



supporting voluntary organisations
that work with offenders and their families

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Information on the proposed Management of Offenders Bill

The Management of Offenders Bill was introduced in the Queen's Speech on 15 November 2006. (Full information about the speech and proposed legislation can be found at www.commonleader.gov.uk/output/Page1744.asp). This legislation has already been introduced in the Lords and most of its provisions have been 'trailed' over the past weeks and months. The intention is to make it possible for the Government to fully implement the recommendations of the Carter Report which was published in December 2003.

This is the position that Clinks has taken regarding the Bill:

1. Clinks welcomes the opportunity for the voluntary sector to undertake more work with people in conflict with the law. We, in the VCS, have a lot to offer and a track record particularly in housing, drug treatment, mentoring, employment training, education and support to families.
2. Many VCS organisations would like to be able to do more of the work they currently do and help more individuals and their families turn their lives around. With proper long term funding and support (in terms of training etc), the sector is keen to play a greater role.
3. There are some core areas of work carried out by the Probation Service which Clinks considers should continue to be undertaken by the state, particularly writing report for courts and the parole board which make recommendations about sentences/release. Apart from potential conflicts of interest, there are important issues of justice and accountability which should not be discounted.
4. Clinks is concerned that the government recognise the distinctive contribution of the sector and the priority it gives to meeting the needs of service users. Many of the most challenging offenders are highly disaffected, suspicious of state agencies and unwilling to engage with them. The voluntary sector must be careful that it does not become (or is perceived as) another agent of the state. If this were to happen we would lose that which is most distinctive and valuable about our role and work.
5. It is important too that the sector is not seen as providing services on the cheap. Value for money is always an important consideration but public safety and world class public services to protect the public deserve proper investment.
6. Clinks is worried too about the processes the government are planning to use to put NOMS into practice. We do not think a series of competitions in which the

voluntary and private organisations are pitted against the probation service is the best model. We are concerned too that the arrangements for letting contracts for work should reflect the highly local nature of some of the most effective projects and activities. Competition and regional commissioning might represent one way forward but other options should also be fully explored.