

**SIX PRINCIPLES  
FOR ENGAGING  
THE VOLUNTARY  
AND COMMUNITY  
SECTOR IN  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
AND COMMUNITY  
SAFETY**

# J DO IT JUSTICE

## THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM EXPLAINED

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### Feedback or further information

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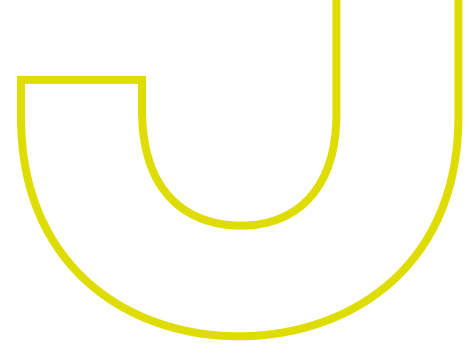
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**CLINKS**

**This resource is one of a series called Do It Justice, designed to provide easily accessible information on key aspects of the Criminal Justice System (CJS).**

**This guide provides six overarching principles to support statutory engagement with the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS). It provides a rationale as to why you would adopt each principle, practical examples of where they have been applied well, and tips on how to implement them.**

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# INTRODUCTION

This guide provides six overarching principles to support statutory engagement with the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS). It provides a rationale as to why you would adopt each principle, practical examples of where they have been applied well, and tips on how to implement them.

Government policy has increasingly emphasised the importance of the VCS in delivering public services at the local level, including community safety and criminal justice. Recent changes in the commissioning landscape have also accentuated the need for more joined up working between a whole range of local delivery partners to improve community safety outcomes and support people with multiple and complex needs.

Clinks' role as the national umbrella body for the VCS working with offenders and their families enables us to represent the experience of **over 500 member organisations**. Through regular consultation and our on-going engagement with national policy makers, we have identified ways in which the relationship between the statutory sector and VCS can be improved to deliver better outcomes.

Over the past four years Clinks has been involved in a number of initiatives to develop local partnerships and improve collaboration at different points in the criminal justice process. For example, we have supported the involvement of the VCS in local Integrated Offender Management arrangements<sup>1,2</sup>, established Safer Future Communities networks to influence the police and crime commissioners<sup>3</sup>, and undertaken local development work in different parts of England and Wales<sup>4</sup>.

## WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?

Recent research published by the Home Office has confirmed that VCS partners can bring a fresh perspective to criminal justice and community safety, complementing the more traditional approach of statutory agencies. There is strong evidence that key statutory stakeholders particularly value the ability of the VCS to work flexibly and responsively, without being slowed by the perceived bureaucracy associated with the statutory sector. The VCS can readily collaborate as equal partners and make a significant contribution, strategically as well as operationally, thereby challenging the perception of the Sector as 'well-meaning amateurs'<sup>5</sup>.

## WHY PROVIDE PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING WITH THE VCS?

The learning from our own experience, backed up by research, has enabled Clinks to identify a set of guiding principles to help statutory partners achieve productive partnerships with the VCS. These principles can inform a range of joint working to support public sector reform and achieve better community safety outcomes. These might include high level strategic planning, local service design, supply chain development, testing new and innovative approaches, or creative service user engagement.

## WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM THESE PRINCIPLES?

They apply to a range of local commissioners and service providers such as:

- Local Authorities
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Police and crime commissioners
- Courts
- Prisons
- Probation Trusts
- Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Directors of Public Health.

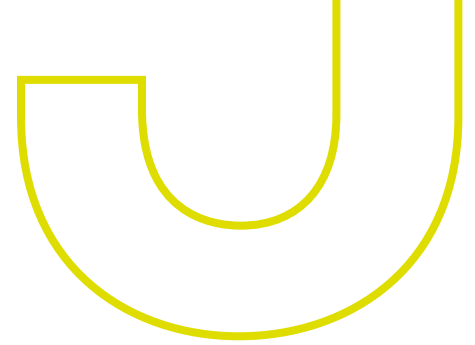
1. Clinks (2011) Innovative VCS Involvement in Integrated Offender Management. [www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/iom](http://www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/iom) [last accessed 5.2.2013]

2. Clinks (2012) Building VCS Involvement in Integrated Offender Management. [www.clinks.org/publications/guides-resources/iom-resources](http://www.clinks.org/publications/guides-resources/iom-resources) [last accessed 5.2.2013]

3. Clinks (2013) Safer Future Communities. [www.clinks.org/services/sfc](http://www.clinks.org/services/sfc)

4. Clinks (2013) Clinks local development work. [www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/ldt](http://www.clinks.org/services/localism-work/ldt)

5. Wong, K., O'Keeffe, C., Meadows, L., Davidson, J., Bird, H., Wilkinson, K., and Senior, P., (2012) Increasing the voluntary and community sector's involvement in Integrated Offender Management. [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/horr59/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/horr59/) [Last accessed 14/03/2012]



# THE SIX PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING THE VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR

## THE SIX PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT ARE...

1. RECOGNISE WHAT THE SECTOR HAS TO OFFER
2. THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN OFFER THE SECTOR
3. UNDERSTAND THE DISTINCT ROLE OF THE SECTOR
4. COMMUNICATE WHAT YOUR ROLE IS
5. DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
6. DELIVER SERVICES TOGETHER

## PRINCIPLE 1

### RECOGNISE WHAT THE VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR HAS TO OFFER

Rarely is there enough capacity within the public sector to meet the diverse and complex needs of offenders, their families and victims. This is particularly accentuated at a time of economic constraint and public sector reform. The range of services delivered by the VCS is extensive but not always known to the statutory sector, commissioners, or private sector companies.

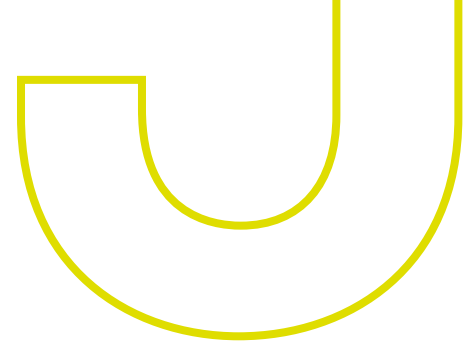
Research suggests that many VCS services are provided at a neighbourhood level, in response to very particular local needs<sup>6</sup>. Statutory agencies are likely to be familiar with a small number of key, well known VCS providers in their areas, but may not have a complete picture of all the support available. This can limit the support available to service users, their families and victims. In order to tap into this expertise, statutory partners need to build a better picture of what is available.

#### HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PRINCIPLE

1. Undertake mapping of VCS services to provide a snapshot of what is being delivered locally, by whom, and to what level. This isn't a simple exercise and can be time consuming because of the volume and diversity of activity.
2. Consider enlisting the services of your local infrastructure organisation<sup>7</sup>, or a leading VCS provider, to support your mapping of the Sector, drawing on their own existing knowledge and networks.

6. Gojkovic, D., Mills, A. and Meek, R. (2011) Third Sector Research Centre – Working Paper 57: Scoping the involvement of third sector organisations in the seven resettlement pathways for offenders. [www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=JnJy2cVtYx0%3D&tabid=500](http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=JnJy2cVtYx0%3D&tabid=500) [last accessed 5.2.2013]

7. Local infrastructure organisation (LIO): a charitable body such as a Council for Voluntary Service that typically provides a range of support services for all the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations within its area. This might include help with organisational development, funding advice, training, and co-ordinating the sector's engagement with and representation on local strategic groupings. Many LIOs have Volunteer Centres attached to their organisations or work very closely with them. To find the LIO in your area, see: [www.navca.org.uk/directory](http://www.navca.org.uk/directory)



3. Invite VCS partners to a 'market place event' where they can tell you more about their services and how they could complement your work. Organise this in partnership with local VCS networks or infrastructure organisations.

### ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION...

In order to improve partnership working between Croydon's VCS organisations and statutory agencies involved in local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements, **Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)** organised a 'market place' event. The aims of the event were to launch a new network of VCS organisations working with offenders and ex-offenders, to showcase local VCS providers, and to strengthen VCS links with local partners engaged in IOM.

Those VCS organisations invited were identified by using CVA's extensive database as the main groups known to be working with offenders and ex-offenders, but which did not necessarily see themselves as criminal justice agencies. The 'market place' event presented an opportunity for 22 VCS organisations to profile their work to over 40 staff and managers from the Probation Trust and other key statutory partners, and to hear more about the work of those public sector agencies.

Participants felt the event helped to foster stronger working relationships between the sectors and contributed to building more robust Integrated Offender Management arrangements, both strategically and operationally, that are bespoke to the Borough of Croydon.

8. Clinks (2013) The VCS in the Economic Downturn: a report series. [www.clinks.org/publications/reports/eco-downturn](http://www.clinks.org/publications/reports/eco-downturn)

9. Gojkovic, D., Mills, A. and Meek, R. (2011) Third Sector Research Centre – Working Paper 57: Scoping the involvement of third sector organisations in the seven resettlement pathways for offenders. [www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=JnJy2cVtYx0%3D&tabid=500](http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=JnJy2cVtYx0%3D&tabid=500) [last accessed 5.2.2013]

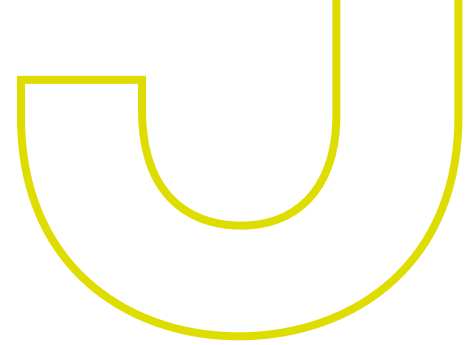
## PRINCIPLE 2

### THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN OFFER THE SECTOR

Many VCS organisations have been severely affected by the economic downturn which has left them financially vulnerable with the added pressure of increasing demand on their services<sup>8</sup>. Research has shown that statutory funding is still an important income stream for the VCS<sup>9</sup>. However, at a time when resources are scarce it is worth remembering that funding is not the only thing statutory partners can offer. There are other ways to support the VCS that can be mutually beneficial.

#### HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PRINCIPLE

1. Audit what you can offer to the VCS in addition to grants or contracts. Could you provide, for example, access to evidence or data, policies and procedures, training on risk assessment, offering meeting space, supporting bids to other funders, and encouraging mainstream VCS organisations to consider working with offenders?
2. Ensure that you adhere to recommended practice, such as the Compact, to develop a positive relationship with the VCS that is based on mutual respect and trust.
3. Offer places on your staff training to VCS organisations where appropriate.



## ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION...

**Dorset Probation Trust** are clear that VCS organisations have a huge amount of experience and expertise in working with specific, often vulnerable groups of individuals. They are flexible in their approach to delivery and can frequently move far more quickly in response to opportunities identified due to their less complex internal structures compared to those of statutory bodies. This makes them valuable partners in delivering niche services which meet local needs, often complementary to the skills of Probation Trusts.

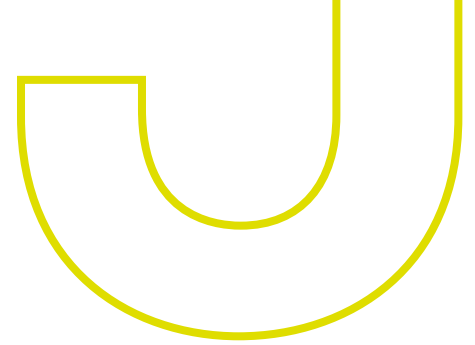
However, limited knowledge of the Criminal Justice System and the work of the agencies within it can frequently cause considerable anxieties for service providers that do not specialise in criminal justice. This can create significant barriers to full and effective engagement and successful outcomes for service users and the organisations themselves.

To reduce barriers, support successful development and delivery and to build effective communication channels and partnerships, Probation Trusts can take two simple steps:

**1. Develop a good relationship with local Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs)** and utilise their networks to communicate to the wider Sector, informing them of what

the Trust can offer and providing a contact point for queries, guidance and support. This offer should ideally incorporate the sharing of data relating to local offender demographics, to provide needs evidence to support bid submissions. It is also important to provide a point of access to guidance on the development of new services and their integration into the CJS and a signposting service to other agencies and colleagues to support on-going work.

**2. Identify your key partners operating in the community** and conduct a very brief survey of training and awareness raising needs. A tip would be to use an online survey and ask your CVS to circulate this on your behalf; it really doesn't need to be long or complex. From the feedback provided identify if relevant training is being delivered within the Trust and offer out a percentage of places to partners. If the need is in relation to some awareness raising and criminal justice context then identify a few operational staff to deliver short one or two-hour group sessions to support this activity. It is crucial to involve operational staff, as partners will gain additional information relating to operational delivery and insight into the work of Offender Managers.



## PRINCIPLE 3

### UNDERSTAND THE DISTINCT ROLE OF THE SECTOR

VCS organisations have got a lot more to offer you than service provision. They are uniquely placed to provide invaluable intelligence on the features of local areas, and the challenges within them, that are often embedded within communities that are harder for statutory agencies to reach. Because VCS organisations do not generally have a formal enforcement role, they are well placed to build trusting and empathic relationships with service users that are not necessarily time limited.

#### HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PRINCIPLE

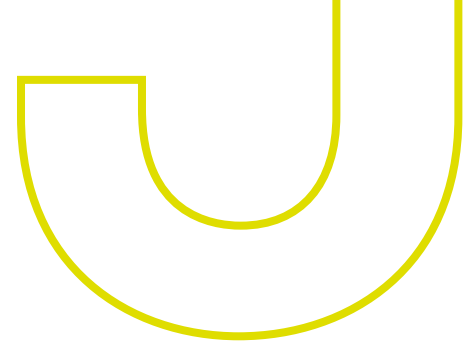
1. Provide structured opportunities for the Sector to contribute their unique local knowledge in a way that enables a better understanding of need and future service development.
2. Discuss with VCS partners how they can help you with outreach and community engagement or involvement.
3. Consider how the VCS can help you to consult with service users and develop good user involvement practice to inform the commissioning and delivery of services.

### ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION...

In 2011 Clinks managed a project funded through NOMS South West, to enable the VCS to assist in carrying forward the Criminal Justice Women's Policy Team's diversion agenda in the region. As part of this, **Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group** developed a bi-lingual information pack for staff and offenders in custodial and probation settings, to reduce stress to Chinese women offenders, assist staff in supporting them, and to reduce the use of translation services for basic requests by offenders.

The pack is made up of a set of cards covering a range of issues including: The Journey through the Criminal Justice System and how each part works; a Directory of information on Chinese and other relevant support agencies; a Communication Card with useful phrases, e.g. "Can I have some food?" which also has symbols/pictures to help identify needs; and Top 10 Cultural Awareness Tips. This pack was not only distributed to criminal justice agencies in the South West and women's prisons across the country, but word soon spread about this great resource and many other partners requested copies, including housing associations and male prisons wanting to develop their communication and support to male Chinese offenders.





## PRINCIPLE 4

### COMMUNICATE WHAT YOUR ROLE IS

Even quite knowledgeable VCS partners may lack understanding of statutory responsibilities, structures, services, and approaches. This can result in misunderstandings about roles and responsibilities that can disrupt and confuse joint working.

Clarity is key when establishing effective working relationships, requiring purposeful and consistent communication.

#### HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PRINCIPLE

1. Provide simple briefings or factsheets about what you do and how you operate, for example, how you are structured, how partners can engage in dialogue with you, or how your case management and referral systems work.
2. Bring VCS partners together to explain clearly what your priorities are and how they shape the services you provide.
3. If you're developing a new partnership with a VCS organisation, be clear about what you expect from them, such as basic minimum standards. These standards should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the work involved.

#### ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION...

**HMP Eastwood Park** works with a number of organisations and recognises the importance of taking a strategic approach to ensure that the best possible range of services are delivered to meet the multiple and complex needs of the women in custody. Where a need is identified the prison aims to introduce a service that can meet that need and contribute to the over-arching outcome of reducing re-offending.

Prior to a partnership being formed, organisations are required to complete a proposal for a new service, demonstrating how the service will assist HMP Eastwood Park in reducing re-offending, including project

aims, desired outcomes, monitoring, evaluation and funding. The Reducing Re-offending Committee considers the proposal, then once a decision is made to go ahead with the partnership, a planning meeting will follow.

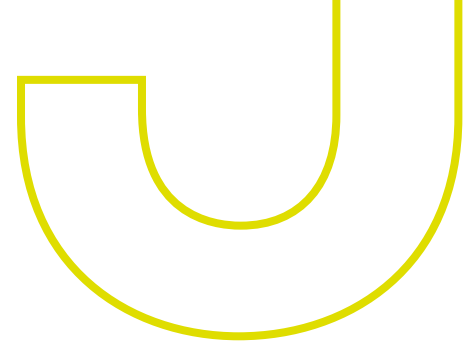
HMP Eastwood Park encourages organisations to become independent within the prison environment by providing an induction which includes an orientation visit, a variety of talks including key and security awareness.

All organisations working with HMP Eastwood Park have a Partnership Agreement in place which is reviewed at least annually. This review is an opportunity to assess the progress of

the organisation and ensure that the service being provided is still relevant and meeting the women's needs.

Eastwood Park holds annual Voluntary & Community Sector Forums which aim to ensure dialogue between sectors. Examples of items discussed include good practice, new initiatives, Prison Service updates and reducing reoffending news. A prisoner representative is also invited. This runs alongside ad hoc prison and Voluntary and Community Sector newsletters and a Directory of Services that is published annually, explaining and promoting the types of services available and how to access them.





## PRINCIPLE 5

### DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Because of the knowledge and experience held within the Sector, local VCS partners have an essential contribution to make towards joint strategic planning. Developing a clear strategic role for the Sector avoids tokenistic consultation and provides a real voice for both organisations and their service users.

There is a prevailing misunderstanding that VCS providers should not be involved in service design because of potential conflicts of interest. However, many examples of good partnership and commissioning practice show that this can be managed without jeopardising fair competition.

How to implement this principle

1. Knowledgeable and committed VCS networks within a Local Authority or police force area (such as the Safer Future Communities networks<sup>11</sup>) can play a pivotal brokerage role in terms of joint strategic planning<sup>12</sup>.
2. Provide space for VCS representatives on key strategic boards or meetings. Ensure that this is supported by an open and transparent nomination process with appropriate input and feedback mechanisms for other VCS organisations.
3. Be very clear about the role of VCS representatives and when appropriate boundaries are needed, for example, to maintain an ethical wall between the commissioning and procurement processes.

1. Clinks (2013) Safer Future Communities local network contacts. [www.clinks.org/services/sfc#networkcontacts](http://www.clinks.org/services/sfc#networkcontacts) [last accessed 5.2.2013]

2. See Clinks (2013) Developing a criminal justice network. [www.clinks.org/publications/guides-resources/dij-resources](http://www.clinks.org/publications/guides-resources/dij-resources) [last accessed 11.2.2013]

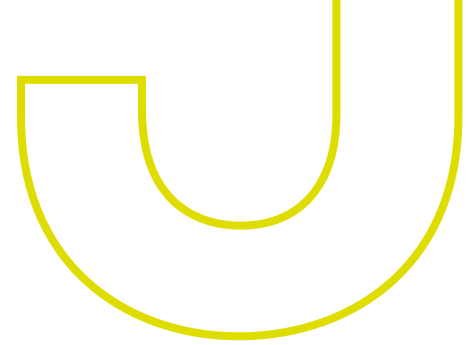
### ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION...

**West Mercia Probation Trust (WMPT)** established the '1 Step Beyond' partnership with the local VCS organisation, and Clinks member, YSS ([www.yss.org.uk](http://www.yss.org.uk)). WMPT invited bids for the role of a strategic partner that would work with the Trust to commission services from other local VCS providers. The partner would also help develop the capacity of local VCS organisations to create innovative solutions for working with offenders. The specification required good knowledge of local need and a track record in meeting this. As a result, while they received bids from the private sector, and large national VCS organisations, local provider YSS was successful.

YSS is a well-established local charity working to combat social exclusion that has a track record of innovative work with offenders. The partnership with WMPT, which is now called '1 Step Beyond', has led to the creation of a 'Pathways' service: a series of related projects aimed at reducing re-offending, often targeted at specific groups of offenders. It provides a flexible menu of supervision.

Much of the work is delivered on a one-to-one basis in the community and tailored to meet the individual's needs to ensure the best outcomes. The projects focus on motivational support, ensuring compliance with court requirements, accommodation, finance and debt, employment advice, mental health support, vocational training, support with children and family, physical health and substance misuse issues. Some

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of the Pathways projects are delivered by YSS, others are developed by YSS and WMPT but delivered in partnership with a range of public, private and VCS partners.

The role of strategic partner is a preferred provider model. This enables WMPT and YSS to explore and discuss new services, without obligation on WMPT to award YSS the work, or on YSS to deliver it. The partnership helps smaller VCS organisations bid for work, adding a level of credibility that strengthens funding applications. YSS plays a capacity building role through training, engagement and developing sustainable funding streams. It also has responsibility to ensure that the voice of service users is fed back into strategy development.

Rob Smith, Director at YSS, is full of enthusiasm for this approach:

*“It facilitates the identification of need, service design and then delivery in a partnership process with multiple VCS organisations, which is vital if we are to make maximum use of the significant skills that rest locally with the VCS. We are lucky in West Mercia in that David Chantler (CEO of the Probation trust) is very forward thinking. He is a great believer that offender services should be delivered by those who are best placed to deliver them, which in many situations is the VCS. It’s allowed YSS and others in the Sector to initiate some really exciting and innovative work.”*

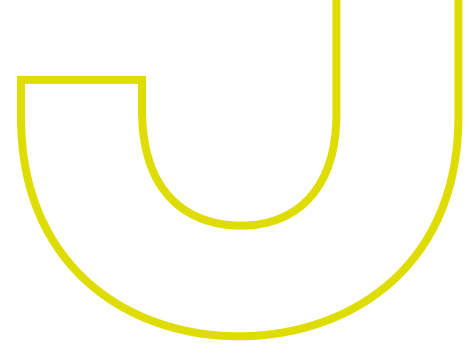
## PRINCIPLE 6

### DELIVER SERVICES TOGETHER TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY

People throughout the criminal justice process typically have two or more overlapping and complex needs which require multi-faceted responses. Co-production and co-location of services provides a better package of support which is more likely to achieve positive outcomes. Bringing services together is a proven way of utilising existing resources more effectively, thereby avoiding duplication.

#### HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PRINCIPLE

1. Work with the VCS to assess where their existing services could be co-located or reconfigured to complement statutory provision and better meet the needs of particular groups. Consider co-locating criminal justice agency staff in VCS organisations.
2. Design new services in collaboration with VCS partners, bringing them round the table at the earliest point possible to ensure the best use of local expertise to shape new approaches.
3. Use seed-corn grants to test innovative practice, as they allow a diverse range of smaller grassroots organisations with expertise in niche areas to develop new approaches.



## ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION...

WomenCentre, in Calderdale, provides an individualised and holistic approach to women with multiple and complex needs, many of whom are known to criminal justice agencies. Their joined up approaches with other local partners including Probation and Substance Misuse teams enable women to have all their appointments within a safe, women only one stop shop. Co-located offender managers work together with WomenCentre caseworkers to provide all components of support and supervision requirements, and enable women to be linked in to other specialist services they may need, including counselling, debts and benefits support and domestic violence services.

The partnership approach enables courts to gain confidence in issuing community sentences that include engagement with WomenCentre services as a requirement or recommendation. The approach has been shown to support compliance rates and subsequently results in reduced incidents of breach. This approach enables an enhanced Through the Gate support service which can include women whose sentences have been less than 12 months.

Working together as local strategic partners, WomenCentre and the Calderdale District Probation Local Delivery Unit, are developing the case with other local partners, including partners in Health Services and the Local Authority, for an integrated approach to addressing the needs of women and girls with multiple and complex needs.



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