959
	Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)	Supported volunteering and mentoring programme	Volunteering and Mentoring Programme – to establish a brokerage service to enable IOM users to access volunteering opportunities and use mentoring to link users into community.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£54,159
		VCS Partnership Development Programme*	Time divided between CVA and IOM team to achieve closer links and to administer an IOM small grants fund.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£73,792

13 This figure includes £12,168 for fund administration and reporting overhead.

Table 1: Summary of funding awarded, by area (continued)

Project area and total funding awarded	Type of intermediary body leading the project	Individual projects funded		Project description	Type of bidding organisation	Previous experience of working with offenders?	Project funding awarded
		Project name					
Gloucestershire £150,867[14]	Local Infrastructure Organisation	REACH Social Enterprise*		Social enterprise to work with IOM partners to explore feasibility of a funded project to engage IOM offenders in restoring council houses – trialling project, preparing business plan and funding applications.	Social enterprise	Yes	£29,520
	Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA)	Cheltenham Community Projects (CCP) Social Enterprise*		To develop social enterprise project for IOM offenders around computer recycling. Provide ETE opportunities whilst achieving better linkages between partners.	Social enterprise	Yes	£24,912
		Family-focused support project		A family-focused intervention for families of IOM cohort offenders in Gloucestershire.	VCS organisation	Yes	£15,000
		Restorative Justice (RJ) Project*		Establish community-based RJ project linked to existing prison RJ project. Train volunteers and offer conferencing for IOM offenders and their victims.	VCS organisation	Yes	£22,000
		Mentoring/ Befriending Project		Create a sustainable 'hub' for IOM offenders to be mentored/ get training to become mentors.	VCS organisation	Yes	£15,100
		Client Reference Group		Influence IOM service delivery and future commissioning by setting up client reference group to review policy and influence planning. Carry out research to engage with IOM clients and determine impact of services.	VCS organisation	Yes	£15,600
		Increasing Volunteering in IOM		Deliver three-day training to workers in IOM agencies to help them recruit and support volunteers to work with IOM offenders, also to develop own policies.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£3,485
		Gloucestershire VCS Assembly Team		Create better linkages to achieve better VCS input into IOM. Develop new IOM commissioning strategy with reference to VCS market.	Local Infrastructure Organisation	No	£20,000

14 The overall budget for Gloucestershire includes £5,250 for consortium management costs that came to GAVCA.

Table 1: Summary of funding awarded, by area (continued)

Project area and total funding awarded	Type of intermediary body leading the project	Individual projects funded		Type of bidding organisation	Previous experience of working with offenders?	Project funding awarded
		Project name	Project description			
Leeds £96,442[15]	VCS lead organisation West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project (WYCCP)	VCS engagement in new IOM Hub at Leeds Prison*	VCS involvement through co-location in the hub in partnership with police, probation and prison. Establish VCS-led 'wrap-around service' to respond to IOM clients on release. Also, VCS Housing support worker and link with existing services.	VCS organisation	Yes	£50,231[16]
		VCS Crime Reduction Forum	Through co-location of a VCS forum coordinator within the hub, develop forum as 'one stop shop' for communication and networking. Establish web-based portal and convene a conference in March 2011 to enable partners to share good practice.	VCS organisation	Yes	£17,711[17]
		DVD of experiences of WYCCP customers	A DVD of experiences of WYCCP customers which will provide a mechanism for feedback on the service provided by WYCCP.	VCS organisation	Yes	£16,000

15 The overall budget for Leeds includes £12,500 for WYCCP costs.
16 The budget for the Hub and the Forum overlap; therefore costs for each project have been estimated based on information available.
17 The budget for the Hub and the Forum overlap; therefore costs for each project have been estimated based on information available.

The grants could be categorised under one of four main headings.

- Strategic development and/or building the capacity of the VCS to engage with IOM. This included establishing fora, mapping of voluntary services, networking and information exchange, and developing guidance on commissioning the voluntary sector.

- Delivering services to offenders. This included providing work placement opportunities for offenders, multi-agency initiatives for supporting offenders post-release, and specialist support for female offenders.

- Volunteering and mentoring provision. This included building the capacity of agencies to undertake mentoring; offering volunteering opportunities to offenders; developing guidelines for offender volunteering and training mentors.

- The provision of seed-corn grants to support small voluntary organisations.

- Table 2 shows how the individual projects fall under these headings, along with the key achievements for the funded work which were identified during the funding period.[18]

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18 The seed-corn grants form part of larger projects; rather than being listed separately these aspects are indicated by an asterisk (*) in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of projects funded

Type of project and total funding allocated to this type of project across the project areas	Individual projects funded	Key project achievements	Project area
Strategic development or capacity building £119,911	VCS Crime Reduction Forum	• Forum established • Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy Group formed to support and feed into the Forum (three places ring-fenced for police, prisons and probation, one for a nominated service user, and eight for VCS organisations) • Hub website developed	Leeds
	VCS partnership development programme	• VCS and other services were mapped • 23 groups (including small BAME organisations) received small grants of up to £2,000 to support innovative work with offenders/ex-offenders/young people at risk of offending* • Various networking events took place for VCS agencies to showcase work and forge links with IOM partners	Croydon
	Strategic VCS involvement in IOM	• VCS resources were mapped • A CJS-specific e-network was developed for ongoing communications • A new CJS Voluntary Sector Forum was established • VCS representation on CJS Partnership Boards was achieved	Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole
	IOM in rural Dorset	• Awareness-raising visits were made to six rural Community Partnerships, and information was distributed to others • Focus group held – report and action plan produced, in discussion with probation staff and Safer Neighbourhood Teams involved in IOM	Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole
	Gloucestershire VCS Assembly Team	• Provision of improved information about services available to IOM case managers • Practical guide for the county's VCS and IOM partners on how to get ready for commissioning produced • Commissioning Framework produced identifying the context and potential for future commissioning	Gloucestershire

Table 2: Types of projects funded (continued)

Type of project and total funding allocated to this type of project across the project areas	Individual projects funded	Key project achievements	Project area
Service delivery for offenders £111,391	REACH Social Enterprise	• Working with other agencies REACH explored three potential routes for setting up a sustainable property restoration project to offer work placement opportunities for IOM offenders • Proposals achieved full support from Gloucester City Council but funding issues delayed start • REACH integrated a small number of IOM users into its current work placement scheme on a trial basis	Gloucestershire
	Cheltenham Community Projects (CPP) Social Enterprise	• Social enterprise model was developed, offering property maintenance, general decorating and industrial cleaning • Three offenders were accepted onto the programme • Two longer-term maintenance/cleaning contracts were won and CCP is funding the project for a further three months	Gloucestershire
	Family-focused support project	• Approved joint development of a screening tool that case managers can use with all IOM offenders to identify family issues/needs.	Gloucestershire
	VCS engagement in new IOM Hub at Leeds Prison	• The Hub was fully established as a multi-agency initiative, providing coordinated delivery of services to offenders on release including employment and accommodation • Prisoners returning to Leeds and sentenced to three months are now offered a tailored support package	Leeds
	DVD of experiences of WYCCP customers	• DVD produced and screened at a final conference attended by 140 delegates from all sectors	Leeds
	Croydon Women's Court Service	• Service established with a CVA worker based three days per week in the probation offices at Croydon magistrates' court • 45 women were interviewed voluntarily and 21 took up the offer of supportive contact and referral to VCS services. 12 were referred to volunteering opportunities; 22 to other support organisations. 14 women were still engaged as at March 2011 • London Probation Trust funding the employment of the CVA worker for a further three months	Croydon

13

Table 2: Types of projects funded (continued)

Type of project and total funding allocated to this type of project across the project areas	Individual projects funded	Key project achievements	Project area
Volunteering or mentoring projects £165,344	Supported volunteering and mentoring programme	• 13 potential volunteers were interviewed. Eight were referred to volunteering opportunities; four were referred to other participation activities • 44 potential mentors applied for training; 25 attended training and 22 completed it • Guidelines for involving offenders/ex-offenders as volunteers/mentors developed • Highdown Prison and Westminster Drug Project interested in collaborating with CVA after March 2011 to further develop the mentoring aspect of the project	Croydon
	Volunteering and IOM	• Training needs survey attracted responses from 14 VCS organisations • A range of training sessions/workshops took place for Volunteer Centre staff and 13 VCS organisations. Training materials developed as a leaflet for wider distribution • The small grants scheme was developed and grants (ranging from £500 to £9,500) were awarded to seven VCS organisations* • Successful bid to Lloyds TSB will enable Bournemouth & Poole Volunteer Centres to continue working with a small group of offenders to support them into volunteering over the next year'	Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole
	Restorative Justice Project	• Former Restorative Justice Programme volunteer recruited as a paid, part-time development worker • 20 new volunteers recruited and trained for the IOM project; five undertook the Level 4 Diploma in Restorative Practice. Ten referrals accepted, seven offenders have benefited from the service • Community Interest Company established to be the vehicle for developing Restorative Justice Programme work across the county, with the continued involvement of all existing partners	Gloucestershire
	Mentoring/befriending project	• 12 mentors successfully completed training programme and confirmed as mentors. All have backgrounds in drug and/or alcohol misuse and/or offending • Referrals accepted and matched to mentors • Links made with IOM partners to promote the service • Application for further funding submitted	Gloucestershire
	Client Reference Groups	• Using volunteers to run the 'Voice for Change' group established to enable offenders to influence IOM service delivery as well as inform future commissioning • Meetings held in December, January and March, attended by staff and service users • Training given to develop potential to influence future commissioning processes and decisions • Research carried out on members' views of services, to be fed into IOM through a final report	Gloucestershire
	Increasing volunteering in IOM	• Three-day training course marketed to IOM agencies. Training offered to VCS agencies as well as public sector to make it viable • 11 individuals participated in the training, three from the public sector (two police and one probation) and eight from VCS organisations working with offenders • GAVCA now has a version of the course adapted specifically for agencies working with offenders, which can be offered again as required	Gloucestershire

Seed-corn grants

Two of the 17 projects (based in Croydon and Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole) undertook to distribute seed-corn grants to a further 30 VCS agencies. These grants were managed by the lead VCS agencies at the two sites and distributed through a competitive application process.

In Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, a total of £35,000 was distributed to seven organisations through grants which ranged from £480 to £7,362. This funded a range of work with adult offenders including support for personal budgeting, an allotment project, mentoring support for resettlement and a job club in a prison. The funding criteria were developed locally and specified that the applicant organisations had to already be working with adult offenders – this was seen as necessary given the short timeframe available for these grants to be spent.

In Croydon, individual seed-corn grants were limited to a maximum of £2,000 per project. A total of £45,608 was distributed across 23 projects, seven of which had a focus on BME offenders and two projects involved working specifically with women offenders. The majority of the seed-corn grants were awarded to smaller community-based VCS organisations in Croydon. As in Bournemouth Dorset and Poole, the seed-corn grants were awarded to organisations that were already working with offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending. The types of activity funded included financial advice to offenders, support to BME/migrant women released from custody, diversion activities for young boys at risk of becoming gang members, and gardening projects for offenders.

Table 3 outlines the needs which the seed-corn projects sought to address, along with details of the proportion of funding that was allocated to each of these needs.

Table 3: Types of projects funded

Need addressed	Number of projects	Amount of funding	Proportion of total seed-corn funding
Youth diversion	7	£17,928	22%
Resettlement for offenders	2	£4,000	5%
Financial advice for offenders	2	£2,479.50	3%
Skills development/education/employment for offenders, ex-offenders, young offenders and those at risk of offending	12	£30,888.50	38%
Mentoring or support for offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending[20]	6	£18,202	23%
Building organisational capacity	1	£7,110	9%
Total	**30**	**£80,608**	**100%**

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20 Including one project focusing upon young offenders and one
    focusing on women offenders.

4. Stakeholder perceptions of the funding mechanism

This chapter explores stakeholder perceptions of the funding mechanism which was used to support VCS engagement in IOM through this project. It explores overall perceptions of the funding model and examines the various brokerage roles within the project and participants' views on the bidding process.

The brokerage role played by Clinks and the local VCS lead agencies

The project operated at double arms-length from the Home Office through two intermediary layers (Clinks and the local VCS lead agencies). Within these layers, brokerage relationships were developed which were widely perceived by the local areas to be a positive aspect of the funding model. The brokerage relationships can be described as follows.

- Nationally, the project was commissioned by the Home Office and implemented by Clinks.

- Across the four project areas Clinks developed relationships with the lead VCS agencies responsible for coordinating the local bids for funded projects.

- Within the project areas the lead VCS agencies developed relationships with the statutory partners and local VCS agencies responsible for delivering the funded projects.

The Home Office perceived Clinks' existing links with the voluntary sector to be important in allowing the swift development of the project. Clinks' pre-existing relationships with two of the project areas allowed the project to get underway quickly in these locations. In those areas where Clinks had no established links (Leeds and Croydon), their specialist knowledge and contacts were regarded as being critical in building relationships quickly enough to allow projects to be run in those locations. Home Office officials felt that these relationships demonstrated how Clinks had the required credibility amongst the VCS agencies that the IOM funding was intended to reach.

"I very much benefited from Clinks being involved in that they were able to provide advice, they also knew our county, they knew the agencies, they were able to translate I suppose what the Home Office were wanting into what we could deliver, that was very helpful."
(VCS representative)

The local lead agencies were also seen as playing an important role in the way the initiative developed. Interviewees from both the local lead VCS agencies and the organisations delivering the projects generally felt that the initiative had helped to develop trusting relationships between them; smaller VCS bodies (particularly in the sites where seed-corn grants were distributed) were grateful for the facilitation role that the local lead VCS agencies had taken in identifying opportunities for them to work with statutory agencies in delivering services for offenders. In some cases, especially amongst those organisations that were not directly involved in the bidding process, this "local" relationship was viewed by local voluntary and statutory bodies to be the most important one that was built through the project.

A common observation from those in local lead agencies was that their critical local brokerage role was not resource neutral. In addition, the resource that local VCS organisations needed to dedicate in order to develop the bids and start to implement the activity was considerable. In some sites the lead VCS agency had included some overhead costs within their funding bid to cover the administration and local project management of the programme, including meeting reporting requirements. This is detailed above. However, it was not possible within this evaluation to determine to what extent these costs adequately covered the actual level of activity required.

Interviewees from local statutory bodies generally believed that this programme had enabled local VCS lead agencies to provide a coordinated voice for the VCS, making it easier for them to engage with statutory bodies. This in turn provided a platform for stronger VCS-statutory relationships. Some statutory stakeholders reported that the local events held between VCS and statutory bodies had provided the 'intellectual space' to identify ways to address re-offending outside of the framework of statutory supervision. This enabled statutory agencies to rethink the way that they could use their resources and skills to build VCS capacity.

The bidding process and the role of Clinks

The majority of local VCS and statutory stakeholders were positive about how the bidding process was conducted. Many described it as a relatively simple and straightforward bidding process, particularly when compared to their previous experiences of bidding for public funds. There was a sense amongst some of the VCS stakeholders that the compressed timescale of the bidding process (five weeks from announcement of the programme to the submission of bids) may have restricted the openness of bidding, i.e. that it was not possible within the timescale for Clinks or the local lead VCS agencies to advertise the grant programme widely, preventing larger numbers of VCS organisations from having the opportunity to submit applications through an open call for proposals. This was partly addressed in two sites through the distribution of seed-corn grants, which, it was argued, provided a mechanism to allow a wider range of VCS agencies to access the initiative.

Across the four sites, the general approach taken was that VCS and statutory organisations combined their expertise to develop the bids. The perceived advantages of a joint approach was that it allowed the identification of partners with relevant existing resources (for example, volunteering and mentoring packages) which built confidence that realistic projects could be established and delivered in the short delivery timeframe for the initiative. There was no clear pattern in terms of who led the bids. In some areas, participants from statutory bodies reported that they had deferred to the VCS agencies to lead the bidding process due to their perceived greater experience and expertise around grant applications. Elsewhere, statutory bodies took a more active role in the process as they felt they had equal relevant experience in bidding for funds.

Some interviewees noted that the programme was helpful in allowing unfulfilled ambitions to be met. As one statutory body interviewee put it, it "linked [bids] to some other work that we already had in mind to do if only we had the resource to do it". There were, however, some criticisms of the way in which some projects were developed, suggesting that a handful of VCS organisations put forward pre-existing projects which were squeezed to fit an IOM agenda. One statutory interviewee described it as VCS bidders seeing "a pot of money and they tried to make their pre-existing project fit the pot of money without even finding out what the IOM cohort was".

Generally, the funding was spent as intended in the original project bidding documents. However, there were isolated instances where there was a change in focus. Interviewees from lead VCS agencies reported that Clinks was responsive and flexible where there were some deviations from intended spending plans. However, at a local level, VCS delivery bodies in one area reported that the lead VCS agency (acting as the local administrator) had been inconsistent as they had allowed one project to alter focus but required another to adhere to the original conditions of the bid. This created some tensions between the VCS delivery agencies and with the VCS lead agency.

Branding the funding – a missed opportunity

Whilst some VCS stakeholders commented that being the gatekeeper for funding was more significant than the source of the funding itself, others felt that the source and related 'badging' of the funding was important, particularly in the context of IOM. Some statutory stakeholders stated that it would have been helpful to receive funding that was jointly badged by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice. The fact that this funding was sourced from the Home Office, albeit with the support and input of the Ministry of Justice, meant that some respondents found it difficult to engage those parts of the criminal justice system that regard the Ministry of Justice as their 'home' government department rather than the Home Office.

Overall perceptions of the funding model

The broadly hands-off approach to programme management was welcomed by local organisations in the four areas. The fact that Home Office funding was channelled to VCS agencies, via Clinks, was cited by a number of VCS projects as providing them with additional credibility and giving them a voice in IOM within local IOM partnership settings. The funding was seen as helping recipient organisations to raise their profile and 'opened doors' for them, enabling them to engage on a more equal footing with statutory agencies. However, concern remained amongst some VCS bodies that these relationships may revert back to normal when the funding ceased.

The processes for managing programme funding were perceived to be relatively light-touch; this was seen as a positive element of the grant programme by the project

areas. That said, some respondents felt that, whilst the more administrative elements of programme management were light-touch, this appeared to have been 'replaced' by a more intense level of Home Office evaluation activity which the areas were required to participate in as a condition of funding. Project staff also expressed a view that the Home Office evaluation activity and the learning activities that Clinks facilitated at times seemed to duplicate each other, thereby causing some confusion about their precise purpose.

5. Involving the VCS in IOM – what it meant for the local areas

This chapter gives an overview of stakeholder perceptions of involving the VCS in IOM. It explores perceptions of the potential benefits that the VCS can bring to IOM; the positive elements emerging through this project; and the challenges for the VCS working in an IOM setting.

Perceived benefits of VCS involvement in IOM

At the outset, statutory and VCS interviewees broadly identified three principal potential benefits of involving the VCS in IOM.

First, the VCS's ability to work flexibly and responsively, without being slowed by the perceived bureaucracy associated with the statutory sector, was perceived to be an important potential benefit. Statutory respondents commented that, at their best, the VCS organisations brought enthusiasm and a fresh perspective to the IOM agenda which complemented the more traditional approaches of statutory agencies. In addition, because the VCS did not have a formal enforcement role, they were well placed to build up more trusting and empathic relationships with the offenders they were working with.

> "Successful resolution for IOM cannot be achieved by the statutory bodies through enforcement alone. And what it's starting to confirm to people is that [the VCS provides] a breadth of support which we didn't have beforehand."
> (Statutory representative)

Second, the VCS was perceived to contribute distinct skills and knowledge to IOM which other stakeholders were able to draw on, enabling skills transfer between the voluntary and statutory sectors. In this particular initiative, the local lead VCS agency brought with them extensive professional networks together with databases of local VCS agencies which helped to develop capacity and support service delivery.

Finally, being embedded within local communities – and therefore able to provide 'informal intelligence' on the unique features of local areas and the challenges within them was identified by statutory stakeholders as another key potential strength of VCS involvement in IOM. Both

VCS and statutory stakeholders acknowledged that this in-depth knowledge enabled VCS agencies to actively contribute to 'tailoring local solutions to local problems'.

Perceptions of benefits of the project in facilitating greater voluntary sector involvement

When interviewees were asked to reflect on the benefits which had actually been realised through the involvement of VCS organisations in IOM by this programme, they generally fell under one of three headings:

- strengthening relations between voluntary and statutory sectors;

- changing perceptions of the value of the VCS in its contribution to IOM; and

- the specific ability of the voluntary sector to address the diverse needs of offenders.

Each one is considered in turn.

Building positive relationships between the VCS and statutory sectors

There was a clear perception amongst VCS and statutory organisations that this project had helped to consolidate local relationships between VCS and statutory agencies in the criminal justice arena. In some cases, closer working relationships had already been forming through the implementation of Prolific and Priority Offender (PPO) approaches and The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) and this project was regarded as a further extension of this process. Local projects which had been funded with a specific remit around VCS capacity building, such as the VCS partnership and development programme in Croydon, enabled this work to 'move up a gear' and to focus directly on how a more diverse range of VCS agencies might support the offender case management process.

A commonly held view of both VCS and statutory respondents was that channelling Home Office funding for IOM through the VCS had raised the profile of the VCS in the criminal justice arena and enhanced the credibility of its input.

Links had partly been formalised through the setting up of strategic governance arrangements to oversee the local delivery of the programme which had both

VCS and statutory body membership. Some individual projects established steering groups comprising VCS, statutory sector members and in some cases, service user representatives. VCS and statutory stakeholders generally reported that governance at these two levels was effective: they adopted a pragmatic, delivery-focused, problem-solving approach which was appropriate to the short timescales of the project. Where governance arrangements were perceived to be less successful, a common feature was that arrangements were too informal and that agency representatives on the relevant groups lacked the remit or seniority to make decisions, thereby delaying progress.

Stakeholders also cited examples of increasing strategic input from the VCS, including VCS involvement in developing commissioning guidelines for IOM partners; VCS engagement in crime reduction fora; and elected VCS representation at a strategic level. In one area, both statutory and VCS stakeholders reported that the VCS project manager for the programme had become actively involved in the local IOM steering group. However, the pattern of greater involvement at a strategic level was not universal. In one site, observational data noted the absence of the VCS as a key player in decision making on the merging of strategic partnerships as a result of spending cuts. Some statutory respondents felt it might be beneficial in the future for VCS and statutory agencies to align their strategies or work streams more formally, where appropriate, in order to ensure a more naturally joined-up approach.

Interviews and workshops undertaken with VCS and statutory stakeholders towards the end of the fieldwork evidenced that effective working relationships had been established between VCS and statutory agencies in most areas and there was a strong commitment across all the sites to maintain these. In one area, the local authorities agreed to fund the VCS Forum, which had been established as part of the programme, for a further year.

Successfully changing views on the value of VCS involvement in IOM

The project was perceived to have been successful in positively influencing views around VCS involvement in IOM, with a perception of a shift away from the VCS being viewed simply as 'well-meaning amateurs'.

"The other thing that's been really refreshing actually for me is about how much of a can-do attitude the voluntary sector have to all of this, they're not phased by any of these timescales…, it's been very positive for all of us in terms of opening our eyes to what some of the future possibilities are with working with this sector." (Statutory representative)

Some VCS staff reported that when they had previously worked with statutory agencies they had experienced a 'top down' approach in which they felt they were there to simply 'service' the statutory sector rather than be equal partners. Within this initiative there was greater equality; however some respondents reported that felt they were still viewed more as 'deliverers rather than strategists'.

Nevertheless, there was a view that the project encouraged a sense of optimism about the future potential for VCS and statutory agencies to work collaboratively in the interests of enhancing services for offenders. With this came recognition amongst stakeholders of the fragility of aspects of the VCS and a need to support this more effectively.

"…the small organisations that have a very sort of niche interest as it were…in local neighbourhoods, assistance is often very fragile, their infrastructure can be very limited. Actually introducing VCS organisations into a broader framework of partnership working with a clear route into the decision-making processes, the sources of funding, the strategic planning, can have a positive impact in terms of both sustainability…but also to give them a voice which is much stronger than if they are struggling on alone or indeed just being the recipient of a little bit of money from a statutory organisation that commissions a little bit of work from them." (Home Office official)

The project also allowed VCS and statutory stakeholders to acknowledge that smaller VCS agencies, which may not have sufficient capacity or capability to access resources through commissioning, may nonetheless have a significant role to play in addressing offender needs. Interviewees commented that a consortium approach to bidding using the complementary skills of large and small VCS agencies was a particularly effective way to increase the capacity of smaller VCS organisations to become involved in IOM, (although some interviewees also commented that competition between VCS agencies for limited funds could militate against this).

Addressing the diverse needs of offenders

The third identified strength of involving the VCS in IOM focused on its ability to support the diverse nature of offender needs. Clinks' funding guidance encouraged the project areas to consider how they might address any locally identified needs in terms of diversity and inclusion. As a result, specific projects were developed which explicitly encouraged work with female offenders, BME offenders and offenders based in rural areas. The use of seed-corn grants was perceived to be particularly helpful in this respect as it allowed a diverse range of smaller VCS organisations, with expertise in niche areas, to apply for funding. These types of projects were perceived as demonstrating the potential capacity of VCS agencies to address very specific offender needs, which might not otherwise be met through a traditional commissioning process.

"…you might only have two people in a year who have that particular need and it would be really hard to commission a service but if you have some sort of direct voluntary sector organisation and some sort of personalisation, spot funding…you can get that need met…" (Statutory representative)

Challenges for the VCS working in an IOM setting

Participants in the project identified seven discrete challenges to involving the VCS in IOM; these are discussed below.

Mixed levels of understanding of IOM

IOM was a new agenda for most of the VCS stakeholders and their understanding of it, and how it linked with other offender-based programmes (e.g. Prolific and other Priority Offender schemes and the Drug Interventions Programme), varied across and within sites. Staff from the four lead VCS agencies gained a good understanding of IOM, in part because they managed the local programmes, had most contact with statutory IOM agencies, engaging with them at an operational as well as a strategic level, and were responsible for engaging other VCS organisations through capacity-building activity. In short, they had to learn about IOM and understand it, in order to engage other VCS organisations in IOM. In two sites where the lead VCS agencies had previously worked with criminal justice agencies this understanding largely built on previous knowledge. The level of knowledge amongst the delivery organisations was much more mixed. Whilst knowledge of

IOM was evident to some degree in those agencies that had previously worked with statutory agencies, many of the VCS organisations that were delivering local projects (particularly the smaller agencies receiving seed-corn grants) had in some cases a very limited understanding of IOM (despite receiving information about IOM at events that they attended).

Targeting effort with IOM offenders

The extent to which, at a service delivery level, VCS agencies successfully engaged with local IOM offenders was unclear. Interviewees from a number of VCS bodies expressed an element of confusion in identifying offenders that were in scope for IOM. Some VCS staff did not know whether the offenders they were working with were actually from the IOM cohort and it is difficult to determine through this research how many of the offenders supported locally were IOM offenders, rather than non-IOM offenders or simply individuals at risk of offending. No output data in relation to offenders and/ or IOM offenders were required to be collected for the programme. In addition, the application criteria for the seed-corn grants allowed projects to work with offenders (not specifically IOM offenders), ex-offenders and young people at risk of offending. This widening of the target group of beneficiaries is reflected, for example, in the number of youth diversion projects that were funded through seed-corn grants. Many VCS agencies, however, felt that working with offenders, regardless of whether they were IOM offenders or not, was itself a significant achievement within the short project timescales.

Furthermore, some interviewees from VCS delivery bodies (principally from smaller organisations) which received seed-corn grants to work with offenders expressed uncertainty about how to progress their work with offenders. Their presumption was that they would be allocated offenders to work with, and that some mechanism existed for this to happen. They reported that they had not received any guidance on what was going to take place following the award of the grant although the application criteria for agencies to receive seed-corn grants required that they had experience of working with offenders. This reported confusion and/or uncertainty suggests that either the screening process for applications was insufficiently rigorous to test that agencies had sufficient experience of working with offenders to progress the work without support from the lead VCS agency following the award of the grant; or, that there was a need to provide further guidance and support to smaller VCS agencies to enable them to use the grant to effectively work with offenders.

Slow or absent referral mechanisms

Whilst stakeholders felt that senior and operational probation managers were committed to the approach of bringing in the voluntary and community sector, there was a perception that frontline offender managers were less inclined to buy into the local projects. Engaging with these time-limited projects was viewed by some offender managers as an additional activity requiring an investment of effort that was unlikely to yield long-term benefit. This was seen as particularly problematic for projects which relied on offender managers to make referrals to them, as statutory agencies therefore determined their success to some degree in terms of the number of referrals they made.

> "We went out before Christmas and said we want referrals, and it wasn't really until after Christmas that we got anybody. To us, four weeks in a six months project is huge." (VCS representative)

Concerns around risk management

Working with offenders necessitates an element of risk management (i.e. managing the risk of further offending and/or causing harm to themselves, staff, volunteers and service users) and any VCS agency delivering a service to offenders will be expected to take responsibility for managing risks appropriately. Interviewees in both the voluntary and statutory sectors highlighted a number of issues around risk assessment in the VCS, including inappropriate and inflexible assessment processes. There is a concern that VCS agencies new to this area of work may not have the expertise to do this effectively and will therefore require additional support.

Sharing information at a local level

VCS interviewees in three of the four project areas reported difficulties in establishing information-sharing protocols between VCS and statutory agencies in relation to offenders. Despite the efforts of key individuals from both VCS and statutory agencies, information-sharing protocols had yet to be resolved four months into the five-month project. This grassroots view of data sharing contrasted with the perceptions of some government department staff, who did not regard data sharing as a problematic area; their understanding was that the relevant public agencies had data-sharing agreements in place. While such protocols may have existed, these were primarily

between public bodies and were not designed for the type of information sharing that was required for these projects, (for example, information sharing between probation and VCS agencies to enable offenders to take up volunteering opportunities).

Although in some instances information about offenders was shared informally, usually through the existence of trusting relationships between VCS and statutory staff, interviewees from both sectors held the view that there were cultural and practical barriers to information sharing. These perceptions included a feeling reported by both VCS and statutory interviewees that some statutory staff held a view that VCS agencies could not be 'trusted' with sensitive data on offenders. This was either because they were not used to dealing with it or because of the limitations of their IT equipment, which lacked appropriate security and storage systems (for example, secure email addresses).

Information sharing is of course a two-way street. The overall ethos and culture of the VCS might influence the level or type of information that VCS would itself share with statutory bodies. This was perceived to be a particular issue where sharing information could lead to enforcement action against an offender.

"…if I refer somebody to a voluntary sector partnership for parenting advice…and my offender causes a ruckus and punches somebody on the nose, it's not enough for that person to be banned from the premises, I have to prosecute that person for failure to comply with his order I need the voluntary sector person…to come to court and give evidence…that's what puts a lot of people off taking offenders because they don't want to engage with that side of the business…" (Statutory representative)

Some VCS stakeholders indicated that such disclosure could potentially damage their working relationship with offenders and run counter to the VCS culture of inclusivity. Some interviewees in statutory bodies supported this view, regarding the role of VCS agencies as being quite separate to that of the statutory sector. However, other statutory stakeholders suggested that other VCS agencies, principally drugs and alcohol agencies, were already providing this kind of information to offender managers, for example, as part of PPO schemes.

Raising unsustainable expectations

At the time of submitting their bids all partners were aware that the funding would cease at the end of March

2011. The local VCS lead agencies commented that this had necessarily influenced their choice of projects as they sought to create longer-term legacies, for example, through compiling service directories, developing community safety fora and multi-agency steering groups, testing out approaches to service delivery, and gathering information to inform future service development.

Whilst the seed-corn grants enhanced the capacity of a broad range of VCS agencies to work with offenders, a common concern held by VCS interviewees was over the sustainability of their service provision when the funding ended. With limited opportunities to seek further funding in the current economic climate, their concern was that making services available to offenders for a short period of two to three months would raise expectations that could not be sustained. Some statutory interviewees commented that the temporary nature of the projects which provided services to offenders risked confirming the perception of some probation offender managers that it was not worth engaging with VCS services (on behalf of their clients) as these services were fragile and could not be relied upon to be available in the medium term. The development of new service provision also requires an investment by statutory agencies to find out and engage effectively with the VCS bodies, an investment which is perceived by many statutory staff to be challenging given the other demands they face on their time.

Competition within the VCS

Many VCS interviewees perceived competition between VCS agencies for a limited pool of funds to be an important feature of VCS behaviour within the current economic climate. The need for individual VCS organisations to 'protect one's own interests' was viewed as paramount. This view served as a reminder that the VCS is not a single, unified and homogeneous sector and that this was a barrier to more collaborative approaches. It was also highlighted that size differences between VCS agencies was a potential impediment to cross-VCS collaboration; collaboration between large, national VCS agencies and smaller grassroots bodies was perceived to happen infrequently, largely due to challenges around the geographic spread of organisations and cultural dissonance between the two types of VCS organisation. For example, larger VCS agencies are more likely to derive their income from service level agreements and contracts with public sector commissioners whilst smaller agencies are more likely to be grant funded.

Whilst VCS organisations reported that the initiative was effective in facilitating some progress in this area, there was a perception that the situation would never be fully resolved. "You will never get equality between [VCS] agencies, I don't think, but I think we're a little bit nearer to it." (VCS representative)

The majority of VCS agencies which were involved in the programme were small to medium-sized bodies. There was a concern amongst this group that larger VCS agencies may become increasingly involved and develop expertise in IOM at the expense of smaller ones.

This grant programme saw the lead VCS agencies in each area make a commitment to actively involving other locally based VCS agencies. However, some VCS interviewees expressed a concern that, if this programme was to be replicated, such a commitment to sharing funds with other VCS agencies may not be made without explicit direction within the programme guidance.

6. Conclusions and implications

The preceding chapters explore the funding model, how the grants were distributed across the four areas and stakeholder perceptions of the initiative. Key implications for policy and practice are outlined below.

Role of brokerage organisations

Brokerage organisations nationally and locally played a crucial role in ensuring timely and effective access to local VCS organisations, strengthening the VCS voice, and enabling the shift to a more hands-off approach by the Home Office.

- In engaging brokerage organisations, there needs to be a clear understanding of, and appropriate levels of funding for, the effort involved in facilitating this engagement.

- Well-developed and trusting relationships with partner organisations are central in moving forward with initiatives which seek to increase the role of the voluntary and community sector.

- The infrastructure organisations that were involved in coordinating activity at a local level in this project were perceived to be effective in the way they performed their role. However, this may not be the case across the whole country. If local brokerage organisations are used in future programme development, government departments will need to consider how capacity might be built in less well-developed organisations.

- The advice and guidance that Clinks provided to the local agencies during the bidding process appeared to allow them to make an informed decision on whether to direct their resources to bidding through this process. If service provision is to be increasingly opened up to local competition, such an advisory role may be beneficial.

The grant administration process

The use of a third party to administer government funding was a new approach for the Home Office in this context.

- This method of grant distribution appears to have worked well and could be a model for future delivery. However, further research would need to

be undertaken to assess whether this approach is cost-effective.

- The use of a third party to manage and administer government grants will not be possible or desirable in all areas of government funding. Government departments should continue to test this approach to grant administration to learn more about the contexts within which it is most valuable and appropriate.

- People working in different sectors may make different assumptions, operate within different processes and use different terminology, particularly when the funding arrangements are new and previously untried. Clarifying expectations and understanding is important to avoid misunderstandings.

- Using mixed bid assessment panels (from, for example, government departments, the VCS and statutory organisations) to award government funding can help to provide a balanced and inclusive approach to the decision-making process.

Data sharing

Concerns around data sharing between the voluntary and statutory sector need to be addressed in order to increase confidence in collaborative working within IOM.

- Where potentially sensitive data are being shared between VCS and statutory agencies, protocols need to be developed at the earliest possible stage (to avoid the informal information sharing which occurred in some areas during this project) and training made available to make this practice more widespread. Both statutory and voluntary sector partners need clarity around the potential impact which data sharing could have (e.g. where information provided by a VCS agency is used to contribute to an enforcement process).

- The development of local protocols could be supported by government departments supporting the development of a nationally agreed template to help reduce duplication of effort locally.

Engagement with IOM agenda

This initiative has undoubtedly raised the profile of the VCS with IOM partners, strengthening relationships between the VCS and the statutory sector and improving perceptions of the value of the VCS contribution, although there were varied levels of understanding of IOM and its relationship with other schemes. In order to improve understanding and to ensure that the positive impact is developed and sustained:

- 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.

- More awareness-raising work should be undertaken to increase the level of VCS understanding of IOM objectives in general (and particularly around which offenders are 'in scope' and how IOM fits with other programmes e.g. PPO, DIP).

- Engaging those organisations which are not already specifically working with offenders can be encouraged, for example, by the use of seed-corn funding. When seeking to bring in organisations which are new to working with offenders, it would be beneficial to explicitly target these organisations within the funding eligibility criteria and allow more time to identify potential agencies and build the necessary relationships.

Roles and responsibilities

Engaging VCS agencies in the IOM agenda has important implications for the roles and responsibilities of individual workers.

- Although the VCS is to be encouraged to take on a more equal role in IOM, it should be recognised that it will not always be appropriate or desirable for statutory agencies to take a fully hands-off approach.

- Consideration needs to be given to the extent to which VCS agencies can/should be expected to actively contribute to offender case management duties, especially enforcement and risk assessment procedures. The expectations of VCS and statutory agencies should be assessed and monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure their roles are clearly understood.

- Time needs to be invested in building strong relationships between IOM offender managers and VCS agency workers. Better working relationships will assist in ensuring that offender referrals are appropriate and also enable standardised support plans and risk assessments to be developed.

- More clarity is necessary around the role which volunteers may have in delivering IOM services. Increased awareness of both the opportunities and constraints of volunteering is desirable in the statutory sector in order to address their (generally) limited experience in using volunteers. There are limits (identified through this evaluation) to the extent to which the VCS can be expected and relied upon to fill service gaps within the public sector.

- Experts are an invaluable source of advice, especially in project development. Seek out and involve relevant experts in the project from the outset.

Skills transfer

This initiative has enabled informal skills transfer between VCS and statutory sector agencies.

- Knowledge-sharing partnerships between the two sectors could provide a useful and cost-effective way of formalising this learning and embedding it within organisations.

- Statutory agencies can enhance the voluntary and community sector's understanding and delivery of risk assessment procedures. Where possible joint voluntary-statutory sector training events may be beneficial for those individuals working within IOM.

Enhancing the credibility of the VCS in IOM

The evaluation has shown that Home Office funding has helped to enhance the profile of, and confidence in, VCS agencies working in IOM. In addition, using the VCS as the conduit for funding can equalise the power relationship between VCS and statutory sector.

- Future initiatives of this type would also benefit from an MoJ as well as a Home Office 'stamp of approval', to further enhance VCS credibility across statutory providers.

- Aligning the organisational objectives of VCS and statutory agencies working within the re-offending agenda will help achieve a more coherent approach to the management of offenders.

Establishing 'buy-in'

'Buy-in' to VCS engagement in IOM needs to be established at all levels across both VCS and statutory organisations. Whilst achieving strategic influence is important, buy-in from frontline staff is particularly important to help ensure effective referral pathways.

- The strategic vision of senior management needs to be cascaded down through organisations so it can be adopted by frontline staff.

- Organisational communications strategies should reflect a commitment to the delivery of this strategic vision.

Maintaining the diversity of the VCS market

The VCS is a diverse sector with small, medium and large organisations offering a range of provision, purchased in a variety of ways. The diversity of the sector can offer benefits in terms of quality and cost and there is a need to ensure that this diversity is supported and incentivised through appropriate commissioning/purchasing mechanisms. Examples include service level agreements for volume services such as accommodation and drugs services, which attract competition, and smaller niche services required by a handful of offenders at any one time, which are purchased through small grants or spot purchasing. It should be noted that while competition may be regarded by VCS service providers as being negative, it may be necessary, to deliver better value, encourage innovation and improve quality.

Funding and commissioning

VCS funding was seen as providing a catalyst for generating new activity or providing tangible opportunities to develop existing but unfulfilled ideas within the four project areas. Specific mechanisms are needed to ensure that the expertise within VCS agencies can, post-project, continue to contribute to the commissioning of IOM services. This will not only ensure that services are targeted appropriately but will also enable the pooling and sharing of knowledge to bring about more integrated working between commissioners and providers.

- There should be some VCS representation on groups responsible for commissioning of IOM services.

- 'Spot purchasing' of VCS services should be considered where a small number of offenders have a particular need. This will ensure a more tailored service for IOM offenders at minimal cost.

- It is important not to underestimate the difference that comparatively small amounts of funding can make to local activity.

Widening engagement

Small, 'harder-to-reach' VCS agencies may well have specific expertise to contribute to the IOM agenda, in particular an in-depth understanding of local areas and specialist client groups. Ways of ensuring that small VCS agencies have the opportunity to engage with IOM alongside more well known national agencies need to be considered.

- Consider further, targeted use of seed-corn grants, incorporating lessons learned from this initiative.

- Local infrastructure organisations should be encouraged to undertake work in building relationships within the VCS to ensure that small agencies can benefit from the expertise of larger ones and vice versa; however, they may need advice and financial support to do this.

- A consortium approach to bid writing within the VCS can help ensure smaller agencies have opportunities to engage.

Impact/sustainability

Whilst it is difficult for short-term projects to meaningfully demonstrate impact, a proportional level of outcome measurement is desirable.

- Appropriate performance measures should be developed at the outset and appropriate data collection systems should be put in place to monitor these. Training and support may be necessary to facilitate this.

- Though independent evaluation is desirable, the evaluation specification needs to be appropriate for the timeframe involved and should not duplicate activities (e.g. learning events) to be undertaken by funders/brokerage agencies.

Drawing on the VCS to deliver services

The approach assessed in this report offers a new way to deliver locally based services; however, it is not without its challenges.

- The projects are resource-intensive. The skills and time required to implement projects of this nature should not be underestimated.

- There is some work to do bringing financial processes for the delivery of resources in line with an approach which places greater responsibility on voluntary sector bodies.

- The current financial climate and the decreasing availability of government funding inevitably prompts questions about how approaches such as this might be encouraged or sustained without funding incentives.

- Project funding should encourage some element of managed 'risk' in order to test new approaches and enhance learning.

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Annex 1: Funding criteria outlined in the Clinks guidance

A Clinks-led panel assessed the quality of each proposal according to agreed criteria related to the following outcomes and principles.

Criteria related to outcomes:

Proposals will be expected to show how they will achieve enhanced VCS involvement in local IOM arrangements, demonstrated by one or more of the following outcomes:

- greater involvement from the VCS in working with offenders;

- an increased level of VCS input into IOM;

- better linkages between VCS and statutory sector partners to implement IOM;

- involvement of smaller VCS organisations that have not so far engaged with the criminal justice agenda;

- greater user involvement in decisions about services and support;

- greater community engagement and involvement in identified neighbourhoods;

- more local people involved in volunteering/ mentoring/advising; and

- reduced re-offending.

Criteria related to principles:

Proposals will be expected to show:

- that relevant VCS and IOM partners have been fully engaged in the process of identifying the priorities and developing the plans set out in the submission;

- how they will engage with specific local needs in relation to ethnicity/culture, disability and gender (either in the offender population or wider community). (Please note: The Home Office has specified that no grant may be used to support or promote religious activity, other than inter-faith activity.)