



Clinks' Impact Assessment Report

April 2010

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Executive Summary

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

The impact assessment involved carrying out a survey of 719 voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) on Clinks' database as well as a series of in-depth telephone interviews with nine other stakeholders who had been selected by Clinks for their knowledge of the sector.

Key findings

Clinks' services

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

Clinks' role

- The majority of the VCOs we contacted saw Clinks as a source of information and a voice for the sector.
- Almost two-thirds of VCOs felt that Clinks provides a unique service.
- Other stakeholders saw Clinks as a bridge between the voluntary sector and statutory sectors, providing a conduit to VCOs and representing its VCO members. All those we spoke to felt that Clinks was effectively fulfilling this role.

Clinks' impact

Clinks is clearly making a difference for both VCOs and other stakeholders in the criminal justice sector.

Over 80% of the VCOs we contacted felt Clinks is effective in:

¹² Almost a quarter (24%) of respondents said they did not know if they were members or did not answer this question.

- representing the voluntary sector within the criminal justice sector
- bringing together the voluntary and statutory sectors
- providing a strong voice for its members

And three-quarters felt Clinks is effective in supporting organisations to improve. In particular, VCOs felt Clinks helped them keep up-to-date with relevant issues and opportunities, made them aware of funding opportunities and enabled them to network with each other.

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

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

Conclusion

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

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Clinks' Impact Assessment Report

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of the impact assessment

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

- how Clinks' services are being used and whether they meet stakeholders' needs
- what role Clinks' stakeholders believe it fulfils in the criminal justice sector and whether this meets their needs
- the impact that Clinks is having on its stakeholders and, more widely, on the criminal justice sector.

1.2 Methods

The impact assessment involved two main activities. Firstly, we designed an online survey which was sent out to 719 voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) on Clinks' database and publicised in Light Lunch. Alongside this, we carried out nine in-depth telephone interviews with a range of stakeholders who had been selected by Clinks for their knowledge of the sector.

1.3 Profile of respondents

Survey respondents

112 people responded to the online survey. These respondents represented a wide range of VCOs working with different groups of people and across the different pathways. The majority were working with ex-offenders (46%) and male offenders (43%) and most were engaged in the areas of education, training and employment (43%) or attitudes, thinking and behaviour (41%).

19% were based in London and 10% in the South West. However, we received responses from VCOs in all ten English regions as well as three responses from VCOs in Scotland.

Almost two-thirds (61%) of respondents were members.² This represented about a quarter of Clinks' current members.³ For further information on the profile of survey respondents, see Appendix 1.

³ Clinks reports that it currently has 264 paid members.

Interviewees

Clinks provided contact details for 23 people who represented a range of its stakeholders. Nine people agreed to be interviewed and five of the people that we did not interview said they had already completed the online survey. Our interviews were therefore carried out with three funders, two member organisations and four people who had worked alongside Clinks in a variety of ways (e.g. partnership-working).

1.4 Issues encountered

There are two main issues to be aware of when reading this report. Firstly, the online survey aimed to collect the views and experiences of VCOs. However, as it was publicised in Light Lunch (which goes out to both VCO and non-VCO contacts across the sector), it is possible that not all responses to the survey were from VCOs. It is therefore important to bear in mind that when we refer to the responses to the survey, some of these may have come from non-VCOs.

Secondly, although Clinks provided us with the names of 23 stakeholders for interview, only seven of the people we interviewed were non-VCOs. The feedback we collected from non-VCO stakeholders is therefore limited. Nonetheless, the people we talked to were able to provide a valuable insight into Clinks' impact in the criminal justice sector.

2. Clinks' services

We began by finding out which services VCOs and other stakeholders we contacted had used and whether they felt there were any gaps in the range of services Clinks provides.

2.1 Services to VCOs

Clinks provides a wide range of services to VCOs which, for the purposes of this assessment, we summarised as:

- e-bulletins e.g. Light Lunch
- GRANTnet funding search
- Clinks News
- briefings and reports
- conferences and events
- regional support
- consultations
- training
- website.

Which Clinks' services VCOs had used

We asked VCOs which Clinks services they had used in the last year. The responses to the online survey showed that Clinks' most well-used services were:

- e-bulletins (received by 94% of respondents)
- the quarterly newsletter (received by 44% of respondents)
- conferences and events (attended by 41% of respondents)

Other services had been less frequently used:

- the website (visited by 37% of respondents)
- briefings and reports (read by 29% of respondents).
- 14% of respondents had attended training run by Clinks.
- 10% had used the GRANTnet funding service (representing 16% of the members who responded to the survey).
- 5% had received regional support
- 5% had taken part in consultations.

The online survey revealed that although VCOs are making use of the full range of Clinks' services, there is considerable variation in the amount of services they are using. Whilst almost a third of respondents (31%) had used four or more of Clinks' services and almost half (43%) had used two or three of Clinks' services, a quarter (24%) had used only one service.⁴

⁴ The vast majority of these were recipients of e-bulletins.

Developing Clinks' services

Nineteen people suggested ways of developing Clinks' services. A third of these people said they would like more regional events and information. For example, one person suggested having:

More conferences and events in more regional areas like Birmingham, Derby and Staffordshire.

Two people commented on Clinks' training – one person suggested Clinks could develop NVQ-based training on offending whilst the other suggested they should take 'a more formal view of how they develop training'.

Others made specific requests, such as for information on how NOMS is implemented in rural areas. However, the vast majority (81%) of VCOs did not feel there were any ways in which Clinks could help them more. Their comments included:

The service is punching far beyond its weight already.

I'm happy with the service they provide - always very helpful and efficient.

I think Clinks is amazing.

It already provides an excellent service.

Please see Appendix 2 for the detailed suggestions made by VCOs.

2.2 Services to other stakeholders

Other stakeholders explained that they had mainly received informal advice and information from Clinks through attending events and contact with individual members of Clinks' staff. Some people described how they had worked with Clinks to develop new services or work together on specific issues.

We staged a joint conference in December and last month we spoke together at a national conference doing a workshop on our work in the region.

Others explained that Clinks provided 'a gateway' to the third sector, enabling them to circulate information and to consult with organisations.

Clinks did a piece of work with their members whereby their members gave permission to share their contact details with me - so that NOMS could communicate in a much better way with the voluntary and community sector.

Some of the funders we spoke to talked about using Clinks as a 'sounding board' to help them think through funding issues. For example, one person said:

Clive and his team are this great resource for us.

Developing Clinks' services

We asked stakeholders whether there were any other ways they would like Clinks to help them. All those we spoke to were very satisfied with the way Clinks works with them and did not feel that there was anything else they wanted from Clinks. For example, one person said:

The involvement we have with them is at the appropriate level of intensity - if we needed more, we would ask and I'm sure it would be forthcoming.

However, one person stressed the importance of Clinks' continuing their work in the South West beyond next spring.

We also asked stakeholders whether they felt there were any other services Clinks should be developing. Most people felt that Clinks was doing what it needed to and should develop their current work rather than take on anything new. For example, one person said:

The important thing is that they have taken on as much as they can. If they do develop anything, it's better they are the conduit rather than do the work themselves.

However, one person echoed some VCOs' views that Clinks should develop more regional links/representation.

2.3 Analysis

This assessment has found that Clinks has developed a range of services that appear to be well-used and which meet VCOs' needs for support, information, networking and representation within the criminal justice sector. Clinks also appears to respond well to the needs of other stakeholders for information, advice and support.

The feedback shows that the vast majority of Clinks' stakeholders feel that Clinks is providing the right amount and range of services and that they do not feel that Clinks should be developing any new services. Suggestions for improvement focused largely on the development of Clinks' existing services, particularly in terms of extending its regional activities.

3. Clinks' role

The impact assessment also explored Clinks' role – what people perceived this to be and whether this was meeting the needs of its different stakeholders.

3.1 VCOs' perceptions of Clinks' role

We asked VCOs to tell us in their own words what they perceived Clinks' role to be.⁵ The following themes emerged most strongly in their responses:

- Almost half of respondents (45%) said that they thought Clinks' role is to disseminate information.
- Around a third (36%) felt it is to provide a voice for the sector and/or to lobby on behalf of the sector.
- A quarter (25%) felt it is to support and advise VCOs in their work.

Other aspects identified by smaller numbers of VCOs included Clinks:

- enabling VCOs to work together (21%)
- acting as an umbrella organisation (13%)
- promoting good practice (12%)
- providing training (8%)
- acting as a bridge between the statutory and voluntary sectors (8%)
- signposting (3%)
- identifying new areas of work (3%)
- being a voice for smaller organisations (3%)
- having an overview of the sector (1%).

Providing a unique service

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of VCOs felt that Clinks provides a unique service.⁶ Many attributed this to Clinks' expertise and knowledge whilst others said that there were simply no other organisations like Clinks. Comments included:

There is no other criminal justice umbrella body which operates with such impact.

I don't know any other organisation that truly does this for this sector or has such a depth of knowledge in its staff.

Other reasons given were:

- the specific remit that Clinks has
- the way that Clinks provides a link between VCOs and statutory bodies in the criminal justice sector
- the accessible, comprehensive service Clinks provides.

⁵ 36 people did not answer this question. However, some respondents suggested more than one role for Clinks.

⁶ 77 people responded to this question.

Some respondents felt that Clinks offers a better service than other, more generic services:

Generalist VCS infrastructure does not meet our needs as closely; Clinks can and does.

The services provided are far more relevant and useful (and cheaper!) than those provided by generic infrastructure organisations.

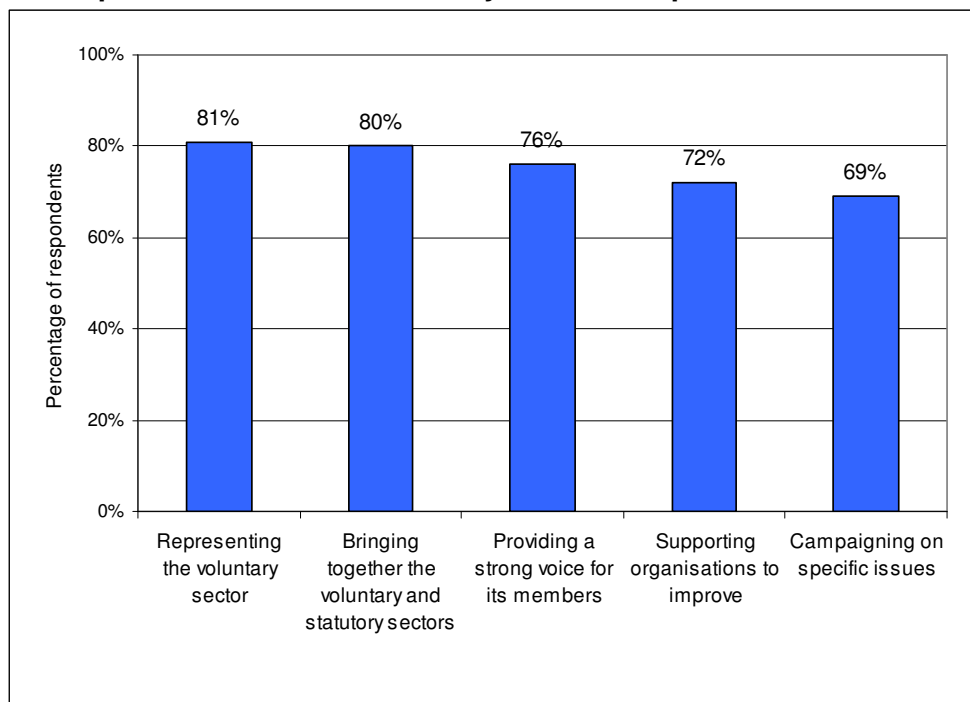
Others felt Clinks' uniqueness is due to its relationship with the voluntary sector. For example, one person said:

They're not a government-led organisation. They understand the criminal justice system as they have been 'service users' and are trusted more because of this.

The importance of Clinks' role

When we asked VCOs which aspects of Clinks' role were most important to them, we found that all aspects appeared to be important to them. However, VCOs placed most importance on Clinks' role in representing the voluntary sector and bringing together the voluntary and statutory sectors and slightly less importance on campaigning on specific issues.

Chart 1: Aspects of Clinks' role rated by VCOs as important



The number of responses ranged from 69 to 71.

Their comments included:

They provide a unified voice for the voluntary sector

They facilitate partnership work.

3.2 Other stakeholders' perceptions of Clinks' role

We also asked funders and other stakeholders what they perceived Clinks' role to be. The majority felt that Clinks' role is to represent its members and act as a bridge between the voluntary and statutory agencies in the criminal justice sector. Their comments included:

Clinks is the representation of the sector with Government and a conduit for passing information down to the sector.

I see them as having a role as a mediator between the statutory and the voluntary sector. They're very well connected with the statutory sector – so facilitating, bringing the two together.

They have a voice because they are a membership organisation and have a range of organisations they work with and through, so they are a kind of funnel of that knowledge and expertise.

Two people felt Clinks' role is to support VCOs in developing services and sharing good practice, particularly among smaller organisations. They emphasised the importance of this in 'showing people they are part of something bigger'.

One person felt that Clinks could be more assertive in their role, saying:

Sometimes I might have wanted them to be a bit more strategic in what they are saying to us... They need to be more challenging and more thoughtful and strategic in their challenge.

Another person felt that Clinks could be networking at a higher level:

They could maybe up their game a bit in terms of working with other broader sectoral umbrella organisations eg NCVO and ACEVO.

However, it was clear from other comments that many people felt Clinks had got their role right. As one person said:

I would not want them to be a campaigning organisation, telling the government what to do.

3.3 Analysis

The majority of the VCOs we contacted saw Clinks both as a source of information and as a voice for the sector. A substantial proportion of the VCOs we contacted also felt that Clinks provides a unique service. They particularly valued the role Clinks plays in representing the voluntary sector and in bringing together the voluntary and statutory sectors. Clinks' campaigning role appeared to be less important to VCOs but this may be because fewer VCOs were aware of the work that Clinks does in this area.⁷ However, all aspects of Clinks' role appeared to be valued by VCOs.

⁷ 17% of respondents to the survey said they were aware of specific work that Clinks was doing in their own region or area of work.

Other stakeholders saw Clinks as a bridge between the voluntary sector and statutory sectors, enabling VCOs' perspectives to be more clearly appreciated. They particularly valued Clinks' role in providing expertise and knowledge of the sector although two people felt Clinks could work at a higher, more strategic level.

4. Clinks' impact

Finally, we looked at the impact that Clinks' work is having on organisations working in the criminal justice sector and on the sector itself.

4.1 Increasing the effectiveness of VCOs in the criminal justice sector

Giving the voluntary sector a strong voice

88% of the VCOs who responded to the online survey felt that Clinks was effective in representing the voluntary sector and 82% felt it provided a strong voice for its members.

VCOs commented particularly on Clinks' ability to connect with and represent the diversity of VCOs in the sector:

Clinks is remarkable because it is an umbrella body which is still very connected with its members and the 'front line' service delivery.

It is an extremely important organisation that manages its multi-faceted role very well. It seems that most organisations in the sector feel Clinks in some way belongs to them and this is no mean feat given the diversity within the sector.

Bringing together the voluntary and statutory sectors

88% of respondents to the online survey felt that Clinks was effective in bringing together the voluntary and statutory sectors. For example, respondents commented:

Clinks provides a national way into the criminal justice sector.

It brings voluntary sector organisations together within the criminal justice sector and links with statutory sector, police probation etc

Some comments showed how Clinks was felt to do more than simply facilitate contact; it was seen as helping VCOs to engage more effectively with statutory agencies:

Clinks makes us feel an important contributor to the criminal justice system.

Clinks enables voice and protects our interests.

We feel better informed when engaging with NOMS and policy makers.

However, one person felt Clinks could take more of a lead in bringing about high-level networking, saying:

They need to be more high-level and introduce key voluntary sector people to people in government.

Enabling VCOs to work effectively

75% of respondents felt that Clinks was effective in supporting organisations to improve. Comments included:

Clinks provides information and resources that enable charities to do the best for their clients.

Clinks provided a huge wealth of material and support, especially in preparation for training our volunteers.

In particular, many VCOs felt Clinks helped them to be more effective by keeping them up-to-date with relevant issues and opportunities. For example, comments included:

Clinks helps us to stay up-to-date with developments in the sector.

They are the way you can get linked into the criminal justice sector. They enable you to access what's going on where.

Several people commented specifically on getting information from Clinks that they did not get from anywhere else:

Light Lunch is particularly helpful as it keeps us up-to-date with things that we may not otherwise hear about.

Clinks has made me aware of publications I didn't know about. Its weekly Light Lunch is superb for information on funding, events and publications.

Others felt Clinks helped them keep in touch with developments within the sector at local and national levels. They said:

I stay informed about what is going on and how other organisations are doing things.

It gives us policy updates, funding and all the breaking news in working with offenders – it has helped us to access great sources of information.

Others said that Clinks had also helped by making them aware of funding opportunities:

We have been kept up- to-date over potential sources of funding and trends in commissioning of services.

I have also found out funding sources for the project and as a result gained more funding.

Other respondents to the survey felt that Clinks helped them to network with other organisations. For example, they said:

The networking opportunities provided have been invaluable.

Clinks has helped us in linking up with other agencies and projects in the criminal justice system.

It has enabled me to make more contacts within the voluntary sector.

Identifying priority areas

72% of VCOs believed that Clinks was effective in campaigning on specific issues. Some explained how this had made a difference to them:

It has helped to provide an evidence base for the work we do.

I like their campaigns e.g. the Race for Justice Campaign. It's really good they are leading on things like that.

Other ways in which Clinks helps VCOs

Other respondents valued specific information they had obtained from Clinks (e.g. background information for funding bids), training they had attended (e.g. on outcomes) or commented that they found Clinks generally helpful. For example, they said:

Great organisation, friendly approachable people!

Keep up the excellent work!

A first class organisation.

Additional comments made by VCOs can be found in Appendix 3.

4.2 Improving the relationship between VCOs and other stakeholders in the criminal justice sector

Providing a better understanding of voluntary sector issues

The majority of the stakeholders we interviewed said that their contact with Clinks had given them access to expertise and knowledge of the voluntary and criminal justice sector. For example, one person described how:

Clinks acts as advocates of the whole voluntary and community sector. It informs our advocacy – we value that relationship extremely highly.

Another commented:

Clinks have knowledge of the third sector working with offenders. They are an intermediary so it's grounded in knowledge they get from their members and users.

Others emphasised the way Clinks represents its members. For example, one person said:

With the strength of purpose and momentum that Clinks has, it does represent the solid presence of charities.

One person commented on the importance of Clinks' role in being a neutral voice for the sector:

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

Some people attributed Clinks' effectiveness to the quality of the team at Clinks:

The senior management team is great. It feels they have the people with the research and strategy experience. Bringing all that together in one team is playing to their strengths.

They have a set of ingredients that are very special and they have a way of making people feel comfortable.

A few people specifically mentioned the work that Clinks' Director has done in building relationships and enhancing Clinks' reputation:

Clive is exceptional and everyone has great trust in his calmness and competence. He has a good team around him but he is the inspiration and he has built the reputation of Clinks.

Clive's overview and analysis is extremely well- informed and balanced.

Others also commented on the quality of their relationship with Clinks. For example, one person said:

We really value that partnership. It is based on trust and is a good relationship.

Better access to voluntary sector organisations

Some people also felt that their relationship with Clinks gives them better access to the voluntary sector. One person said that, as a result of Clinks sharing their contacts with them, they had been able to consult with a much greater range of organisations in the sector:

We used to just speak to the people we knew. Now we have a database of about 300 organisations in the region so if we're consulting on a strategy or organising an event, we can get in touch with them.

Other ways in which Clinks helps stakeholders

Some stakeholders said that Clinks had helped them in their own work by being available to discuss issues and help them develop their plans. Their comments included:

Being able to talk to Clive to work through those issues was invaluable for us. What we were getting was something quite independent.

Another person described how Clinks helps them to support VCOs more effectively:

Very useful for linking up local organisations we support and how they can engage with criminal justice agenda.

4.3 Influencing policy

We also asked stakeholders whether they felt that Clinks had been influential in shifting policy in relation to the voluntary and community sector. Most of them felt strongly that this was the case. Their comments included:

What they have done is increased policy makers' awareness of voluntary sector issues.

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

One person felt that Clinks influences policy through discussion and consultation rather than through overt campaigning:

Clive has been very good in a disarming way in saying 'this is where there are gaps', 'this is what's wrong'.

Another person felt that the support they get from Clinks helps their organisation to bring about changes:

We are much better informed about the activities of the voluntary and community sector that work with offenders and families as a result of what we get from Clinks. That helps us to influence policy better.

The importance of Clinks' role in enabling smaller organisations to have a voice and play a part in bringing about change was also highlighted:

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

4.4 Analysis

It is clear that Clinks is making a difference both for VCOs and other stakeholders in the criminal justice sector. Its support has increased VCOs' effectiveness by providing them with information that is relevant to their work and helping them to access funding. Clinks has also enabled VCOs to work together more effectively through facilitating networking at conferences, training and other events. Furthermore, Clinks seems to empower VCOs in their work and to enable them to play a part in influencing policy.

Most of the other stakeholders we spoke to also felt that Clinks' work had helped influence policy. They described how Clinks increases policy makers' awareness of issues affecting VCOs and gives the voluntary sector a voice. They felt this was a more effective approach than direct campaigning. In addition, Clinks was seen to be making a difference to stakeholders' own understanding of voluntary and criminal justice sector issues which had helped them to be more effective in their own work.

Interviews with the other stakeholders also revealed the way in which Clinks' Senior Management Team is responsible for building Clinks' reputation and effectiveness in the criminal justice sector.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This impact assessment has provided a great endorsement of Clinks' work. The feedback we received from VCOs and other stakeholders was extremely positive. Clinks has established a reputation as a trusted and credible organisation which is seen as being both independent of Government and neutral in its representation of VCO views. Its stakeholders clearly feel that it provides high-quality services which are effective in meeting their needs. There were no substantial suggestions for improvement to Clinks' services or for the need to develop new services. It is clear that Clinks offers a range of services and fulfils a role that no one else in the sector does. Indeed, it would seem that, for such a small organisation, Clinks has a considerable impact on organisations working in the criminal justice sector. This can be particularly attributed to the quality and reach of Light Lunch as well as to the expertise and approach of Clinks' staff.

This impact assessment has shown that Clinks is achieving its strategic aims in the following ways.

Promoting the work of the voluntary and community sector

Feedback from all stakeholders revealed that Clinks is highly effective in bringing together different stakeholders within the criminal justice sector. Non-voluntary sector stakeholders felt that Clinks keeps them well-informed about voluntary sector issues and acts as an effective conduit to VCOs so that they can consult with them. VCOs are also extremely satisfied with the role that Clinks plays in promoting their work with 82% feeling that Clinks provides a strong voice for its members.

Providing specialist support to organisations working with offenders and ex-offenders

VCOs told us that the support they receive from Clinks helps them to be more effective in their work by keeping them informed about issues affecting them, helping them to access funding, enabling them to network with other organisations and strengthening their work.

Representing the voluntary and community sector within the criminal justice sector

The vast majority of VCOs felt that Clinks is effective in representing the voluntary sector within the criminal justice sector. This feeling was also reflected by the non-voluntary sector stakeholders who also valued the part Clinks plays in representing the voluntary sector.

Identifying priority areas and working with voluntary and community organisations to find solutions.

Many VCOs felt that Clinks' work on specific issues or regions was helpful. The majority felt that Clinks was effective in campaigning on areas of work

such as the Race for Justice Campaign. Clinks is also seen as being very good at influencing policy in discreet way.

5.2 Recommendations

With such a positive assessment of Clinks' work and the way it carries it out, very few recommendations for improvement have emerged. Three themes that are worth further consideration are:

- the importance of Clinks continuing regional support and activities
- the way in which Clinks asserts itself as an organisation
- the way in which Clinks can facilitate high-level networking between VCOs and other stakeholders in the criminal justice sector.

In addition, we suggest that Clinks could make better use of its feedback forms to capture outcomes data from its training, events and conferences.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Profile of respondents

| Whether VCOs were members of Clinks | Number of responses | % of responses |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 68 | 61% |
| Not sure | 14 | 13% |
| No | 17 | 15% |
| No response | 13 | 12% |
| Total number of respondents | 112 | 100% |

| What regions VCOs were based in | Number of responses | % of responses |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| East Midlands | 2 | 2% |
| East of England | 2 | 2% |
| London | 21 | 19% |
| North East | 8 | 7% |
| North West | 3 | 3% |
| South East | 6 | 5% |
| South West | 11 | 10% |
| Wales | 2 | 2% |
| West Midlands | 6 | 5% |
| Yorkshire & Humber | 7 | 6% |
| No response | 44 | 39% |
| Total number of respondents | 112 | 100% |

| Which groups VCOs worked with | Number of responses | % of responses |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Male offenders | 48 | 43% |
| Female offenders | 39 | 35% |
| Young offenders | 31 | 28% |
| Ex-offenders | 51 | 46% |
| Children and families of offenders | 36 | 32% |
| Black, Minority and Ethnic offenders | 35 | 31% |
| Other | 12 | 11% |

| Which areas VCOs' work covered? | Number of responses | % of responses |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Mental and physical health | 32 | 29% |
| Accommodation | 30 | 27% |
| Education, training and employment | 48 | 43% |
| Finance, benefit and debt | 27 | 24% |
| Drugs and alcohol | 33 | 29% |
| Attitudes, thinking and behaviour | 46 | 41% |
| Other | 7 | 6% |

Appendix 2: VCO views on Clinks' services, role and effectiveness

| Which Clinks' services VCOS had used | Number of responses | % of responses |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| E-bulletins | 103 | 92% |
| Clinks News | 49 | 44% |
| Conferences and events | 46 | 41% |
| Website | 41 | 37% |
| Briefings and reports | 33 | 29% |
| Training | 16 | 14% |
| Grant-net | 11 | 10% |
| Regional support | 6 | 5% |
| Consultations | 6 | 5% |
| Other - liaison with expert staff | 1 | 1% |

| Clinks' role | Number of responses | % of responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Information dissemination | 34 | 45% |
| Support and advice for VCOs | 19 | 25% |
| Voice for the sector | 18 | 24% |
| Enabling VCOs to work together | 16 | 21% |
| Umbrella organisation | 11 | 14% |
| Lobbying/campaigning | 9 | 12% |
| Promoting good practice | 9 | 12% |
| Providing training | 6 | 8% |
| Acting as a bridge between the statutory and voluntary sectors | 6 | 8% |
| Don't know | 4 | 5% |
| Signposting | 2 | 3% |
| Innovation | 2 | 3% |
| Being a voice for smaller organisations | 2 | 3% |
| Having an overview of the sector | 1 | 1% |
| Total number of respondents | 76 | |

| Why VCOs felt Clinks was unique | Number of responses | % of responses |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Quality of information Clinks provides | 20 | 34% |
| No other organisations like it | 19 | 32% |
| Their specific remit | 9 | 15% |
| Bridge between VCS and CJS | 5 | 8% |
| Easy to access | 4 | 7% |
| Comprehensive | 3 | 5% |
| Links/support/advice | 3 | 5% |
| Trusted | 2 | 3% |
| Representing sector | 2 | 3% |
| Covers the sector | 2 | 3% |
| Not government-led | 1 | 2% |
| Their understanding of sector | 1 | 2% |
| Making us feel important | 1 | 2% |
| They do what they say | 1 | 2% |
| Total number of respondents | 59 | |

| How effectively does Clinks... | Very / quite | Not sure | Not very / not at all | Not aware they did this | Total no. of responses |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| represent the voluntary sector | 88% | 7% | 4% | 1% | 73 |
| provide a strong voice for its members | 82% | 14% | 4% | 0% | 73 |
| campaign on specific issues | 74% | 16% | 5% | 4% | 73 |
| bring together the voluntary sector with statutory agencies and funders | 88% | 5% | 7% | 0% | 73 |
| support organisations to improve their services | 75% | 11% | 10% | 4% | 72 |

| How important to you is it that Clinks... | Very | Quite | Not very | Not at all | Total no. of responses |
|--|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| represents the voluntary sector | 81% | 17% | 1% | 0% | 70 |
| provides a strong voice for its members | 76% | 23% | 1% | 0% | 70 |
| campaigns on specific issues | 69% | 27% | 4% | 0% | 71 |
| brings together the voluntary sector with statutory agencies and funders | 80% | 17% | 3% | 0% | 69 |
| supports organisations to improve their services | 72% | 27% | 1% | 0% | 71 |

| VCO views on Clinks' role | No. of VCOs rating this as important | No. of VCOs rating Clinks as effective |
|--|---|---|
| Representing the voluntary sector | 81% | 88% |
| Bringing together the voluntary sector with statutory agencies and funders | 80% | 88% |
| Providing a strong voice for its members | 76% | 82% |
| Supporting organisations to improve their services | 72% | 75% |
| Campaigning on specific issues | 69% | 74% |

Appendix 2: Suggestions from VCOs

Providing mentoring, training, employment and volunteer opportunities for ex-offenders.

Raising awareness among licensed and bail hostels of prisoners' mental health issues and of the needs of offenders with specific issues such as older prisoners or prisoners with autism, ADHD etc.

I think Clinks should consult more with specialist members like ourselves before developing provision in specialist areas. For example, we were not aware Clinks were developing training for working with women. Had we been aware, we could have contributed to it.

I think the training Clinks provides is fantastic, I do think however that Clinks spends a lot of time and money on producing glossy leaflets and putting on events which are not really saying anything new.

Would like to know more of what's going on locally on Welsh borders.

A forum for those of us working with finance benefit and debt issues would be great - we could share good practice and pinch each others good ideas and resources!

We have advertised in Light Lunch but we have found Light Lunch does not always display our information in the way that we request it.

More information about funding opportunities would be helpful too.

Consultation with individual organisation to help signpost.

Ensure events are promoted more and opportunities for small organisations encouraged.

Let us know the overall strategy for volunteering in Prisons.

Clinks could run more regional events to strengthen criminal justice/partnership work.

I would love some more training courses of opportunities for charity staff to be able to do probation focused courses such as NVQs in offending behaviour.

More events in the North West.

We would appreciate more UK-wide information, as the newsletters, briefings etc. tend to focus on England.

Possibly provide a networking event (regionally)

More Scottish information.

More training days.

Bringing potential partners together.

Asked to take part in working parties.

Be great to have a clinks regional staff member in Birmingham again.

Appendix 3: Comments made by VCOs and stakeholders

Comments about Clinks' role and reputation

It is an extremely important organisation that manages its multifaceted role very well. It seems that most organisations in the sector feel Clinks in some way belongs to them and this is no mean feat given the diversity within the sector, not least in terms of opinion on some big issues. It manages to be strongly 'on the side' of the sector while maintaining friendly and constructive relationships with Government. It manages to provide guidance and support on some quite detailed operational issues as well as to keep the 'big picture' in focus.

It is very highly thought of in the North East.

I am not aware of any other organisation that provides the same service, although there are some overlaps between Clinks and NACRO.

Not a government led organisation. Understand the criminal justice system as they have been 'service users'. Trusted more because of this. Professional reports and info that are understandable. Know the problems and difficulties that ex- offenders face and are willing to try to change things to help.

There is no other criminal justice umbrella body which operates with such impact.

Keeping the voluntary sector in touch with the criminal justice sector - making us feel an important contributor to the criminal justice system. they keep their remit to a specific area.

Representing the third sector at national level.

Clinks is a very useful organisation in supporting our work.

Gained a greater understanding of issues surrounding my work.

Provided support and endorsed our role, strengthening criminal justice partnership work.

Can't think of any other organisations doing anything even remotely similar.

Never heard or seen anything like this previously.

It is open and comprehensive.

Don't think anyone else does it nationally.

Provides useful services; enables networking; enables voice; protects our interests.

It is the only universal umbrella organisation working in the field of offender management and reducing re-offending.

It is specialised to the needs of organisations working with crime.

An invaluable link and support service, providing information on all aspects of the CJS.

Generalist VCS infrastructure does not meet our needs as closely; Clinks can and does.

Only service that covers a wide range of topics that I am aware of.

I can think of no other provider who does this in an easy to follow way. They do exactly what is said on the tin - which is very rare these days!

It's a place that provides expert advice.

Specialist in criminal justice issues.

This is a very specific support where no other support exists - perhaps particularly helpful for smaller voluntary sector services that have good ideas and provide a good service but sometimes less expertise to make this work sustainable.

As a broad umbrella body covering more of the criminal justice sector than any other organisation.

No other organisation has the same remit. Also Clinks manages this complex set of roles while maintaining the goodwill/support of the sector and the respect of NOMS and the Ministry of Justice..

I don't know of any other organisation that provides this specialised service.

Clinks 'links' up various voluntary sectors, provide vital information and help promote the voluntary sector.

Not aware of others working in this way in this field.

Have not identified anyone doing similar work on the same scale as Clinks.

There is no comparable CJ specialist VCS infrastructure organisation. The services provided are far more relevant and useful (and cheaper!) than those provided by generic infrastructure organisations such as NCVO. Providing a national way into the criminal justice sector.

Expertise & knowledge in a specialist field.

I don't know any other organisation that truly does this for this sector or has such a depth of knowledge in its staff.

Dealing with the particular needs of community and voluntary sector organisations working in criminal justice.

I think membership offers good value for money. Keep up the good work!

Informative and professional.

I commend the work Clinks are doing in regards to criminal justice awareness and support for the released and their support for the volunteer sector in working alongside the statutory sectors.

It is a good and valuable source of information.

Great organisation, friendly approachable people!

I value it very much. Carry on!

Clinks provides information and resources the enable charities to do the best for their clients.

It would be lovely to see Clinks be more active in the sector and engage with organisations working IN the prison service with clients.

To my knowledge, with the exception of the Arts Alliance, there is now no other umbrella organisation representing the sector.

Brings voluntary sector organisations together within the criminal justice sector and links with statutory sector, police probation etc.

Clinks is remarkable because it is an umbrella body which is still very connected with its members and the 'front line' service delivery. Guard against over-development / over-sizing and a loss of that direct relationship, as can sometimes occur as representative agencies grow.

All events etc I have attended have been well presented, collated informative and friendly.

Keep up the excellent work!

A first class organisation.

Provided a huge wealth of material and support, especially in preparation for training our volunteers.

Lesley Frazer was an enormous help when we were putting our bid together for Tudor LankellyChase SW Partnership.

Comments about Light Lunch

Since becoming a member of Clinks, I look forward to receiving the email newsletter and have found many useful links and information from it.

Up to date, useful information.

Easy to access yet highly comprehensive.

The Light Lunch is a very informative bulletin and we don't get anything else like it.

Knowing I'll be kept up to date through Light Lunch etc (which is great!)

Having a lot of relevant information that is easy to access.

All information provided is in a concise way.

Light Lunch is an excellent publication. Pertinent, and accessible. . I like 'Tip of the Week' - some good hotel deals ...thank Joe. Funding and tendering opportunities are of particular interest to us.

This is a great organisation for us as a CIC it gives us policy updates, funding and all breaking news in working with offenders - it has helped us to access great sources of information.

It has helped a lot as it provides updated information and direct access to funding / funders, etc

The Clinks 'Light Lunch' comes through regularly and provides the reader with informative data relative to offenders, the legal system, giving its readers up-to-date information and funding opportunities and choices relative to the area of interest.

Flags up relevant issues and info in manner that makes it easy to decide whether or not to follow up.

*Info on CJS matters aimed at the VCS... does what it says on the tin!
I don't think there is any other service quite like it. It brings together the statutory agencies and voluntary sector.
It's relevant and informative.*

Funding news weekly through Light Lunch - gives us up to date information on what is happening.

A refreshing informative newsletter, I have got a range of useful work related activities achieved thanks to Clinks.

Keeps us updated on issues affecting ex-offenders, NOMS issues etc.

I enjoy receiving Light Lunch and hope to continue the membership.

Light Lunch is a very useful way of keeping up to date with relevant goings-on, though this focuses primarily on England.

Information on specific areas, alerts to new things and general information about what others are doing in this area

Comments about Clinks' regional and campaigning work:

It has been very helpful.

Very supportive links to Probation, Prisons and Police.

Identified possible funding sources.

Provides information about policy and process that is really helpful.

Helped to provide evidence base for the work we do.

It's helpful to know about it; it provides a wider framework which ultimately supports our projects.

An invaluable reference point and source of advice.

Provides a helpful broader network and framework; underpins development of a thematic area of work.

It has informed me that there is someone campaigning and giving figures for the sector I work in.

It has helped make a coherent strategy in working practises and covered cheaply and effectively some areas of training and consultation.

Given useful background to the piece of work I am undertaking.

Clinks has helped us to stay up to date with developments in the sector and to feel better informed when engaging with NOMS and policy makers.

Comments about Clinks' training

Clinks delivered a training session on the importance of strategic planning, monitoring, etc. specifically for those of us North of the border, which was very helpful, both in terms of information-sharing and networking

Training was very good and cleared up my confusion around outcomes

Comments about how Clinks facilitates networking

It has enabled me to make more contacts within the voluntary sector. The networking opportunities provided have been invaluable.

Clinks has helped me ... network with people who work in the same environment.

The events have been very helpful for keeping up to date with changes and networking.

Clinks has linked us to other similar agencies.

Provided useful information and services, as well as networking opportunities.

Clinks helps us to keep up with what is going on and to network.

Has helped in linking up with other agencies and projects in criminal justice system and also getting a good overview of practices across the board.