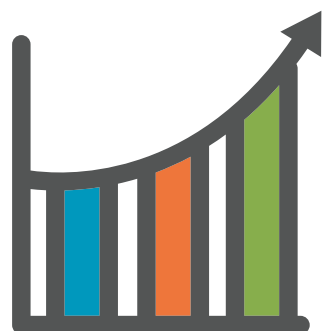
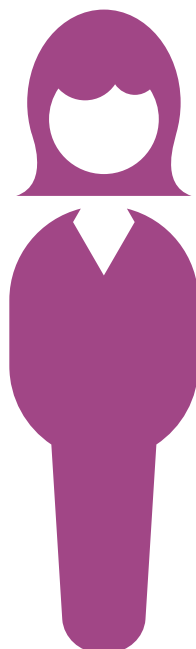
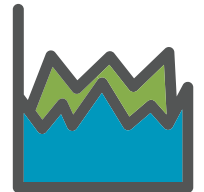
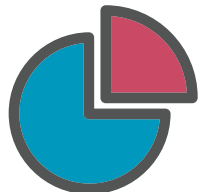


The state of the sector

Recommendations for change



For the last five years Clinks has been collecting information about how voluntary sector organisations working in the criminal justice system are faring, what success they have achieved and what challenges they are facing. Our state of the sector reports have consistently demonstrated that organisations are diverse in terms of their size, the services they deliver, who they support, and how they are funded.

Our 2017 state of the sector report shows that many voluntary organisations are experiencing significant challenges. In response to these findings we consulted with key stakeholders from charitable trusts and foundations, government, criminal justice agencies, and voluntary organisations themselves to set out recommendations for change. This paper sets out what Clinks intends to do to support the sector, but also suggests what can be done by voluntary organisations, independent funders and government.

Clinks will respond by...

Clinks supports, represents and advocates for the voluntary sector in criminal justice, enabling them to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families. Our vision is of a vibrant, independent and resilient voluntary sector that enables people to transform their lives.

1 / Supporting organisations to explore alternative fundraising options

Voluntary organisations working in criminal justice are diverse and rely on multiple sources for their income including government and from charitable trusts and foundations, but few receive donations from the public. As shown by NCVO's almanac data, this is the largest source of income for the whole voluntary sector working in England and Wales. Clinks will support our members to explore alternative funding options, including donations from the public.

2 / Assisting organisations to support their staff and volunteers

The needs of service users have become more complex and immediate with many staff and volunteers taking on higher caseloads, which is

putting them under increasing pressure. Staff and volunteers are the lifeblood of voluntary organisations and it is important that they are fully supported to ensure that they remain resilient and able to undertake their essential work. Clinks will share learning and information from existing programmes to assist our members with providing adequate training and support for their staff and volunteers.

3 / Proactively acting as a critical friend to decision makers

A range of factors are having a detrimental impact on the needs of service users, including changes to welfare and benefits, a reduction in other services and prisons that are in need of immediate reform. Clinks will continue to proactively speak up on behalf of voluntary organisations and act as a critical friend to decision makers to highlight where the development and implementation of policy is likely to be prohibitive to someone's rehabilitation.

Voluntary sector organisations should...

As well as providing frontline services, voluntary sector organisations advocate on behalf of and represent marginalised groups, develop rigorously-tested best practice based on the needs of their client groups and the communities they work in, act as a strategic partner in service design, and can add value to statutory services.

1 / Continue to prioritise service user need

Organisations are developing new services to meet the changing needs of their service users, fill gaps in provision and access alternative funding opportunities. Voluntary organisations consistently demonstrate their resilience and flexibility when working to meet the complex needs of their service users. As the safety net for people in contact with the criminal justice system is shrinking, these organisations are more important than ever, and it is essential that they keep working in this way.

2 / Speak out on behalf of their service users

Voluntary organisations must be more than just providers of services and have an important role to play in advocating for their service users. Many individuals in contact with the criminal justice system

are vulnerable, belong to marginalised groups or have protected characteristics which mean that they have specific needs and often find that their voices go unheard. By speaking directly to decision makers and commissioners, voluntary organisations can influence decisions and change processes that might otherwise be detrimental to the needs of their service users.

3 / Work collaboratively to reach shared goals

Working in partnership continues to be important for organisations. It allows them to share resources, ensure better outcomes for their service users and supports staff to develop skills and expertise. But partnership working is challenging due to a lack of trust between organisations, and an increasingly competitive funding environment. Voluntary organisations need to take proactive steps to facilitate positive partnership working, continuing to develop effective referral pathways and sharing resources between them.

Charitable trusts and foundations should...

Charitable trusts and foundations not only provide essential grant funding for voluntary organisations, allowing them to be innovative and flexible to meet the ever-changing needs of their service users, but they also play an important role speaking up on their behalf.

1 / Provide essential long-term grant funding for specialist criminal justice organisations

Voluntary organisations have provided essential services and support to people in contact with the criminal justice system for more than 300 years. Their services are becoming more important than ever as the needs of services users become more complex and immediate. Charitable trusts and foundations should continue to provide essential long-term grant funding to voluntary organisations working in the criminal justice system which supports core functions as well as service delivery and policy work. This will ensure the needs of marginalised and stigmatised groups are met by these specialist organisations.

2 / Proactively support organisations to advocate on behalf of their service users

As well as delivering essential services, voluntary organisations provide an important advocacy and campaigning role on behalf of people in contact

with the criminal justice system. Due to recent policy and legislative changes, and a shift in the way organisations are commissioned, many voluntary organisations are finding it challenging to speak out. Clinks will continue to support and speak up on behalf of voluntary organisations, but charitable trusts and foundations can play a valuable role in this space. They can utilise their independence and the valuable evidence they gather from organisations to influence decision makers. They could also provide specific, restricted funding to support collaboration across the sector for advocacy and policy influencing work.

3 / Work collaboratively to support the sector

At a time when other services are shrinking, due to a lack of funding, many voluntary organisations are finding income generation challenging and resource intensive. This is having the largest impact on small, specialist organisations. It is important that charitable trusts and foundations are alive to the challenges experienced by voluntary organisations and proactively work to build the capacity of small, specialist organisations to enable them to successfully secure funding. It is also important that they recognise the time and resources organisations spend on submitting applications and reporting back to funders, especially when organisations are in receipt of multiple small grants. Working to reduce the time organisations need to spend on this would enable organisations to remain focused on supporting the needs of their service users.





Government and criminal justice agencies should...

The Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service, Police and Crime Commissioners, prisons and other criminal justice agencies have a key role to play in ensuring voluntary sector organisations are able to continue to develop and deliver their essential services.

1 / Work in partnership with voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations working in criminal justice are often small, embedded in local communities and have a wealth of knowledge about what works in addressing the increasingly complex needs of their clients. They also play an important role in casting a critical eye on existing services and can provide crucial insight about service design and the commissioning processes needed to support their development. It is important that the Ministry of Justice and other criminal justice agencies utilise the expertise of voluntary organisations through providing flexible but systematic routes for them to share intelligence about emerging needs, advocate for service improvements and support the development of transparent and proportionate commissioning and procurement processes.

2 / Allow for innovation and reform

Clinks' state of the sector report shows that voluntary organisations are resilient, flexible and innovative. Some are developing and delivering new services to respond to the changing needs of their service users, whilst others are increasing their partnership work and employing staff with specific expertise. It is important that voluntary organisations remain able to operate in this way to respond to changes in the external policy environment and the needs of their service users. To support this the Ministry of Justice and criminal justice partners should allow organisations the space to continue to innovate and consider providing laboratory grant funding to enable organisations to test new approaches. These grants should allow innovative approaches to be tested over a 3-5 year period and allow funding for suitable evaluation to take place.

3 / Recognise the value of small, specialist organisations

Organisations providing specialist services to distinct groups, including those with protected characteristics, are vital to the vibrant nature of the voluntary sector and provide critical services to meet the unique needs of their service users. But these organisations are struggling; they are less likely to achieve full cost recovery on the contracts they are delivering, more likely to be at risk of closure and less likely to be expanding their services compared to other voluntary organisations. It is essential that the Ministry of Justice and criminal justice agencies recognise their importance and proactively work to support and nurture them through providing sustainable long-term grant funding, or find better ways to include them successfully in commissioning processes.

Monitoring success

Clinks will work to promote these recommendations to the key stakeholders identified in this paper and will report on the progress we have made.

Become a member

Clinks membership offers you a voice to influence change, practical assistance to be effective and resilient, and support from a community of like-minded professionals. Join our network of over 500 voluntary organisation members.

Join today...

www.clinks.org/membership