



DEVELOPING A CRIMINAL JUSTICE NETWORK

DO IT JUSTICE

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM EXPLAINED

Acknowledgements

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Author

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Feedback or further information

If you have any feedback on the resources, are seeking further information about the programme, or would like to share your own advice/experiences on supporting the VCS in the Criminal Justice System, please contact Isabel Livingstone at Clinks: isabel.livingstone@clinks.org

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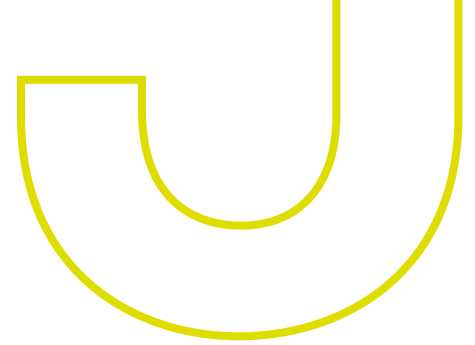
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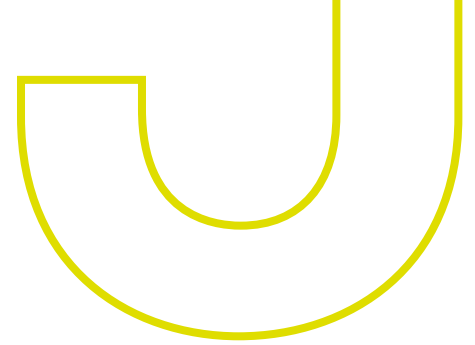
CLINKS

This resource is one of a series called Do it Justice, aimed at providing information and advice to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) on a range of issues in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). It provides information for organisations working in the CJS in England and Wales. It aims to support a better understanding of how the system is organised and how it works.

This guide is for VCS organisations working in the Criminal Justice System, and those who support them. It gives advice on how to set up a network of VCS organisations to help organisations collaborate, learn from one another, and develop a strategic voice to influence commissioning and other decision making. It includes case studies of networks in the South West and Wales.



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INTRODUCTION

This resource is for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations working in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), and those who support them. It gives advice about how to set up a network of VCS organisations to help them collaborate, learn from one another and develop a strategic voice to influence commissioning and other decision making. The guide also covers how to support the sustainability of your network.

VCS-led criminal justice networks can be established for a number of reasons, including engaging with statutory forums or boards (for example, Community Safety Partnerships and Reducing Reoffending Boards) and bringing organisations together to access funding and influence public sector commissioning or other decision-making.

Clinks has supported the development of networks and partnerships in the South West of England for several years, and this guide draws on the experience of some of those networks. Clinks has also led the Safer Future Communities project,¹ which has funded the development of networks across England and Wales to engage with Police and Crime Commissioners, elected for the first time in November 2012. This guide complements other resources developed specifically for those networks, which are available on the [Clinks website](#).²

This guide includes case studies and examples drawn from some of the networks Clinks has worked with in the South West and Wales but there many others with invaluable experience to draw on. In the South West, these include (among others) the [Criminal Justice Forum](#)

in Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset, led by [Bournemouth CVS](#), and the Safer Future Communities networks including the [Avon and Somerset Network](#), led by [Voscur](#).

"If you give people the chance to come together and say what they want to say in a positive way as opposed to moaning about things, it works. But they need support to do this too."

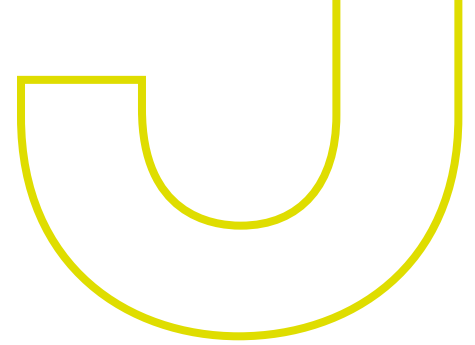
"It's moved a long way from the beginning when statutory service just came to us to find volunteers."

"If the group didn't exist it would cost the public sector a lot more money because they'd have a lot of different groups to go to."

"What we need to get better at is setting the agenda rather than responding to the public sector's agenda."

1. Safer Future Communities: www.clinks.org/services/sfc

2. Safer Future Communities resources: www.clinks.org/services/sfc/sfcreources



WHERE DO I START?

The first steps to setting up your network will include being clear about the purpose of the network and what it wants to achieve; meeting with key people to involve them from the start; and developing a contact list of other people to inform and involve, by starting to map voluntary organisations involved in criminal justice.

It is important that you have a clear vision of why the network needs to exist from the outset. You might want to set up a small steering group to help establish the network, setting set clear objectives and ground rules. The first meeting or event often sets the tone for how the network will be run.

EXAMPLE: IMPORTANCE OF A CLEAR PURPOSE

Gloucestershire VCS Assembly stresses the importance of having a clear purpose for a network and questioning whether the network is really needed:

“Clarify from the outset the purpose of the whole network, and what each individual constituent part brings to it. And write it all down. Clarity of purpose is really important. If there is no purpose then stop meeting. It’s harder to get people to stop meeting than start!”

See Gloucestershire VCS Assembly case study on [page 21](#).

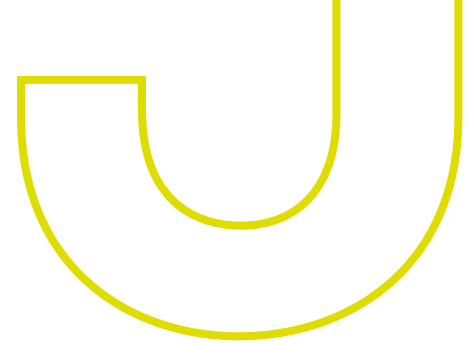
WHO TO INVOLVE

Consider who the network will be open to, for example:

- **How will you define and describe the remit and scope of the network?** How the network defines its members will affect who becomes involved. Organisations working in criminal justice and community safety are very diverse, and you need to consider who your network is targeted at. Here are some different ways of describing criminal justice organisations:
 - Organisations working with offenders
 - Community justice – including organisations working on youth justice, community safety, adult offenders, victims, survivors and witnesses
 - Safer and stronger communities
 - Organisations working within the criminal justice system.

You may also need to consider how to target organisations that do not see themselves as working with offenders or within the criminal justice system, but whose client group or activities may be relevant and who may benefit from the network.

- **Will the network be open to anyone to attend or will it have a fixed membership?** The advantages of open membership are that no-one feels excluded and the network has a large pool of knowledge and experience to draw from. However, fixed membership can be effective when you want to develop strong relationships or partnerships between members, or to ensure that marginalised groups are at the heart of decision-making by making sure they are part of the core membership. If a network or steering group

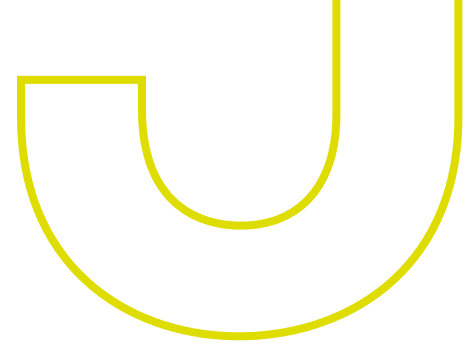


has fixed membership it is vital to ensure that the selection of members is transparent and fair. For an example of a network with fixed membership of its steering group nominated from a wider membership, see the case study of Community Justice Cymru on [page 32](#).

- **How will you ensure that marginalised groups are included?** It is important to identify which organisations and communities might be inadvertently excluded from the network and to take proactive steps to involve them. Simply saying that it is open to all does not make it so. Nor does it ensure that every organisation that joins is enabled to participate and be an active member. The network should target small, volunteer-run organisations, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) organisations, women’s organisations, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) groups, user-led organisations and groups operating in rural areas. To enable the inclusion of very small organisations, consider whether funding should be made available to cover the costs of attending network meetings.
- **How will you ensure that the expertise of service users informs the network’s activities?** You could invite service-user representatives to join the network (perhaps attending with staff from their organisations), target user-led groups, or set up a sub-network to bring together service-user groups to feed in to the wider network. Clinks and Revolving Doors Agency have published a guide to effective service user involvement. These principles could be adapted to decide what level of service user involvement is appropriate for the network.³

- **Will the network include statutory or private sector members, or is it just for voluntary organisations?** There are merits and limitations to including statutory and private sector members in a network. To preserve the independence of the VCS, members from other sectors might be excluded completely or be allowed only to attend as observers, or at some meetings and not others. Including other sectors in the network in some way could increase dialogue and understanding between sectors and may enable joint initiatives. However, if the network includes influencing of policy or collaborating for contracting, it is likely that potential statutory sector members will be commissioners and procurers of services which VCS members might hope to deliver. Private sector members might be competing for the same tenders or wish to include VCS members in their supply chains. These issues can all be overcome, but will need to be considered carefully by the network. On the other hand, if other sectors are excluded, the network will need other ways of developing effective and strategic relationships with public and private sector organisations. These could include reporting to and having representation on multi-sector partnerships, running joint events, and inviting speakers from other sectors.

³. Download the guide at www.clinks.org/publications/guides-resources/vol_guides



FUNDING AND RESOURCES

All networks need resources, whether these are in-kind support or cash funding. The networks we have interviewed for this guide have acquired funding from a range of sources including:

- Charitable trusts
- Probation Trusts
- Local authorities
- Welsh Government
- Small seed-corn grants from Clinks (no longer available).

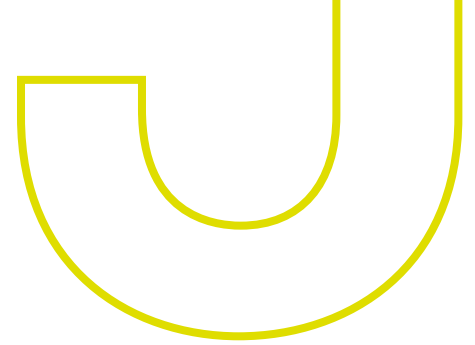
The amount of funding needed to run a network varies enormously, and depends on what other resources can be drawn upon. If the network is one of several supported by an umbrella organisation, it can often run on minimal specific funding by making use of staff time funded from other sources. For example Community Justice Cymru has a small annual grant of £4000 from Welsh Government plus some additional one-off funding for conferences from elsewhere. A lot of the work is carried out voluntarily by network members, and it also draws on the skills and practical resources of its host organisation Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

If there is little funding for the network, make use of other resources available in member and partner organisations. For example:

- Ensure that support duties, such as secretariat, hosting meetings or follow up actions, are shared fairly and proportionately among members.
- Where only a few members are in a position to contribute these resources, ask other members to contribute something to support them, such as money, refreshments for meetings, bringing their own copies of minutes and other documents.

- If statutory partners cannot offer funding to the network, they may be able to provide venues and facilities for meetings or events.

See 'Making it last' section below for ideas on how to sustain your network after any initial funding ends.



MAKING IT LAST

It is important to consider from the beginning how the network could be sustained after initial funding (if any) ends. The following suggestions will help make the network sustainable.

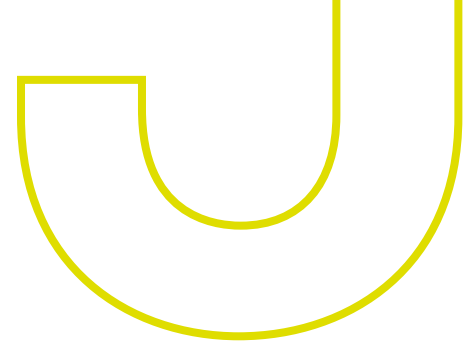
- Make sure the network meets members' needs: if members value the network they will stay involved and invest time, energy and even funds to make sure it continues.
- Involve members in running the network from the start: recruit a steering group and member chairs/vice-chairs; and ask members to host the meetings at their premises.
- Once established, agree a plan with the members about how the network will continue after the initial funding ends (start this no later than halfway through the initial project/funding).
- Plan how you will track the network's activities and achievements (outputs and outcomes), so that you can evaluate them and use the results to advocate for funding from a range of funders.
- Build relationships with potential funders of the network to show them its value. For example, speak to organisations such as the Probation Trust, Police and Crime Commissioner's office, local authority and others about how they could benefit from having a single point of contact for the VCS.
- Consider establishing the network as an independent organisation: this is a lot of work but it can ensure that it maintains momentum and everyone has a stake in it continuing. However it is also worth considering partnering with other voluntary sector networks and support organisations to make the best use of existing contacts and resources.

EXAMPLE: SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT ORGANISATION

Devon Reform was set up as an independent charity (and company limited by guarantee) with a paid manager to support VCS organisations working with offenders at a local level, and now has 120 member organisations. This has enabled it to carry out much more activity than would have been likely if it was a small project within a wider organisation. However the network does have concerns about how to sustain its activity after the end of its current funding, and is considering introducing VCS membership fees and/or charges for statutory organisations using its services. Another option might be that Devon Reform is absorbed into another organisation which is felt would help its sustainability. Being hosted by a local support and development organisation (such as a CVS) makes sense particularly if the network's remit is broadened out to include community safety as well as services for offenders.

"If you could retain your independence but tap into the HR, finance and communication systems of a CVS, that might work."

See Devon Reform case study on [page 27](#).



MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE

A key reason for organisations to form a network is so that they can have a collective voice and more 'clout' with decision makers. Here are some ideas for how your network could influence Criminal Justice System strategy, decision-making, service design and practice.

- **Develop relationships with key people in the Criminal Justice System:**

Invite them to speak (and listen) to the network. These might include:

- Probation Trust senior managers or partnership managers
- Prison Governors or partnership co-ordinators
- Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) (or candidates), their staff and Police and Crime Panel members
- National Offender Management Service (NOMS) commissioners
- Chief Constables
- Chairs/members of prison Independent Monitoring Boards
- Youth Offending Team managers
- Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Boards and lead officers
- Magistrates and District Judges
- Local authority directors of services and lead commissioners
- Community Safety Partnership and Local Criminal Justice Board representatives
- Councillors with criminal justice related portfolios.

- **Write a manifesto to influence commissioners, local policy or elected officials:** Developing a manifesto could provide an excellent focus for discussions

between network members to help them identify where consensus can be reached on, for example, what challenges they are facing and what needs to change to address them. A manifesto would also raise awareness of the network with decision makers and provide an agenda for future discussions. Make sure that the manifesto avoids party political bias or reference, and asks for actions that are within the power of the decision-makers or elected officials it is targeting.

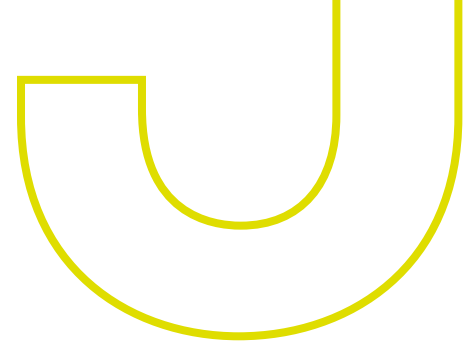
EXAMPLE: COMMUNITY JUSTICE CYMRU MANIFESTO

Community Justice Cymru developed a manifesto⁴ as way to revitalise the network and engage with decision-makers. It has had many benefits in giving members ownership over the network and empowering members to more effectively represent the network's views on external partnerships.

See Community Justice Cymru case study on [page 32](#).

- **Launch a campaign:** For example, to raise awareness of the value of VCOs working in the Criminal Justice System, or a campaign on a specific issue.
- **Seek VCS representation on local partnerships and boards:** Lobby for VCS representation and encourage network members to stand for election or nomination to, for example, the Probation Trust boards, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), Reducing Reoffending Boards, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Boards, Prison

4. Community Justice Cymru Manifesto 2011-2012, download from www.wcva.org.uk/policy/dsp_network.cfm?networkid=6&display_sitedeptid=9



partnership meetings and Neighbourhood Policing Panels. Consider providing training and support for individuals to represent the whole network or sector, rather than only their own organisation or sub-sector.

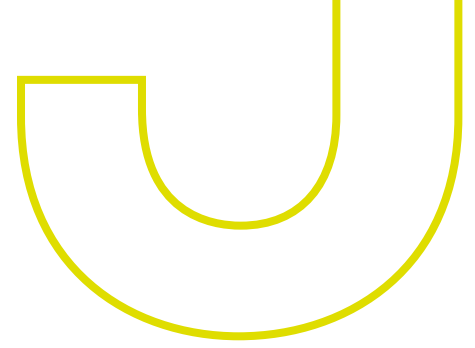
- **Ensure the network is represented at public meetings:** If there is opportunity to ask questions, provide an agreed list of questions and points to be made from the network and provide an opportunity for the answers and responses to be fed back to the network at the next meeting.
- **Carry out research** and produce reports to provide evidence for key messages that the network wants to get across.

EXAMPLE: DEVELOPING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

ViSTA, a learning and development charity in Somerset, has been working over the last three years to develop strategic engagement between statutory criminal justice agencies and the voluntary and community sector. Initially, it was difficult to get statutory services to attend meetings and events, as there had not been a history of partnership working and there are not large numbers of voluntary organisations involved in criminal justice in the county. In addition, the network itself had minimal resources to support its development.

A key turning point was inviting a speaker from National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to a network meeting. This encouraged the police and Probation Trust to become more involved, which in turn increased engagement from voluntary organisations. NOMS recommended that the VCS network attended the Reducing Reoffending Board, which the Board agreed to. Getting representation on the Reducing Reoffending Board was a key achievement for the network, and has opened up other opportunities for voluntary organisations to become more involved in Integrated Offender Management and other areas.

For more information on ViSTA's work on criminal justice contact Angela Kerr, Chief Executive, at angela@vistaproject.org.uk



GETTING INVOLVED IN INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) is a system that provides all agencies involved in local criminal justice with a single coherent structure for the management of prolific offenders.

VCS involvement in IOM has many benefits including making use of strong local intelligence and links with communities, addressing specific gaps in services that help reduce reoffending, and tapping into the less bureaucratic, more responsive nature of voluntary organisations' activities.

Clinks and the Home Office have developed resources to help local areas involve the VCS in IOM arrangements. They include the following:

How VCS organisations can engage with local IOM arrangements and other Criminal Justice System (CJS) structures includes advice on working across organisational cultures, positioning your organisation and 'selling' your services, and effective partnership working. It also includes checklists for VCS organisations to assess how ready they are for engagement with IOM arrangements.

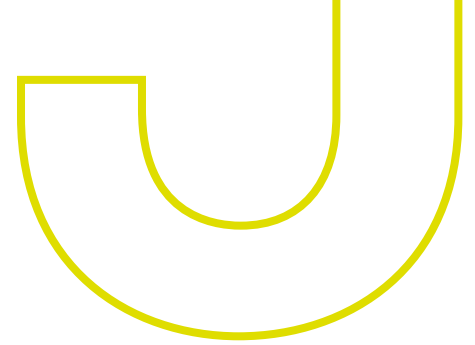
Strategic partnership working sets out how the VCS can organise its involvement in IOM strategic partnerships, including through setting up VCS forums. It includes the Terms of Reference for the Croydon VCS Supporting Offenders Forum.

The potential brokerage role of Local Support and Development Organisations explores the role local umbrella bodies such as CVSs and rural community councils.

Mapping and engaging with potential local VCS partners gives advice on how to identify and involve local VCS organisations including those that might not initially see themselves as working with offenders. It covers mapping exercises, database development and market place events.

Download the guides from the [Clinks website](#).⁵

⁵. Download from www.clinks.org/publications/guides-resources/iom-resources



MAKING AN IMPACT (AND PROVING IT)

It is important that a voluntary sector network is clear about what it wants to achieve and how it will measure its success. These issues need to be considered from early on when setting up a network so that you can look back later and know what has changed (establishing a baseline). Some things are difficult to measure, such as having an influence on strategic decision making, partly because they take a long time to change and also because it can be difficult to tell whether things have changed because of what the network did or for other reasons.

EVALUATION TOOLS FOR NETWORKS

There are several evaluation tools available that are suitable for networks, which can also be a useful activity to develop the network. Details of two tools for networks can be found in the Appendix:

- **Axis of Influence**, a discussion based framework which helps community groups and networks to assess and improve the influence they have on agencies and partnerships.
- **Value of Infrastructure**, a framework developed by NCVO to assess and provide evidence of the impact of voluntary sector infrastructure. It includes an 'External Agencies' dial which could be used to measure how criminal justice public sector agencies are relating to voluntary organisations.

IDENTIFYING AND MEASURING NETWORK OUTCOMES

The network should identify some outcomes that can be relatively easily measured throughout the development and running of the network to track progress.

EXAMPLE: IDENTIFYING OUTCOMES

A measurable outcome would be, for example, 'the network will make links with the following other voluntary organisations/statutory agencies/partnerships working in criminal justice or community safety within certain time frames'.

In addition to having an objective outcome (the network has/has not made this link), the network can develop impact statements that network members and officers can rate and which can also be applied to other stakeholders, to look at perceptions of the effectiveness of the network, such as:

- 'The network has enabled the voluntary and community sector to have a strong voice in the local Criminal Justice System'
- 'The network is able to influence the local Criminal Justice System.'
- 'The network has brought the voluntary and community sector into a good relationship with commissioners'
- 'Membership of the network has enabled my organisation to better compete in the marketplace as a provider of services to the Criminal Justice System.'

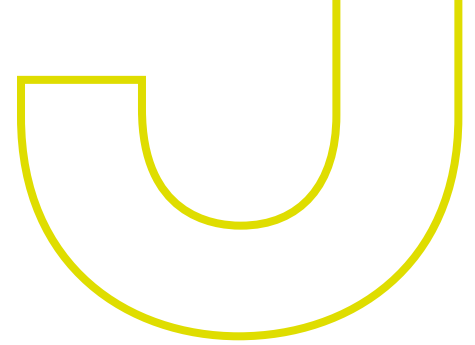
These impacts could be assessed by questionnaires (telephone or online) and/or participatory evaluation at events/meetings.

EXAMPLE: TIMING MEETINGS TO INFLUENCE MULTI-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Gloucestershire VCS Assembly times the meetings of its VCS strategy group so that actions from the meeting can influence multi-sector partnership meetings, and they check the papers of the partnership meetings to assess the network's impact. In addition, the chair and vice chair meet before each VCS strategy group meeting to review what has happened since the last meeting so it can be clearly communicated and discussed with members at the meeting. See Gloucestershire VCS Assembly case study on [page 22](#).

EMBED IMPACT REVIEW INTO MEETINGS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Include a review of progress on the agenda of each network meeting, including what the network is achieving and influencing and how it could be more effective.



NETWORK STRUCTURES

Voluntary sector networks can be organised in various ways, but it is important that everybody understands how the network operates and its relationship with other partnerships and organisations. Some networks set out this information in their Terms of Reference.

On [pages 14 to 16](#) there are three diagrams illustrating possible structures for VCS criminal justice networks. They have been developed as examples for the guide, and although they are loosely based on the networks featured in this guide, they are not exact representations of how those networks operate.

6. Download from www.wcva.org.uk/policy/dsp_network.cfm?display_sitetextid=172&display_sitedeptid=9&networkid=6&sub=7

7. Download from www.lvsc.org.uk/projects-networks/safer-future-communities-london.aspx

8. Download from www.gloshub.org.uk/assembly-board

9. Read the forum's Terms of Reference in 'Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management: Strategic Partnership Working', Clinks/Home Office: April 2012, page 10. Download from www.clinks.org/publications/guides-resources/iom-resources

EXAMPLE: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Below are links to some example Terms of Reference of criminal justice networks.

Community Justice Cymru⁶

These Terms of Reference set out the role of the network and its dialogue with Welsh Assembly Ministers, steering group, roles of chair and vice chair, and expectations of members. See case study on [page 32](#).

London Safer Future Communities VCS Network⁷

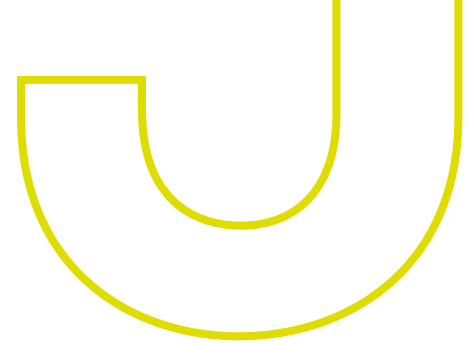
This network has been established to help the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector engage with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and other criminal justice and community safety agencies, both pan-London and in the London Boroughs. Its Terms of Reference set out the purpose, aims and objectives of the Network, the criteria for different types of membership and the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Steering Group and Advisory Group.

Gloucestershire VCS Assembly Board⁸

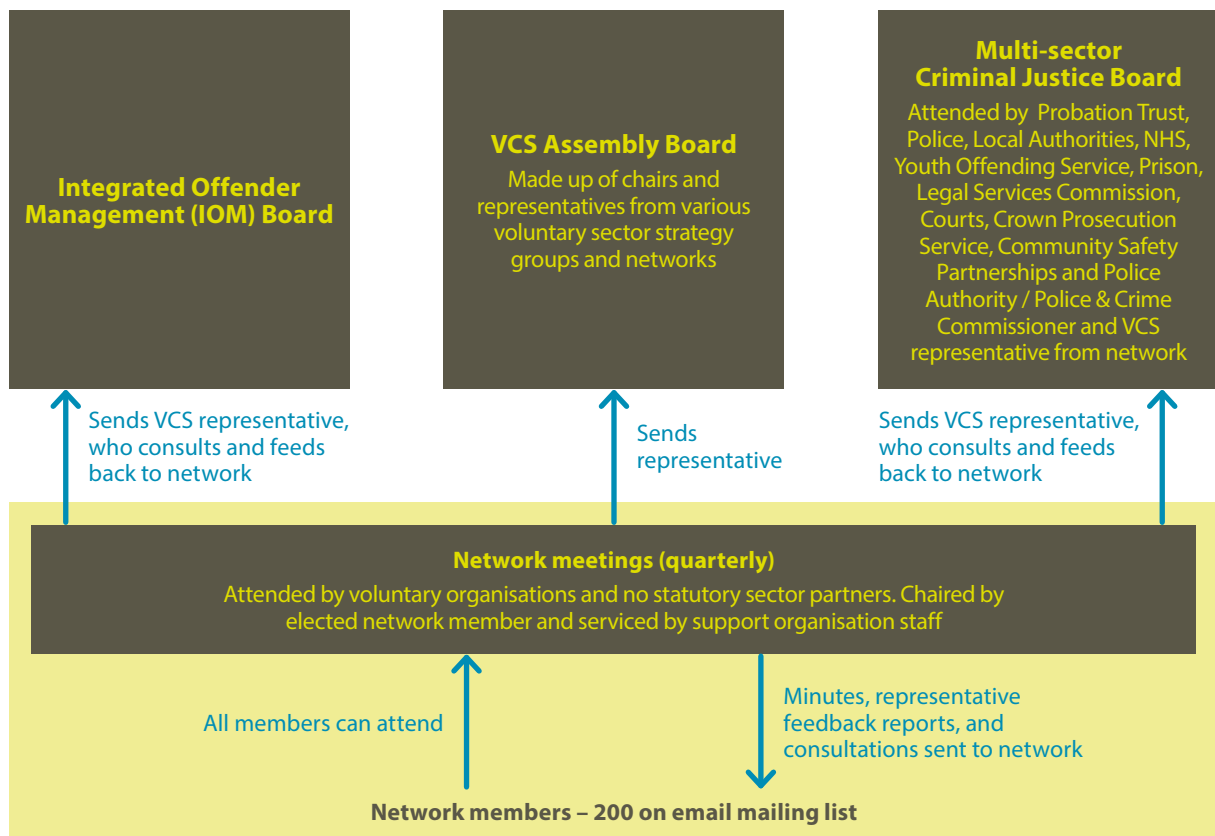
The VCS Safer and Stronger Strategy Group (see case study on [page 22](#)) is part of Gloucestershire VCS Assembly. Although the strategy group does not have its own Terms of Reference, the VCS Assembly Board has very clear Terms of Reference that also set out the relationship with strategy groups.

Croydon VCS Supporting Offenders Forum⁹

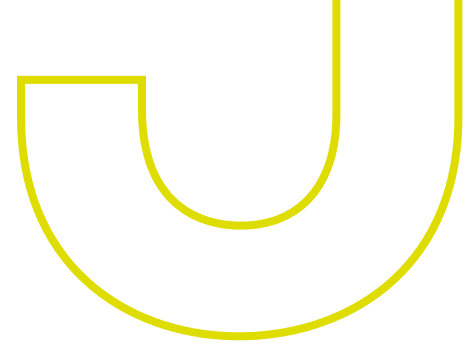
This forum was set up in part to help involve VCS organisations in Integrated Offender Management (IOM) and its Terms of Reference set out a proposal for a full-time co-ordinator to support this. See [page 11](#) for more information on IOM.



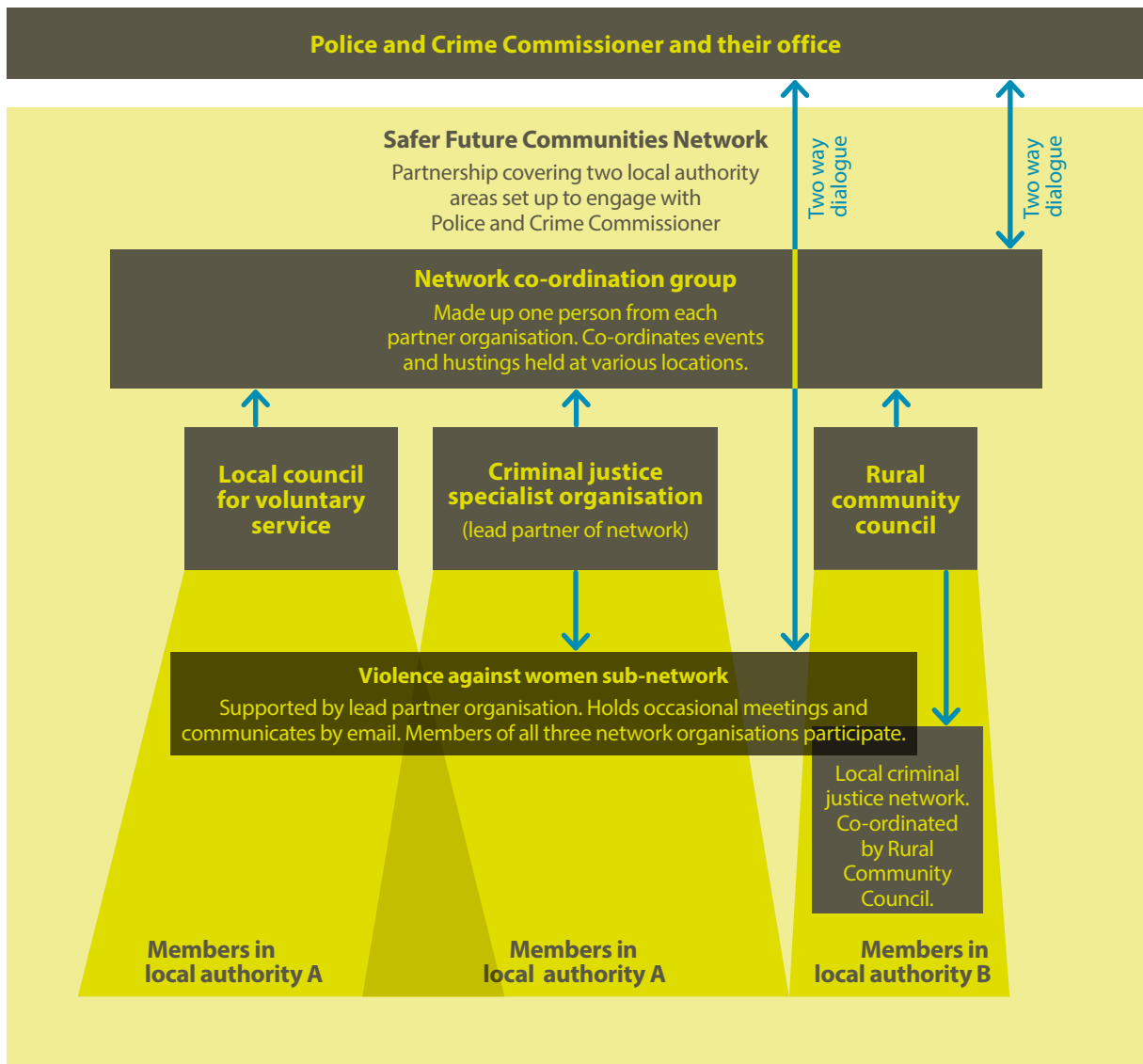
**NETWORK STRUCTURE EXAMPLE:
REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL BOARDS AND PARTNERSHIPS**



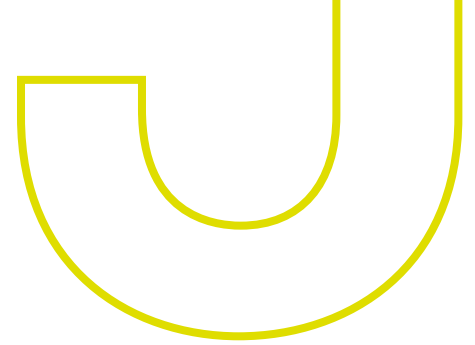
For a network structured in a similar way to this one see Gloucestershire VCS Assembly case study on [page 22](#).



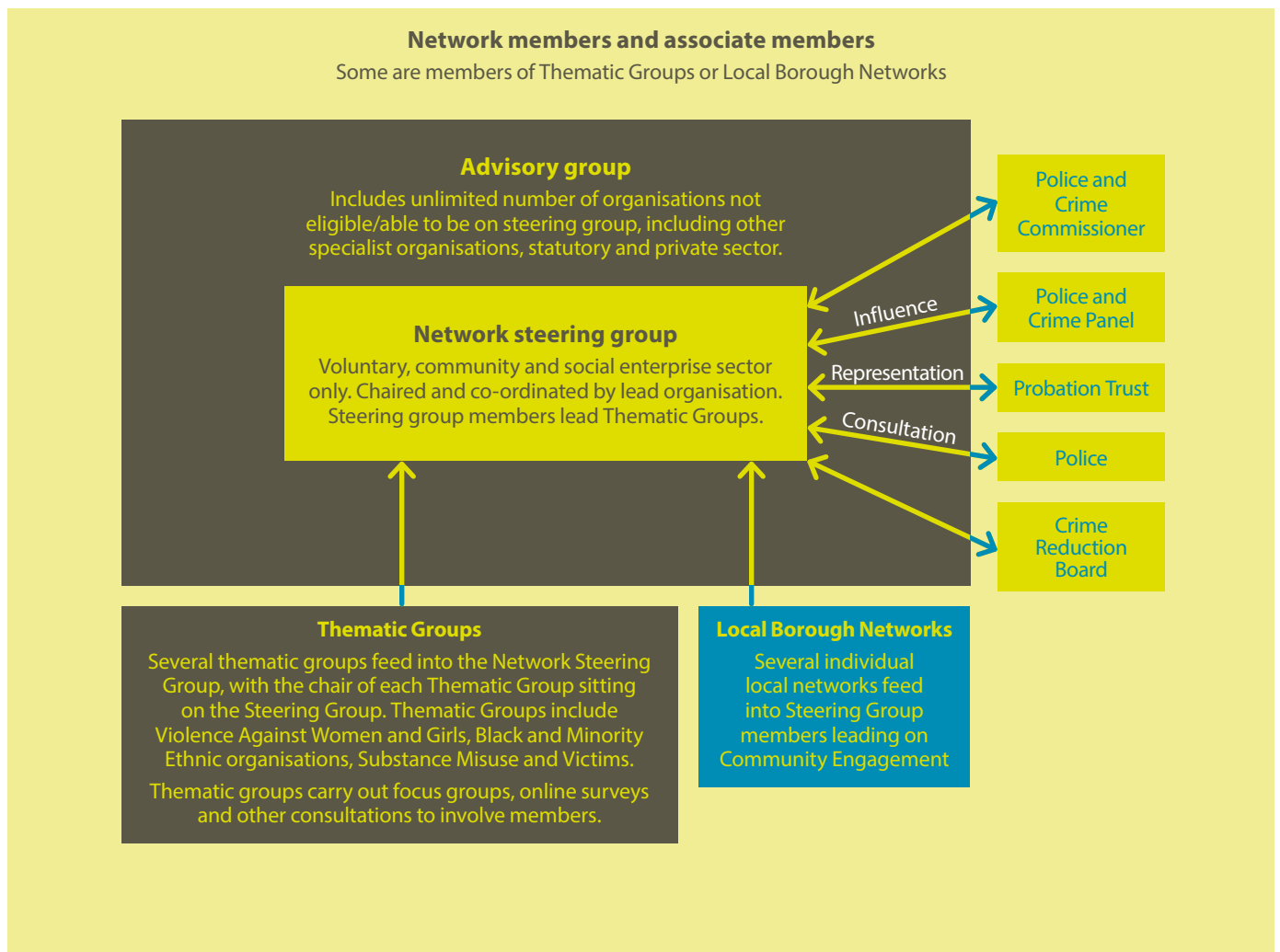
**NETWORK STRUCTURE EXAMPLE:
NETWORK COVERING TWO LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND URBAN AND RURAL AREAS**

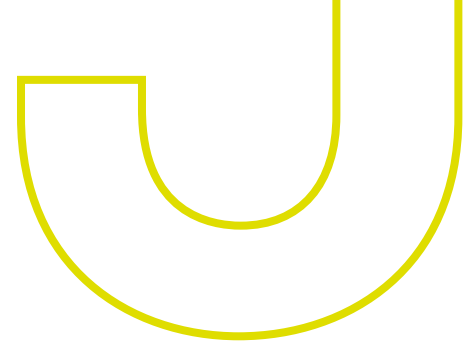


For a network structured in a similar way to this one see Devon Reform case study on [page 27](#).



**NETWORK STRUCTURE EXAMPLE:
BASED ON SAFER FUTURE COMMUNITIES NETWORK**





CHALLENGES AND TROUBLESHOOTING

All networks face challenges, and some of the possible pitfalls and how to address them are outlined below. However, there may also be other factors outside your control that affect the success of a criminal justice network.

Clinks' experience working with criminal justice networks has identified the following issues which can affect the success of VCS networks:

- **Resourcing and effectiveness of VCS infrastructure in the area:** Where there is little funding for local support and development organisations, there may be less effective communication channels or poor strategic relationships with the statutory sector, which can make it harder for a network to get established.
- **Rural area issues:** Greater distances between network members and statutory agencies and poor public transport can make it harder for relationships to develop and can create practical difficulties of cost and time to travel to meetings and events.
- **Prison dispersal:** If there are no prisons nearby that release significant numbers of ex-prisoners into the local area, there may be fewer voluntary organisations specialising in work with offenders leaving prison. This could make it difficult to get a 'critical mass' of organisations to sustain a network.
- **Poor engagement from statutory criminal justice agencies:** The police, probation trusts, prisons and courts all vary in how interested and active they are in engaging with voluntary organisations. In some areas it can take more time and persistence to develop links, effective dialogue and partnerships.

TROUBLESHOOTING

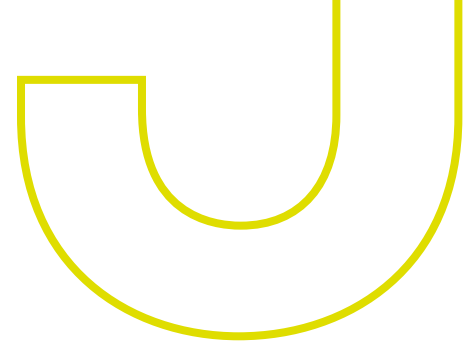
Below are some common barriers you might face in setting up and sustaining your network and some suggestions for how to overcome them.

There is resistance to establishing a new network or fears of duplication

- Meet with any sceptical people early on to bring them on board.
- Be clear about how the network relates to other partnerships, boards and networks and have effective channels of communication between them.
- Consider carefully whether the network is actually needed or if its aims can be met in other ways, for example as a sub-group of an existing network.

Attendance at meetings declines

- Recognise that this is a common phenomenon in new networks after the initial novelty and enthusiasm subsides and before the first objectives are achieved.
- Review what members want by carrying out a survey or just informal phone calls with members, to ask them how the network is progressing and if they are getting what they want from it.
- Invite interesting speakers to meetings, including funders and key decision makers.
- Review the frequency of meetings – perhaps meeting less often would attract more attendees.
- Enable members to take part in other ways. Some organisations will always find it difficult to attend meetings, perhaps because small staff numbers would mean closing the office/



centre. Overcome this by inviting them to send questions and ideas before meetings and providing feedback (in addition to formal minutes) on what was discussed; setting up online discussion forums or simple email lists where members can communicate with each other directly; trying out ‘webinars’ or video conferencing; and holding meetings at different times, including evenings.

Network covers a large area and members can’t/won’t travel to meetings

- Hold each meeting in a different location around the area.
- Offer travel expenses to very small organisations if possible; this can cost very little but make an enormous difference to the groups involved.
- Provide other ways of participating (see above).
- Clearly explain why the network covers the geographical area it does, which is to work with and influence Criminal Justice System structures.
- Develop sub-groups covering smaller geographical areas and/or use existing smaller networks or meetings to share news from your network and gather views.
- Use video conferencing to hold meetings in multiple locations. See Community Justice Cymru case study on [page 32](#).

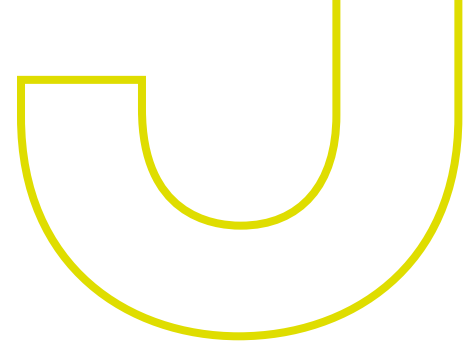
People feel the network is just a ‘talking shop’

- Ensure members are clear about what they want to achieve through the network.
- Produce tangible outputs and actions such as a report/research that provides clear evidence to support the messages that network members want to get across.

- Use video conferencing to hold meetings in multiple locations. See Community Justice Cymru case study on [page 32](#).
- Ensure the activity of the network is transparent and well communicated, so members know what is happening.
- Focus the meetings on what actions people will take, and follow this up by reviewing them at the next meeting.
- Celebrate successes through case studies or by sharing key achievements at meetings.
- Develop a culture of reviewing and acknowledging both progress and also what was not achieved or needs to be done differently.
- Do not be afraid to disband the network if it is no longer serving a purpose. One organisation we have spoken to has recently wound up a network because it had lost focus and although some members were keen to attend meetings little was achieved.

Commissioners do not listen to the network

- Clarify what the network wants to change and convey this through positive messages (such as ‘VCS provides excellent cost-effective services and small changes to the commissioning process can unleash huge untapped potential in the VCS’) rather than negative (such as ‘VCS is not getting enough access to funding’).
- Ensure there is evidence to back up your messages: collect case studies, carry out a survey or commission more specialist research if the network can afford it.
- Consider getting press coverage of key problems or issues, or involving MPs, Councillors or other key influential people.



TEN TOP TIPS FROM CRIMINAL JUSTICE NETWORKS

- Organise an event specifically for commissioners, at which you can provide information and support around the VCS and commissioning; invite commissioners to participate in network events.
- Show how the network can help commissioners meet their Compact¹⁰ objectives, and be a consultation tool.
- Hold marketplace events to enable commissioners and procurers to meet and understand local VCS providers.

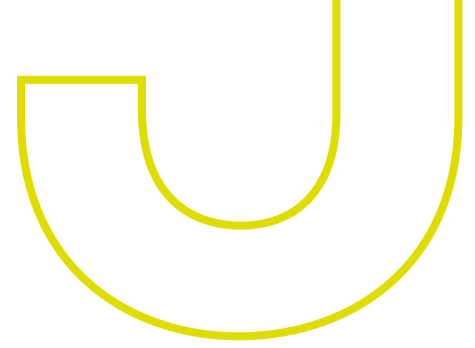
Funding ends and the network fizzles out

- Avoid this from the start by establishing a sense of member ownership and agreeing a plan for sustainability early on (see Making it last above).
- Consider running the network at very low cost, with members hosting meetings, or rotating administration and communication duties among members each year.
- Consider charging a fee to members to sustain the network and/or asking for contributions from the statutory services which benefit from the network's existence.
- Review whether the network needs to continue, perhaps it has achieved its purpose and is no longer needed?

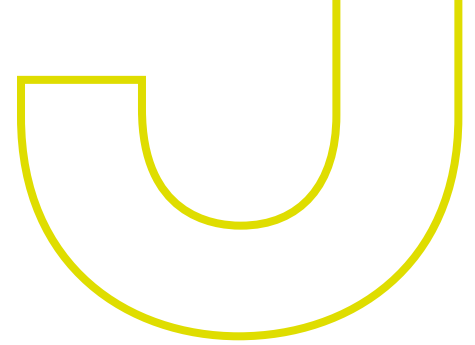
Below are some of the tips offered by network leads and managers. They provide insight into the world of developing and maintaining a local network.

- 1. Be clear on your purpose:** "Clarify from the outset the purpose of the whole network, and what each individual constituent part brings to it. Is it information sharing, is it lobbying? And write it all down."
- 2. Invite interesting speakers:** "You've got to give people a reason to come to the room that isn't just a free lunch. If it's always the same agenda and the same people talking it gets boring."
- 3. Be proactive in informing policy:** "Use your collective knowledge to inform government policy – this is vital because the third sector knows more about what is going on on the ground."
- 4. Give feedback on strategic work:** "Be clear from the beginning about communicating with your network, particularly giving feedback from network representatives attending external meetings."
- 5. Build relationships:** "Relationship building is key – develop positive relationships with statutory partners."
- 6. Stay VCS-focussed:** "Try not to be dragged into what other people want you to be, and stay VCS-focussed."
- 7. Don't do statutory partners' jobs for them:** "It is not always a good idea for VCS to lead things – we thought we could do things as equal partners but actually you can't. Ultimately, statutory partners need to own their own strategies."

¹⁰ The Compact is an agreement between the government and voluntary sector to ensure better working together. See www.compactvoice.org.uk



8. **Manage egos:** “Be aware that there are egos and organisational blustering, but work around it.”
9. **Keep up to date:** “The key is to keep it up to date – people want to talk about the PCC and funding opportunities, then they see a benefit.”
10. **Be realistic:** “Be absolutely realistic. You can only start with aiding communications, developing infrastructure. A network takes a massively long time to develop.”

HOW WE DID IT
CASE STUDY

VCS STRONGER AND SAFER GROUP GLOUCESTERSHIRE VCS ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION

The Voluntary and Community Sector Stronger and Safer Strategy Group is part of the Gloucestershire VCS Assembly, which was established in 2004 by GAVCA (Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action). The VCS Assembly exists to help voluntary and community groups in Gloucestershire share their views and expertise, to influence how services are planned and delivered for the communities of Gloucestershire. It is a countywide structure that provides a strategic voice for the Sector, and the VCS Stronger and Safer Strategy Group is part of this structure. The purpose of the Strategy Group is to influence commissioning of criminal justice and community safety services.

This case study is based on an interview with Sally Pickering, GAVCA Chief Executive, and Andrew Lee, Gloucestershire VCS Assembly Manager (since April 2012), and quotations are taken from that interview.

HOW DID THE NETWORK START?

The VCS Stronger and Safer Strategy Group was originally established in 2007, when the Local Area Agreement (LAA) was introduced. LAAs were three-year funding agreements between central and local government that were managed through the Local Strategic Partnership, and were abolished in 2010.

The Strategy Group was first set up, as a network within the wider VCS Assembly structure, to shadow or correspond to the 'Safer and Stronger Communities' theme of the LAA, as

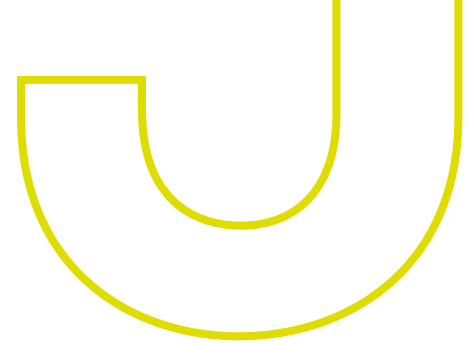
the VCS Assembly was leading on achieving the target of a 'thriving third sector'. The purpose of the VCS Strategy Group was strategic, not merely information sharing, with the aim of raising strategic issues and setting the agenda, and to be a place where the statutory sector could come and consult with the VCS.

In 2009 Clinks made contact with Gloucestershire VCS Assembly to help make better links with criminal justice agencies, and a conference was held to bring together statutory agencies (police, courts, prison, probation) with voluntary and communities groups that had an interest in criminal justice issues to look at how closer joint working could be achieved. This brought in a wider range of voluntary organisations and helped to develop relationships with criminal justice agencies, including the police who have recently funded the Strategy Group.

More recently, the statutory Stronger and Safer Partnership has merged with the Criminal Justice Board (a suggestion from the VCS), forming the Gloucestershire Stronger Safer Justice Commission (GSSJC), to which the VCS Strategy Group sends a representative. The Strategy Group is now also preparing for the introduction of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and plans to be the mechanism for the Commissioner to work with the VCS.

HOW IS THE NETWORK RUN?

The Strategy Group meets four times a year, with meetings organised and serviced by the Assembly Team, which is hosted



by GAVCA. About 10-15 people attend each meeting, and there are hundreds of organisations on an email mailing list.

The Group is supported by the Assembly Team (Manager Andrew Lee and Partnership Support Officer Hannah Gorf), with Andrew's line management from GAVCA Chief Executive Sally Pickering. They service meetings, draft papers and strategies, liaise with the statutory sector, support and ensure accountability of representatives and communicate with the wider network. Supporting representatives and responding to emails and requests from the statutory sector are particularly resource intensive.

"You have to have someone to do the work to present to the group, you can't create things by committee."

The Strategy Group elects a chair (currently Elin Tattersall, Deputy Chief Executive of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council) and representatives to sit on statutory partnerships including the Gloucestershire Stronger Safer Justice Commission and the Integrated Offender Management board. The reps have agreed Roles and Responsibilities¹¹ but the chair does not currently have a job description, although this is something the group might consider in future.

Representatives are accountable to the Strategy Group, and they write feedback reports after attending statutory partnerships, and get input from the Strategy Group on what issues they should be raising. Representatives are supported (and where necessary chased) in this role by Gloucestershire VCS Assembly team staff.

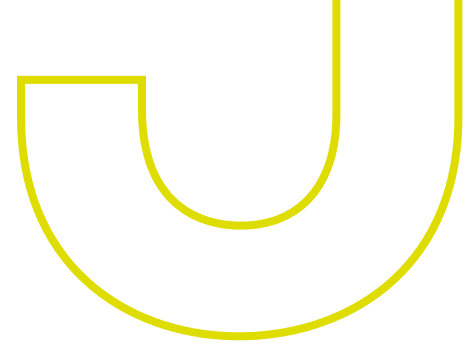
HOW IS THE NETWORK FUNDED?

The initial funding from 2007-11 was provided by the statutory Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership (resourced by the Local Area Agreement). The network now has £10,000 per year from the police, plus a contribution of £3,000 from Safer Future Communities (a Home Office funded project led by Clinks to support the VCS to engage with Police and Crime Commissioners).

"Last year the police supported the Strategy Group, and this has happened again this year. This was facilitated due to a good relationship with a key individual [the Deputy Chief Constable, who has now left]. The police are very supportive. The Clinks conference [see under 'How did the network start?' above] was positive for this as it brought the police in, who were enthusiastic about the VCS."

In addition, the Gloucestershire Police Authority has commissioned GAVCA to carry out focus group consultations about the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and what the role should be. The Safer Future Communities funding enabled GAVCA's CEO to speak to the Police Authority and build a relationship with them, this levered in more funding from them – they have now commissioned GAVCA to carry out focus group consultations with 'hard to reach' groups such as LGBT communities and rural groups about the PCC and what their role should be.

¹¹. Download Representatives Roles and Responsibilities from www.gloshub.org.uk/representatives



WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE NETWORK AND HOW ARE MARGINALISED GROUPS INCLUDED?

There are hundreds of organisations on the Safer and Stronger Communities email mailing list, and the meetings are attended by around 10-15 people, from a range of VCS organisations, including housing providers, the law centre, domestic violence organisations, time bank, carers organisations, older people's organisations and local criminal justice organisations, such as the Independence Trust and Nelson Trust.

To involve marginalised groups in the network, Gloucestershire VCS Assembly has carried out outreach to small groups and spent a lot of time increasing their contact database.

"In the last year, we've done lots of outreach visits to small groups to explain the assembly, rather than expecting people to come to us. But it's hard to have resources to do this."

There are important links with the development support provided by GAVCA, as this is often the first route in for organisations that then become involved in the strategy groups:

"...we often get people involved in the assembly after they come to GAVCA for funding advice."

In 2008, Gloucestershire VCS Assembly published 'Minding the Gap', a report¹² that identified that the groups not involved in the Assembly were often small, volunteer-led groups, including Black, Asian

and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, which are very rarely involved in strategy group meetings.

"What we need to get better at is setting the agenda rather than responding to the public sector's agenda – you can understand why small groups might not be interested in the public sector's agenda."

For some criminal justice networks it can be a challenge to involve those groups that work with offenders but do not see criminal justice as the core part of their work. However, this has not been an issue for the Gloucestershire group because it originally had a broader remit than criminal justice and there has always been a wide variety of groups involved.

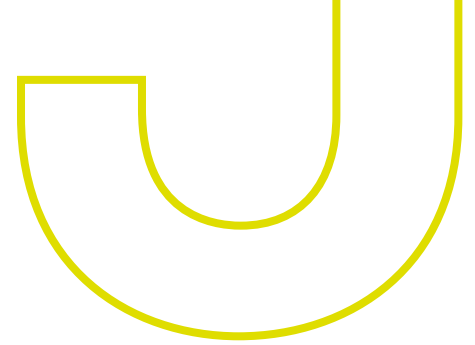
There has been no service user involvement in the Strategy Group so far. Strategy group members do not tend to be user-led organisations, unlike in some other areas such as health and disability. However, through the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) project, a user-led group Voice of Change¹³ was set up. Although they have not been involved in the Strategy Group so far, the Assembly may meet with them to build links.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE STRATEGY GROUP MAKE?

Having effective and accountable VCS representation on criminal justice partnership boards is considered to be a significant strength and achievement for the Strategy Group. Without the group, a lot of small groups would get involved in delivering services

12. Available as an appendix to Gloucestershire Assembly Business Plan 2009-10, download from www.gloshub.org.uk/attachments/article/5/VCS%20Assembly%20Business%20Plan%20plus%20appendix%205%20March%202009.pdf

13. See report of interviews with Voice of Change members at www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/iom



operationally through receiving small grants from district Community Safety Partnerships; but having a representative means the sector has a voice at strategic level across the county.

“What’s our biggest achievement? We have a representative on GSSJC who can go and be informed, and represent a wider constituency and feedback to it. We have a truly accountable and representative ‘rep’.”

In addition, the Strategy Group meetings enable voluntary and community organisations to work together on strategic issues.

“Today’s meeting was a big achievement – it was a disparate group of VCS organisations coming together and responding to developments in a strategic way.”

Overall the Strategy Group has raised the profile of the VCS, and Gloucestershire VCS Assembly feels the group has “probably got more resources into the sector.” For example, some capital funding from GSSJC went out to a commissioning process which is likely not to have happened without VCS involvement. Without the Strategy Group, GAVCA would not have been able to secure funding from the Home Office to pilot VCS involvement in Integrated Offender Management.

In addition, the group makes savings for the statutory sector through efficient community engagement resulting in better decision making.

“If the strategy group didn’t exist it would cost the public sector a lot more money because they’d have a lot of different groups to go to. In practice community voice wouldn’t get heard.”

HOW DOES THE STRATEGY GROUP MEASURE ITS IMPACT?

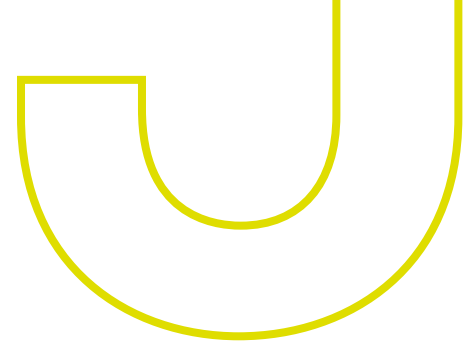
Impact measurement is carried out on an on-going basis, through review at Strategy Group meetings and monitoring of papers from multi-sector strategic partnerships, such as the Gloucestershire Stronger and Safer Justice Commission (GSSJC).

Before each VCS Strategy Group meeting, the chair and vice-chair meet to review the actions from the last meeting and the impact they have had, so that this can be presented to the Strategy Group at its meeting. In addition, meetings are timed to feed into multi-sector strategic partnership meetings. They are held far enough in advance so that decisions made at VCS Strategy Group meetings can be actioned before the papers for strategic partnership meetings are circulated. VCS Assembly staff or representatives then check the papers from the partnership meetings, to monitor the impact of Strategy Group discussions and actions. After VCS representatives attend multi-sector partnership meetings, they write a short feedback report which is circulated to Strategy Group members and discussed at their next meeting.¹⁴

Gloucestershire VCS Assembly has not carried out an external evaluation but review and impact measurement is undertaken as an on-going organic process which is integrated into its work. Gloucestershire VCS Assembly’s Business Delivery Plan 2012-13¹⁵ sets objectives, performance indicators and outcomes, against which its activity is reviewed. For example, performance indicators include:

¹⁴. Feedback from representatives are available on the Gloucestershire VCS Assembly website at www.gloshub.org.uk/stronger-a-safer-communities/stronger-a-safer-news

¹⁵. Available from www.gloshub.org.uk/news/238-gloucestershire-vcs-assembly-business-delivery-plan-2012-13



- Increased recognition amongst key strategic partnership bodies of the value the VCSE can play in strategic planning and policy development
- Increased contact with staff from police, probation (and other statutory bodies)
- Increased contact with officers from or representing the Health & Wellbeing Board, Police & Crime Commissioner, emerging local Healthwatch.

- Provider (as a deliverer or potential deliverer of commissioned services)
- Strategist (as a member of a partnership helping to assess need and develop strategy)
- Lobbyist (as a representative of the interests of service users and citizens).

“The Gloucestershire VCS Assembly Board is clear about the three roles, but the statutory sector is not always, and lots of voluntary organisations aren’t either. There are varying levels of understanding in the VCS. It’s frustrating if we get clear on this and then the commissioners aren’t.”

CHALLENGES

Clarity of purpose: One of the challenges in the early years of the Strategy Group’s existence was getting clarity on its purpose. The various VCS strategy groups’ success mirrored the success or otherwise of the corresponding statutory thematic groups (partnerships). The statutory Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership struggled because its own purpose was unclear, which meant that, the Partnership did not really use the VCS Strategy Group and, consequently, the Strategy Group’s own purpose was unclear.

“Strategy groups have to have a purpose, otherwise they flounder. We wanted to be proactive but in practice we were reactive to the statutory agenda.”

The purpose of the VCS Strategy Group is becoming clearer – it is focused on influencing commissioning, influencing what public services are delivered. “Now we don’t talk about ‘working in partnership’, we talk about influencing commissioning.”

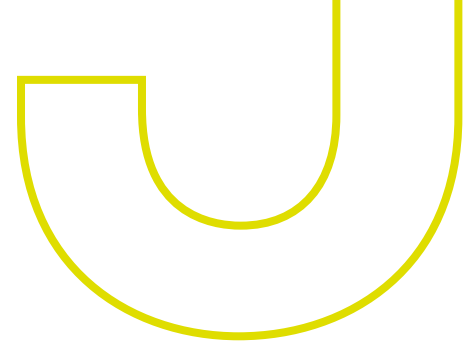
For Gloucestershire VCS Assembly, the VCS has three distinct roles in influencing commissioning:

Relationship with statutory agencies: In addition, the relationship with statutory authorities can be difficult, challenges regularly need to be overcome to ensure relationships function well.

“We need to educate new commissioners about how to interact with us, and it’s hard. The VCS should not be afraid to stand up and be more assertive about needing to be heard (without whingeing).”

Another challenge has been getting the balance right between the VCS being proactive and setting the agenda, and getting buy-in from the statutory sector. The VCS led on the development of a strategy, and the process was one of genuine co-production. However, because it was led by the VCS, there was eventually not enough buy in from the statutory sector for the resulting strategy which some perceived to be written by the VCS rather than in partnership.

“It is not always a good idea for VCS to lead things – we thought we could do things as equal partners but actually you can’t. Ultimately, they [statutory partners] need to own their own strategies.”



WHAT HAS THE NETWORK LEARNT?

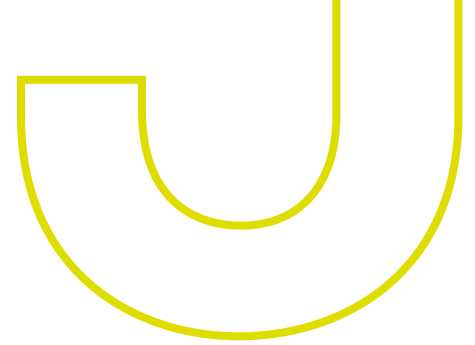
- **“A learning is that it’s hard to keep a distinction between the organisation running the network and the network itself. Who takes credit for things is really important.”**
- **“Another learning is that it’s not always in the VCS’s best interests to be equal partners.”– the Gloucestershire VCS Assembly was the lead for one of the outcomes within the LAA which entailed dealing with “mountains of monitoring and paperwork which did not help me to achieve my organisation’s mission.”**
- **“There was an assumption that the VCS representative would become chair of GSSJC when the chair stood down but he thought carefully about it and didn’t stand. It can be tempting to get glory but you have to think about whether you’ll really achieve what you need to.”**

What are the future plans of the network?

The Strategy Group’s aim is to be indispensable partners of the Police and Crime Commissioner, to make sure that the PCC sticks to any stated commitment to engage with the community.

Generically the Assembly has a distinct role to play locally in providing the VCS with a strategic voice. Nationally Gloucestershire VCS Assembly has supported other areas and in some cases learnt from other networks.

“There are other assemblies round the country who have based their experience on Gloucestershire, and they have moved through some things that we have struggled with.”



DEVON REFORM

INTRODUCTION

Devon Reform was launched in 2011, as a collective of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations working with the criminal justice system in Devon. It is unusual in being an independent organisation, with a paid member of staff solely focussed on supporting VCOs working with offenders at local level.

This case study is based on an interview with the Devon Reform Manager, Sarah Carlsen-Browne, as well as on evaluation reports and background documents on the organisation. Quotations in the case study are from the interview with Sarah Carlsen-Browne, unless otherwise stated.

HOW DID THE NETWORK START?

Devon Reform originated from a network called Devon Conform, which was set up by key individuals in Devon-based voluntary organisations working in criminal justice. Conform ran events, such as lectures, but was not able to carry out much follow up activity in between events, so Devon Reform was established to take forward this work.

Devon Reform sprang from a meeting in October 2009 and a community consultation, followed by applications to grant-making trusts. The manager was appointed in 2011 and the organisation registered as a charity in November 2011.

Devon Reform was set up to address several issues:

- A disparate voluntary and community sector, especially over the large rural

geography of Devon, and the need for greater partnership working

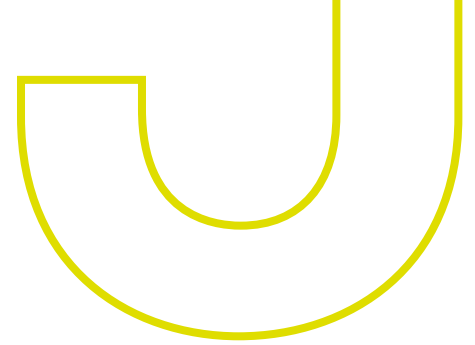
- Statutory agencies' poor knowledge of the voluntary sector – they didn't really know who was operating in criminal justice or what level or quality of work they were doing
- A feeling in the voluntary sector that they weren't uniformly or fairly kept informed of developments and opportunities
- The need to support smaller VCOs, which are the most innovative and needs-based, but find it very difficult unless allied with others.

"The idea behind Devon Reform was to form a network of organisations linked together via a website where they could find out about funding, etc. It was also intended to bring together criminal justice VCOs in a single point of contact for statutory agencies. The original idea was around commissioning or bringing people together for partnership bids, but this hasn't happened as much as intended yet."

Devon Reform is now also the lead on the Safer Future Communities network, helping the voluntary sector to engage with the new Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), and works in partnership with Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, Torbay Community & Voluntary Action, Community and Social Action Plymouth (CASAP) and Devon Association of CVS.

HOW IS THE NETWORK RUN?

A year after its formal launch, Devon Reform has over 120 members, significantly higher than the planned membership target of 70



organisations. Devon Reform has a board of trustees who are individuals from member organisations and also a wider steering group. Devon Reform rents office space from one of its members, EDP Drug & Alcohol Services.

Devon Reform does not have regular meetings of the network members because in its first year it wanted to “focus on action rather than talking”, but is now considering holding quarterly members’ meetings.

Devon Reform has representation on the Reducing Reoffending Board, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Board and Community Safety Partnerships, which the manager attends on behalf of the network.

WHAT IS THE NETWORK DOING?

The network’s main activities are strategic work with statutory agencies, developing a website and database of members, small group development work and running events. Current activities include:

- Developing a database of organisations in order to produce a directory and kitemark; a guide to commissioning and those seeking partnership opportunities.
- Creation of a recovery directory for Devon in partnership with the Devon Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT).
- Responding to regular requests from statutory agencies who want to approach or work with the voluntary sector.
- Leading the Safer Future Communities network and organising a hustings event with candidates, engaging with the Police & Crime Commissioner,

including setting up sub-networks, such as on Violence Against Women and Girls, Housing, Victim Support, which are all linked in with the wider network aiming to engage with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

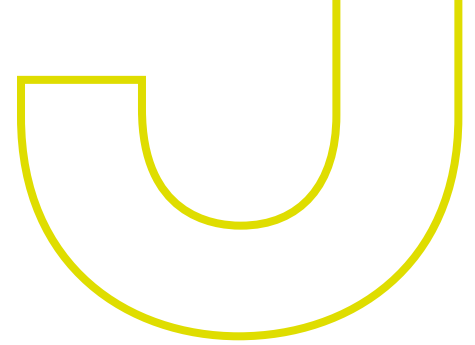
HOW IS THE NETWORK FUNDED?

Devon Reform’s main grant from Tudor Trust runs until 2014, with funding tapering off in the final year (£15,000). It has also attracted additional extra funding, for example £5,000 from Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust, and some small grants from other trust funds. However, the network finds it difficult to identify funding sources because of being an infrastructure organisation rather than frontline (supporting organisations rather than directly supporting individuals).

Devon Reform’s manager feels it is unlikely to survive beyond the end of its grant without statutory agency financial support. The original idea was that the statutory sector would pay a higher membership fee, but this hasn’t happened yet.

A membership fee from voluntary sector members was originally envisaged but has been difficult to introduce in the current climate. Receiving funds from members would also put them in the driving seat:

“I would love to see the members drive [the network] and be willing to pay £50 a year, and be more active members, for example on a funding subgroup or delivering a training session.”



WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE NETWORK AND HOW ARE MARGINALISED GROUPS INCLUDED?

Devon Reform's 120 members include wide range of voluntary organisations of different sizes and specialisms, as well as statutory and private sector organisations as affiliate members.

To involve marginalised groups, the network manager has carried out one-to-one development meetings with smaller groups, and networking and promotion of these organisations. Small group development work is a significant activity of Devon Reform. For example, one small voluntary organisation was commissioned by the Integrated Offender Management team and the prison as a result of Devon Reform setting up contacts for them.

"I sometimes act as a salesperson for smaller groups. At the beginning I thought I had to be neutral but actually I think it is my role to provide extra support to the smaller groups."

There has been less progress, so far, in engaging with equality groups, though Devon Reform has tried to make contact. The Safer Future Communities project has provided a good opportunity to engage more with equality groups. Sub-groups have formed to get ready for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), coming together across Devon & Cornwall for the first time (for example the violence against women sub-group). Devon Reform has identified that it needs to do more to target Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender groups.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES DEVON REFORM MAKE?

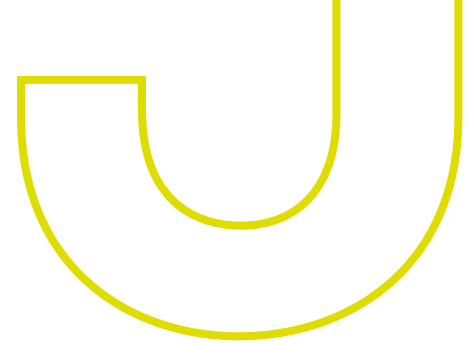
A key achievement of Devon Reform is representing VCS interests at strategic level. For example, before the network was established, there was no broad VCS representation on Integrated Offender Management (IOM), with just one organisation involved, focusing on their specialism in substance abuse.

There is confidence in Devon Reform from the statutory agencies. For example, the network was invited to a meeting with the national Probation Service to discuss impact on the VCS of moving towards national contracts as opposed to local commissioning. Devon Reform feels it has influenced statutory agencies, encouraging them to engage more with the VCS. For example:

"Health agencies, and substance misuse in particular, are really keen to engage VCS and much more so because of Devon Reform. Also the prisons have opened out much more to the VCS - they can see what the VCS is doing."

Devon Reform's events have been another key success, and have been critical in helping to connect voluntary organisations to statutory services. For example, the Prison Roadshow has been particularly successful:

"I approached Exeter prison about whether they'd do an open day to help prisoners coming up to release. We have now introduced them to eight new organisations and they have started working with them. At the event, prisoners are given a 'learning card', so they have something to take away with them and can use it with their discharge boards. The road show



has captured people's imagination and shows the prisons are taking reducing re-offending seriously."

Another key indication of Devon Reform's success is that it is often contacted by offenders looking for services. Through work with statutory agencies, Devon Reform is now looking at developing a directory for people with personalised budgets to be able to find services.

"It's moved a long way from the beginning when statutory service just came to us to find volunteers."

As mentioned above, Devon Reform has also made a difference through direct support to small organisations, as the following feedback from a small group quoted in their annual report, indicates:

*"Following my first meeting with you in November 2011, your networking, on behalf of Fast Forward Films, has resulted in the commission of a new training film with a leading prison and community training provider and may lead on to other projects. Your networking links to the IOM have also led to a criminal justice training project taking place in a Further Education college and several funding bids in partnership with the Torquay police. I've also benefited from CPD [Continuing Professional Development] training events through the Reform service. This is all quite astounding. I'm really grateful for the work you've initiated. So this is a huge thank you."*¹⁶

HOW DOES THE NETWORK MEASURE ITS IMPACT?

Devon Reform has not yet carried out a formal evaluation of the whole network but collects data and feedback on its activities and events.

It measures its impact through observing and tracking various outcomes including:

- Being invited by statutory agencies to strategic positions
- Popularity and feedback at events
- Website traffic
- Level of active membership.

CHALLENGES

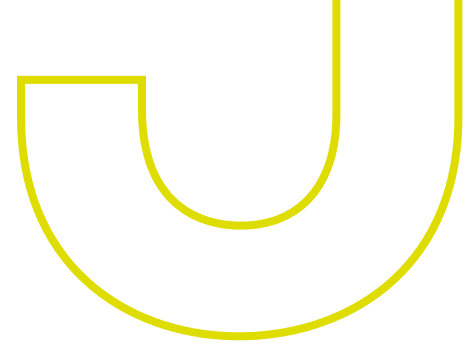
One of the challenges common to many networks has been balancing the different expectations and interests in the network, and being clear about what it can and cannot do.

"Everyone wanted Devon Reform to fill a tick box – for example Probation wanted us to do a quality mark and handle risk; IOM wanted mapping of the VCS, and the VCS wanted us to fill in funding applications for them."

Another challenge has been the launch of the network coinciding with the establishment by Devon & Cornwall Probation of a charity Devon & Cornwall Partnership, which aims to "add value to the local communities of Devon and Cornwall and the criminal justice system" by working in partnership with existing voluntary and community sector organisations. This has meant there has been some danger of overlap and confusion about the roles and remits of each organisation, although they work closely together.

In addition, there were some practical difficulties arising from a delay in appointing the manager, resulting in some loss of

¹⁶. Email from Devon Reform member Martin Gill quoted in Devon Reform Report to Tudor Trust, March 2011 to March 2012.



momentum from the initial funding application to the launch of the organisation.

WHAT HAS THE NETWORK LEARNT?

As with other networks, agreeing a clear purpose has been key to Devon Reform's success:

"To create a network we needed to have really clear aim at the beginning that everyone agreed with."

If they could go back and do something differently, Devon Reform would involve members much more from the beginning, for example in sub groups on funding or information.

In addition, they feel it might have been better to have set up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation rather than a Company Limited by Guarantee, so that it could use the financial systems of a host organisation.

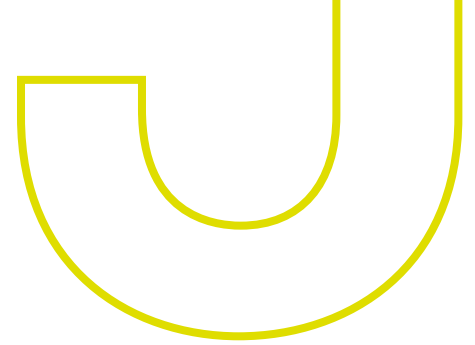
WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS OF THE NETWORK?

Devon Reform is planning to launch an independent, voluntary sector-led kitemark on the website so organisations can sign up as potential deliverers of services, showing that they meet a basic minimum standard. The kitemark will also incorporate a 'healthcheck' for smaller VCS organisations. The network also plans to expand on current work, including extending the successful road show event to other prisons in the county.

To support the future sustainability of the network beyond the end of its grant, Devon Reform may need to introduce VCS membership fees and/or charges for statutory organisations using its services.

Another option might be that Devon Reform is absorbed into another organisation, for example, having a CVS as a host organisation, which is felt would help its sustainability. Being hosted by a local support and development organisation (such as a CVS) makes sense, particularly if the network's remit is broadened out to include community safety as well as services for offenders, as the Safer Future Communities project has prompted it to do.

"If you could retain your independence but tap into the HR, finance and communication systems of a CVS, that might work."



COMMUNITY JUSTICE CYMRU

HOW WE DID IT CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Community Justice Cymru (CJC, and also known as Community Justice Wales) is a voluntary sector network facilitated by Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). CJC provides a focus for the exchange of information and experience between voluntary organisations that work within the field of community justice, and is a forum for discussion of relevant policy and a means informing policy makers.

The network has recently developed the Community Justice Cymru Manifesto, a collective position statement on a range of policy issues that affect its members. This has been particularly successful in revitalizing the network, raising the profile of the sector and developing relationships with decision-makers.

This case study is based on an interview with Barbara Natasegara, Chief Executive of Safer Wales and Chair of Community Justice Cymru, and quotations are taken from that interview. Additional information was provided by Mirriam Dupree, Senior Policy Advisor at WCVA, who facilitates the network.

HOW DID THE NETWORK START?

Community Justice Cymru (CJC) was set up in 2000 by WCVA, which runs a number of networks to facilitate networking across a particular area of work. The network was elected as one of 25 themed networks that make up the Third Sector Partnership Council, a mechanism for maintaining regular dialogue between voluntary and community organisations and Welsh

Government. The network was formerly called 'Community Justice Voluntary Sector Network Wales', but changed its name in 2011 to the less cumbersome Community Justice Cymru.

In 2010, the network lost both the chair and vice chair at the same time (there were lots of redundancies in the sector). At this time Barbara Natasegara, Chief Executive of Safer Wales, became chair, along with Gaynor McKeown from Victim Support as vice chair.

HOW IS THE NETWORK RUN?

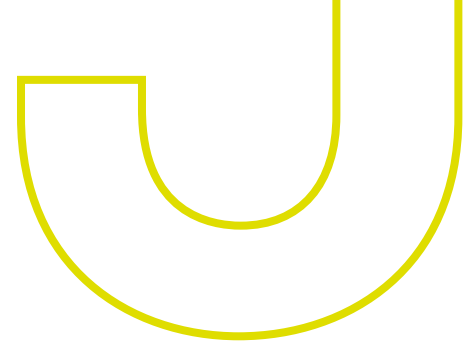
CJC has a steering group which meets four times a year. Meetings and other network activity are facilitated by a Senior Policy Advisor at WCVA. Steering group meetings are held at WCVA's Cardiff office with a video link to steering group members in North Wales.¹⁷

The network's Terms of Reference¹⁸ set out that the steering group will include up to 35 member organisations, made up of up to 7 in the following categories: youth justice; community safety; adult offenders; victims, survivors and witnesses; and key voluntary organisations. The wider network is involved through conferences and updates on an email mailing list, and by nominating organisations for the steering group. Elections are held for chair and vice chair, and positions on the steering group are held for two years.

Community Justice Cymru's steering group meetings are also attended by several statutory organisations that have observer status. These are the Crown Prosecution Service, Skills for

¹⁷. The meetings use video conferencing facilities installed at WCVA's offices in Cardiff and North Wales, with about 15-20 people attending in Cardiff and 4-5 in North Wales. The facilities are felt to be very effective, with large screens showing members in the other office appearing as if all sit round the same table.

¹⁸. Voluntary Sector Community Justice Network Terms of Reference, download from www.wcva.org.uk/policy/dsp_network.cfm?networkid=6&display_sitedeptid=9



Justice, Wales Probation Trust and recently the policy officers that will be working alongside the Police and Crime Commissioners. Meetings are split into two parts, with network business in the morning and speakers and presentations in the afternoon, when the observers join the meeting. Speakers have also included academics and a senior civil servant in Welsh Government with responsibility for community safety.

HOW IS THE NETWORK FUNDED?

WCVA receives £4000 funding per year from Welsh Government to run Community Justice Cymru, as do all the other networks making up the Third Sector Partnership Council. This funding is to cover the network's involvement in the Third Sector Partnership Council and ensure two-way information flow between the sector and the Council. In addition, contributions were made in 2011-12 by Wales Probation and by Clinks to support two conferences.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE NETWORK AND HOW ARE MARGINALISED GROUPS INCLUDED?

There are 33 voluntary organisations on the Community Justice Cymru steering group and meetings are generally attended by around 25 people. There are over 150 organisations in the wider membership, ranging from small neighbourhood watch organisations to large national charities. The steering group includes organisations specialising in homelessness,

domestic and sexual violence, older people, youth offending, children's services, offenders' families, prison work and race equality.

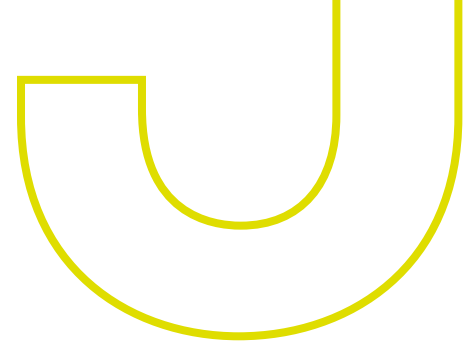
The Chair and co-ordinator have reviewed the network membership as they were concerned the representation of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups was sporadic. Holding conferences has provided a way for smaller groups that are not members of the steering group to get involved. There are also other voluntary sector networks that represent specific groups within CJC membership, such as the Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales, and very small community organisations can feed in via these networks. The network does not specifically include service user voice because it is a network of organisations rather than services users, although network members do advocate on behalf of their service users.

WHAT IS THE NETWORK DOING? THE CJC MANIFESTO

Membership numbers had fallen and the network was looking for a way to engage with existing members and revitalise the network. They decided to jointly develop a manifesto¹⁹, which sets out the network's collective position on a range of community justice issues. It also ensures that when network members attend external forums or meetings with Welsh Government, they represent the network's views rather than just those of their own organisation.

"The main issue was how do we make sure that when people go to a high level meeting, they are able to talk strategically and not about what they do day-to-day."

¹⁹ Community Justice Cymru Manifesto 2011-2012, download from www.wcva.org.uk/policy/dsp_network.cfm?networkid=6&display_sitedeptid=9



The manifesto took ten months to develop, and was led by a working group of network members. Individual members elected to write sections of the manifesto in areas they specialised in, and then the working group edited these before they were sent to the wider network membership.

“People came forward who had expertise in a particular area. In many cases they had already got position statements on the issue from their own organisation. For example Nacro was happy to write the part on youth justice, and then it was reviewed by the whole partnership so that the manifesto had the ownership of everyone.”

The manifesto identifies six priority policy areas which are important to members, and which also reflect the Wales Reducing Reoffending Board’s policy pathways. For each priority area, the manifesto includes background and context, key concerns, and recommendations.

Once the manifesto was drafted, two conferences were held with the wider network membership to consult on the manifesto and ensure that everybody has ownership of it. The manifesto is now being updated following these conferences. The document will continue to be “live and organic”, and is being updated currently regarding Police and Crime Commissioners, which had not been announced when the manifesto was initiated.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE NETWORK MAKE?

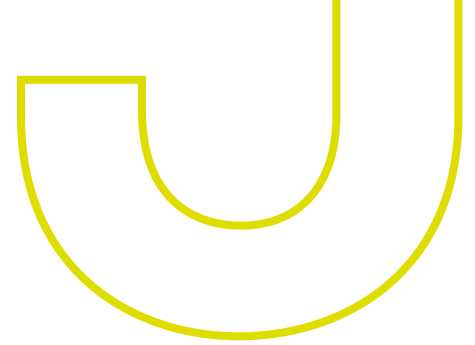
Developing the manifesto is a key achievement of Community Justice Cymru which has had many benefits for the network and the wider sector:

- Member ownership:** jointly producing a collective position statement has given the members a sense of ownership of the network and the manifesto itself:

“People feel proud of it and it belongs to them – they don’t feel like a group of people went away and wrote it. That’s lovely, we’re really pleased with that.”
- Status of the voluntary and community sector:** Proactively developing the manifesto rather than just responding to consultations has also raised the status of the voluntary sector in the eyes of government, and developed the network’s relationship with key decision makers:

“The goal was: we’ll go and influence ministers instead of waiting for them to come to us. And that’s what we’ve done. It’s really raised our status with the public sector. Probation now regularly come as observers. Since the conferences we’ve had three or four other non-VCS agencies who want to come and attend. The more we do this kind of thing through the network, it professionalises the sector, shows government we are positive and professional and shows what we are about rather than waiting for them to come with us.”
- More effective sector representation:** The manifesto has also informed network members so that they can better represent the network at other forums and partnerships.

“If I go to a network to represent women when my field is not domestic violence, how do I know what the issues are? The manifesto was introduced to address this. It’s worked really well, members have felt really empowered by having the manifesto. It has made me feel more confident when representing the network at other forums and boards.”



- **Better partnership working:** As a result of the manifesto, a planning group (called the CJC Partnership Group) was developed to organise the two conferences, and it is going on to develop future work. It is a multi-sector partnership which includes network members, Clinks, academics and Probation.
- **Information sharing:** Other benefits of the manifesto process include increased information sharing. For example, recently the member who had written the housing section of the manifesto shared a consultation response on housing so that the rest of the steering group could learn from their expertise and respond to the consultation as well if they wanted.
- Attendance at the two conferences involving wider network membership, which were both fully booked. Feedback from the conference was positive with many attendees saying that they wanted future similar events.
- E-groups being established around manifesto themes which involve wider membership and all communicate with each other.
- The development of the CJC Partnership Group involving academia and public sector (see above), and the enthusiasm for getting involved in planning future event.
- Feedback received from some network members that CJC is the best network they are involved in.

The network chair describes how the manifesto has galvanised activity in the voluntary sector, and how much was achieved by member organisations volunteering for the network:

"We have achieved a lot in a short space of time, none of us is a full-time worker, we're all just doing it as part of something else. The amount of work people put in voluntarily, I hope has benefitted their own organisation but has certainly benefitted the network and the manifesto."

HOW DOES THE NETWORK MEASURE ITS IMPACT?

Community Justice Cymru has not carried out a formal evaluation but has identified several indicators of success of the network:

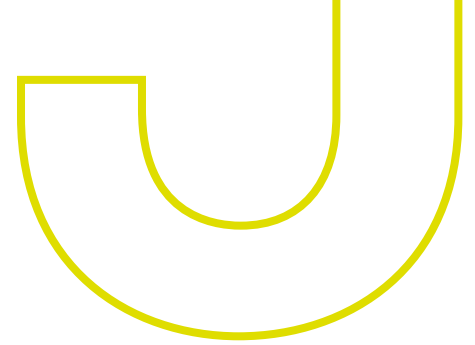
- Increase in attendance of steering group meetings.
- Finally, another indication of the success of CJC in developing the manifesto is that other networks are now planning to develop their own:

"The best feedback so far is that fact that other networks want to use the model and do the same thing. Now, the substance misuse network and the equalities network are putting together their own position statements, so it's had a knock on effect."

CHALLENGES

In 2010 the network had low attendance at its steering group meetings, and lost both its chair and vice chair as there were lots of redundancies in the voluntary sector. The network carried out a number of activities to revitalise its membership and increase participation:

- Renaming the network – members were asked to vote on which name they preferred, to ensure that they had a sense of ownership.
- Developing the manifesto.



- Inviting speakers to steering group meetings: *"We wanted to bring together academic criminologists with the voluntary sector, so started having speakers at meetings. We started getting stronger membership of the network, and better attendance at meetings."*

Developing the manifesto itself brought challenges, and required a lot of commitment from network members in giving up their time to develop various sections, and also depended on strong policy support from WCVA. In addition, the remit of the network is quite broad so needs to bring together many different issues:

"It can be difficult because community justice isn't one issue, it includes criminal justice, community safety, equality, hate crime, women's issues, domestic violence etc."

One danger of networks can be that they focus on negative issues and people talk about problems they face such as lack of funding, rather than doing something positive to address them. Developing the manifesto has enabled Community Justice Cymru to overcome this challenge:

"The manifesto has been a lesson in thinking about the bigger picture. The danger [of a network] is everyone comes along and has a whinge and talks about their loss of funding. It's a waste of time."

WHAT HAS THE NETWORK LEARNT?

"We've learned loads. We've learned that if you give people the chance to come together and say what they want to say in a positive way as

opposed to moaning about things, it works. But also that they need support to do this too."

If they could go back and do something differently, Community Justice Cymru would build in a media campaign from the start of the manifesto launch.

"If I was doing it from scratch and had the resources, I would build in a PR or media campaign around the manifesto. If we'd known the conferences were going to go as well as they did we would have got more press involvement."

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS OF THE NETWORK?

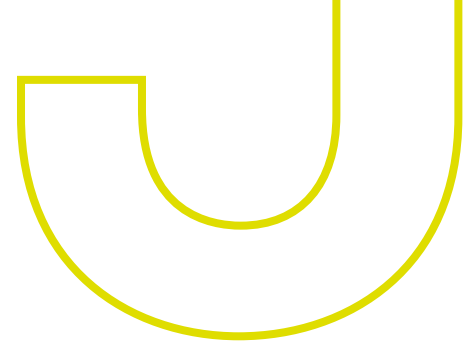
When the manifesto has been updated with feedback from the conferences, it will be taken to the Welsh Minister and to the Police & Crime Commissioner candidates.

"I would like to think that in a few months' time when we have circulated the manifesto to PCC candidates and ministers this will enable us to build relationships with them and make them less wary of working with the voluntary sector."

The manifesto will be redeveloped again on an ongoing basis, and further conferences with wider network membership are already being planned:

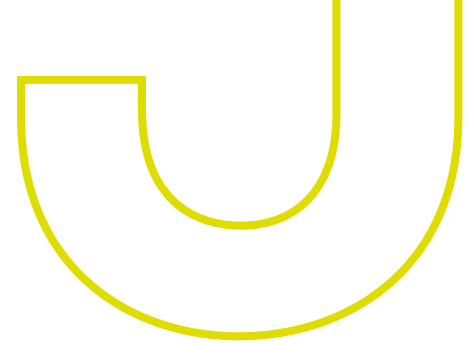
"The manifesto is organic, we'll re-write it again next year for example when there's new legislation."

The network would also like to develop its communications, building on the themed e-groups that have been set up around the



manifesto, and more information electronically rather than just through updates at the meetings.

*“We could use social networking a lot more.
We have talked about having a website for the
network and a forum that allows interaction.”*

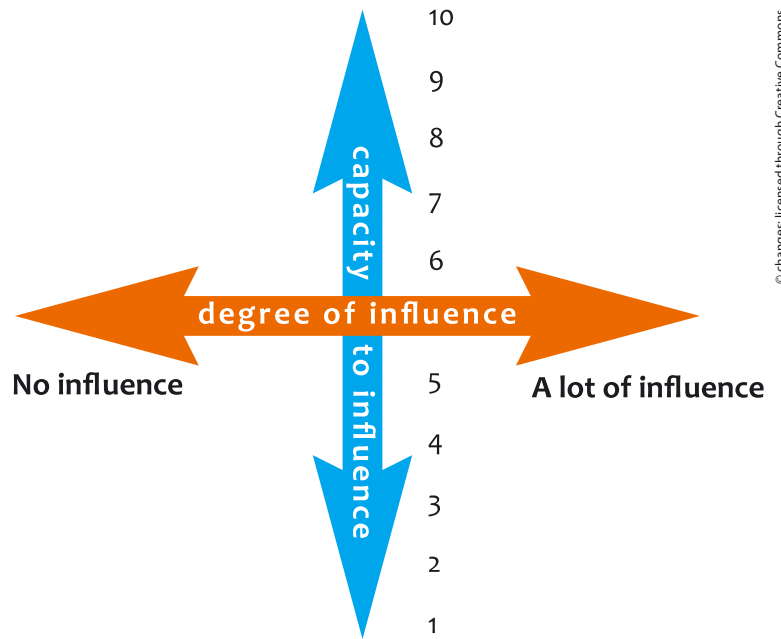


APPENDIX 1 EVALUATION TOOLS FOR NETWORKS

AXIS OF INFLUENCE

'Voice' is a discussion based framework which helps community groups and networks to assess and improve the influence they have on agencies and partnerships. The two axes plot existing capacity to influence against how influential members of the group feel it is. It can be used to: assess and monitor community influence, prompt discussion and debate within groups and help plan how to become more influential. Voice could be used very effectively in the set-up of a network as a framework for discussions in the meetings, and a way to gather baseline information at the beginning and how this changes as the network develops.

For more information see:
www.axisofinfluence.co.uk



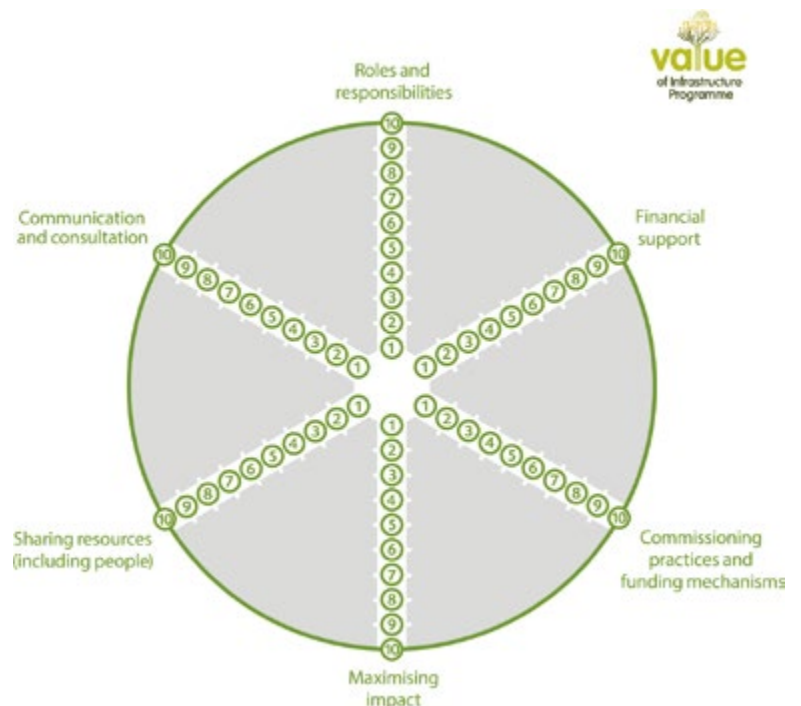
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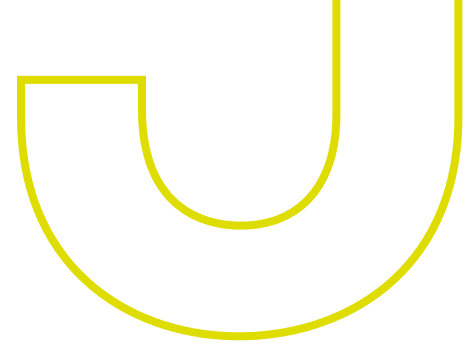
VALUE OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME

Framework developed by NCVO to assess and provide evidence of the impact of voluntary sector infrastructure. It uses an 'outcomes star' approach to assess performance on a range of different elements at the same time. It includes an 'External Agencies Dial', which measures how far the actions of a statutory agency help the voluntary sector to meet its aims.

This tool could be used by a network to assess the relationship between the voluntary sector and the police force, prisons, and probation trust (a separate dial would be used for each agency).

For more information see:
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/infrastructure/impact/vip





APPENDIX 2 RESOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

CLINKS RESOURCES

Service User Involvement (Clinks/ Revolving Doors Agency, 2010)

Written by service users, this guide provides a structured and accessible introduction to involving offenders and ex-offenders in your work, including examples of good practice, checklists and signposting to further information and support.

Building Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in Integrated Offender Management (Clinks/Home Office, 2012)

Series of resources intended to help key those involved in local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements to review and develop the role of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners,

and to help VCS organisations get involved in IOM. For more information see [page 11](#).

Do It Justice: Navigating the Criminal Justice System (Clinks, 2012)

Do It Justice: Getting Help from Local Support and Development Organisations (LSDOs) (Clinks/NAVCA 2012)

SAFER FUTURE COMMUNITIES

Resources developed for Safer Future Communities networks to support the VCS engagement with Police and Crime Commissioners, available at: www.clinks.org/services/sfc/sfcreources

Online Learning

Free e-learning courses to offer bite sized information and support with the flexibility to be completed in your own time from your office or home. Courses available include Influencing Skills and Working with the Media. clinks.learningpool.com

Setting up your local network

This gives guidance on the aims and objectives of the local Safer

Future Communities networks and outlines who should be involved.

Influencing your PCC

In the run up to and after the PCC elections many individuals, organisations, public bodies and even private companies will be vying for the PCCs attention. Your case for the PCC to listen to the knowledge and understanding of the VCSE Sector in setting their plan and ensuring continued funding of VCSE community safety activities will be stronger if you address the PCCs priorities and frame the VCSEs work accordingly. This document provides guidance on building your case for the PCC.

Local media toolkit

This toolkit gives guidance on engaging with the local media to highlight the community safety work of local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations. It includes a template press release and mapping tool to find out how local VCSE organisations are engaging with the local media.

Local Safer Future Communities networks – useful contacts

This gives details of a range of organisations that local Safer Future Communities networks might want to involve and engage with.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Campaign Central

Website aiming to connect, inform and support campaigners. www.campaigncentral.org.uk

Axis of Influence

A discussion-based framework that improves influence and community engagement. www.axisofinfluence.co.uk

Principles of Representation: A framework for effective third sector participation in Local Strategic Partnerships (NAVCA/ Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008)

For more information on this framework and how to use it see the NAVCA website: www.navca.org.uk/representation

How to... develop a women's network or forum (Women's Resource Centre, 2010) www.wrc.org.uk

In Focus: Effecting change through collaboration (NCVO, undated) www.ncvo-vol.org.uk



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