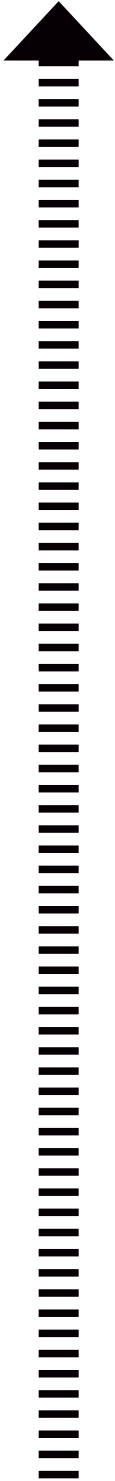


# IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | MAY 2010



There is no other criminal justice umbrella body which operates with such impact. I don't know any other organisation that truly does this for this sector or has such a depth of knowledge in its staff."



## CLINKS

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For the full Clinks Impact Assessment visit  
[www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org) and click on  
Publications, then Clinks Publications

**In March 2010, M&E Consulting were commissioned by Clinks to carry out an impact assessment of its work. The aims of the impact assessment were to assess the difference that Clinks' services make and whether it is providing the services its stakeholders want and need.**

The impact assessment involved surveying 719 Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations on Clinks' database, of which 112 (15%) responded. A series of in-depth telephone interviews was carried out with nine other stakeholders including VCS organisations, funders and statutory agencies, from a list of 23 identified by Clinks for their knowledge of the sector.

### Key findings

#### Clinks' services

- ★ The online survey revealed that the VCS organisations who responded are making good use of Clinks' services. In particular, 94% of respondents had received Clinks' e-bulletins and almost three-quarters of respondents had used two or more of Clinks' services.
- ★ The vast majority (81%) of VCS organisations did not feel there were any ways in which Clinks could help them more than it already is. A small number suggested Clinks should extend its regional activities and support.
- ★ Interviews with other stakeholders revealed that they had mainly received informal advice and information from Clinks through attending events and contact with individual members of Clinks' staff. All were very satisfied with the way Clinks works with them and did not feel that there was anything else they wanted from Clinks.

#### Clinks' role

- ★ The majority of the VCS organisations who responded saw Clinks as a source of information and a voice for the sector.
- ★ Almost two-thirds of VCS organisations felt that Clinks provides a unique service.
- ★ Other stakeholders saw Clinks as a bridge between the voluntary sector and statutory sectors, providing a conduit to VCS organisations and representing its VCS members.

All those the researchers spoke to felt that Clinks was effectively fulfilling this role.

#### Clinks' impact

Clinks is clearly making a difference for both VCS organisations and other stakeholders in the criminal justice sector. Over 80% of the VCS organisations the researchers contacted felt Clinks is effective in:

- ★ Representing the voluntary sector within the Criminal Justice System.
- ★ Bringing together the voluntary and statutory sectors.
- ★ Providing a strong voice for its members.

And three-quarters felt Clinks is effective in supporting organisations to improve. In particular, VCS organisations

felt Clinks helped them keep up-to-date with relevant issues and opportunities, made them aware of funding opportunities and enabled them to network with each other.

Other stakeholders also felt that their relationship with Clinks makes a difference to their work:

- ★ The majority of other stakeholders felt that their contact with Clinks had given them access to expertise and knowledge of the voluntary and criminal justice sector.
- ★ Most also felt that Clinks had been influential in shifting policy in relation to the voluntary and community sector.

### Conclusion

This impact assessment has provided a great endorsement of Clinks' work. The feedback from VCS organisations and other stakeholders is extremely positive. Clinks has established a reputation as a trusted and credible organisation which is seen as having an independent view and being neutral in its representation of VCO views. It would seem that, for such a small organisation, Clinks has a considerable impact on organisations working in the criminal justice sector.



“Generalist VCS infrastructure does not meet our needs as closely; Clinks can and does. The services provided are far more relevant and useful (and cheaper!) than those provided by generic infrastructure organisations.”

“Clinks is the representation of the sector with Government and a conduit for passing information down to the sector. I see them as having a role as a mediator between the statutory and the voluntary sector. They're very well connected with the statutory sector – so facilitating, bringing the two together.”

“They provide a unified voice for the voluntary sector.”

“Clinks is remarkable. It is an umbrella body which is very connected with its members and front line service delivery. It is an extremely important organisation that manages its multifaceted role very well. Most organisations in the sector feel Clinks in some way belongs to them and this is no mean feat given the diversity within the sector.”

“Clinks makes us feel an important contributor to the criminal justice system. We feel better informed when engaging with NOMS and policy makers.”

“Individuals tend to represent their own organisation and until Clinks came along, there was no one representing the sector. They have competence and they have the confidence of the sector.”

“Until they were there, the sector didn't get representation and a voice in government.”

“It's something that small organisations find hard and feel left out of that sphere of influence ... Clinks are adding value to the people on the ground who don't have the time or opportunity to do that kind of work.”