



supporting voluntary organisations that
work with offenders and their families

Written Evidence from Clinks to the Home Affairs Committee Inquiry into the New Landscape of Policing

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 As the national umbrella body for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) working with offenders, Clinks' written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee recommends further steps to drive collaboration between police forces and local VCS organisations as key partners in delivering safer communities, alongside those from the private and public sectors.
- 1.2 The submission draws heavily on Clinks' recent extensive consultation with VCS organisations on the Ministry of Justice's Green Paper, *Breaking the Cycle*, and on our current experience of managing innovative local partnership work for the Home Office in relation to Integrated Offender Management.

2. About Clinks

- 2.1 Clinks exists to provide infrastructure support to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) working with offenders across England and Wales. Our mission is to support, represent and campaign for the Sector, so that VCS organisations, and all those with whom they work, are engaged and informed to transform offenders' lives and reduce reoffending.
- 2.2 We are a membership organisation with over 300 members, including the Sector's largest providers as well as its smallest, and our wider national network reaches 3,500 VCS contacts. Overall, through our weekly e-bulletin *Light Lunch*, we are in contact with over 5,500 individuals and agencies with an interest in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and the role of the VCS in the resettlement and rehabilitation of offenders.
- 2.3 Clinks also plays a significant role at national level in informing Government policy on community safety, for example as a member of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) / NOMS Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group.
- 2.4 Our written evidence on the *New Landscape of Policing* is informed by particular work that we have undertaken since the election of the new coalition Government in 2010, to engage the Sector in the debate about the future of Criminal Justice Services. For example, we have

recently published an on-line series of five themed Discussion Papers¹ focussed on key aspects of the Government's vision for a 'Rehabilitation Revolution':

- *Big Society: constraints and potentials;*
- *Localising justice: how can we increase local VCS involvement in service design and delivery?*
- *Payment by results: what does it mean for voluntary organisations working with offenders?*
- *A new focus on measuring outcomes: where do we start?*
- *Criminal justice outsourcing: what is the potential role of the VCS?*

2.5 Following publication in December 2010 of the MoJ's Green Paper, *Breaking the Cycle*, Clinks convened seven events in various locations including London, the South West, Midlands, North West and North East regions, in order to gather the views of our members and wider VCS network on the proposals and questions set out in the Green Paper. In total, over 400 organisations participated in these events. All of these responses were subsequently collated and reflected in the response to the Green Paper that Clinks submitted to MoJ in March 2011².

3. Evidence

3.1 Clinks is submitting written evidence to the Committee in response to its question:

What progress has the Government made so far, and what further steps should it take, in driving greater collaboration between forces and other partners from both the private and the public sectors?

3.2 As the key national body representing the voice of the VCS working in the CJS, we would urge the Committee to broaden this question and to acknowledge that Government has a key role in driving greater collaboration between forces and local VCS organisations as key partners in delivering safer communities, alongside those from the private and public sectors.

¹ See Clinks' Discussion Papers at: <http://www.clinks.org/publications/discussion-papers>

² See Clinks' response to the Green Paper, *Breaking the Cycle*, at: <http://www.clinks.org/publications/responses>

3.3 The importance of engaging with and harnessing the potential of the VCS to support the new agenda has been underlined in all the key policy documents on criminal justice and policing issued by Government over the past year. In particular, the Government's consultation paper *Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People*³ contains plans to increase local accountability and address the disconnection between the police and communities by reversing the trend towards centralisation. It sees the Big Society as the vehicle for transforming the relationship between the police, partners and the public and to encourage collective action. The Government therefore aims to:

...empower the Big Society; reforming our wider approach to cutting crime, making sure everyone plays their full part in cutting crime in a Big Society - wider criminal justice and community safety partners, the voluntary and community sector and individuals themselves.

3.4 The new Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will clearly be at the heart of local arrangements for crime prevention and should therefore have a key role in ensuring that local VCS partners are fully engaged both strategically (to inform the commissioning of locally relevant, integrated multi-agency interventions) and operationally (to deliver tangible positive outcomes that address locally set priorities).

3.5 Concerns have already been voiced, however, that one elected Commissioner will concentrate power rather than disperse it.⁴ With one PCC replacing the Police Authorities, which were typically composed of seventeen members or more, there is a risk of overload. Community engagement requires interaction at a very local level and the PCC will be appointed at force level. The Home Affairs Committee's own recently published research paper⁵ highlighted the danger of 'local tensions and public disenchantment' resulting where the PCC is unable to represent the diverse community they serve. The creation of effective links with local community and voluntary groups will therefore be essential in assisting the PCC to provide substantive representation.

³ Home Office. 2010. *Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting the Police and the People*. Online: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/consultations/policing-21st-century/>

⁴ Lord Shipley. House of Lords *Police – Debate*. 25th Nov 2010. Online: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2010-11-25a.1230.0&s=justice#g1245.0>

⁵ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee. Dec 2010. *Policing: Police and Crime Commissioners*. Online: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmhaff/511/511.pdf>

- 3.6 A significant barrier to progress in this regard is that the proposed reforms are currently very lightly sketched. There is little detail as yet on the local structures needed to support Government policy in terms of accountabilities and the allocation of budgets and commissioning responsibilities between PCCs, Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnerships, Integrated Offender Management Boards, Probation Trusts, Health Services and Prisons. Many local VCS organisations are voicing frustration about this lack of clarity at a time when it is becoming critical for them to forge new relationships with key public and private sector partners at local level in order to play their full part in reducing crime.
- 3.7 The new Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) established to scrutinise the work of PCCs should provide one important mechanism for enhanced VCS and public involvement, particularly in areas where police engagement with the Sector is currently poorly developed. A representative for the Sector, possibly identified through the VCS Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO)⁶, would be an asset in terms of police engagement with the wider community. A central mandate from Government on how the Panels are composed would therefore be very useful.
- 3.8 As well as giving the public a voice through the PCPs, it is anticipated that the elected PCCs will engender greater confidence among local people to be involved in the criminal justice system: providing information, acting as witnesses and taking action to reduce anti-social behaviour. Members of the public will be encouraged to become ‘neighbourhood activists’ and ‘community crime fighters’ to determine local solutions for their neighbourhood.
- 3.9 It is Clinks’ experience that this volunteer base is likely to be highly variable across different localities and there will need to be local brokerage to match resources with need, otherwise there is a real danger that community safety will be determined by postcode lottery. Local VCS organisations, working with some of the most excluded and vulnerable members of their communities, could offer a crucial access point for effective local social action. It is therefore important to consider the mechanisms that will be needed to map and engage with voluntary and community groups that are already operating in the local area, and ensure that the PCC recognises and draws on these existing sources of support.

⁶ LIO: Local Infrastructure Organisation – 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. These might include help with organisational development, funding advice, training, and co-ordinating the sector’s engagement with and representation on local strategic groupings such as the Local Strategic Partnership. Many LIOs have Volunteer Centres attached to their organisations or work very closely with them.

- 3.10 All of this work relies on the police, other statutory agencies and the VCS effectively responding to local need and engaging with one another. It is therefore imperative that the VCS is considered an equal and independent partner and is adequately funded to play a central role in local crime reduction. The VCS have a historic partnership ethos and a wealth of experience working in partnership with different statutory agencies. However, historically the police have more limited experience of working in partnership with the VCS and, apart from the work of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams, have only recently started to build partnership links.
- 3.11 In 2010, the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) published helpful guidance for Neighbourhood Policing Teams on working with VCS partners.⁷ This includes a list of qualities that the VCS can offer to the statutory sector:
- reaching out to excluded communities using a flexible approach and delivery
 - building confidence and abilities of those who volunteer
 - strengthening trust and providing innovative solutions to the new problems that society faces
 - providing a voice for its communities in ways government cannot
- 3.12 This sort of guidance will be increasingly important to help all police teams to understand, engage with and involve VCS partners in their work at a very local level. With the phasing out of the National Policing Improvement Agency, it remains unclear what mechanisms will exist to disseminate and promote good partnership practice to local forces and individual police officers. Clarification of this important area of Government responsibility would be welcomed.
- 3.13 There is undoubtedly good emergent partnership practice to be shared with local forces and the new PCCs. For example, in September 2010, Clinks was commissioned by the Home Office to oversee a five month funded project to develop 'Innovative VCS Involvement in Integrated Offender Management Arrangements' across four 'development and demonstration areas': Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole; Croydon; Gloucestershire; and Leeds.

⁷ NPIA. 2010. *Working with the third sector: A guide for neighbourhood policing teams and partners*. Online: <http://www.npiadocuments.co.uk/thirdsectorguidance.pdf>



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- 3.14 Grant funding was made available for distribution by Clinks to support VCS-led initiatives to achieve one or more of the following outcomes in relation to partnership work with local Integrated Offender Management (IOM):
- greater involvement from the VCS in working with offenders;
 - an increased level of VCS input into IOM;
 - better linkages between VCS and statutory sector partners to implement IOM;
 - involvement of smaller VCS organisations that have not so far engaged with the criminal justice agenda;
 - greater user involvement in decisions about services and support;
 - greater community engagement and involvement in identified neighbourhoods;
 - more local people involved in volunteering/mentoring/advising; and
 - reduced re-offending.
- 3.15 This project is now reaching its end and an evaluation report is currently under preparation by the Hallam Centre for Community Justice at Sheffield Hallam University. Without wishing in any way to pre-empt these findings, it is Clinks' experience that the project has very much demonstrated the flexibility and readiness of the VCS to innovate at speed to address local crime reduction needs, when given the opportunity to play a leading role.
- 3.16 Statutory IOM partners, including those from the police, have especially valued the brokerage roles that knowledgeable and committed LIOs or other leading VCS organisations, can play in terms of strategic partnership work, outreach to the wider community, and local signposting / referral to VCS services.
- 3.17 Small grants, administered locally and imposing very light bureaucratic burdens on applicants, have also enabled small VCS groups and social enterprises to begin to engage with IOM and develop some highly innovative and sustainable work to reduce reoffending. However, all of this partnership work is dependent on good local leadership and facilitation, and adequate funding. Government support continues to be needed to ensure that local commissioners recognise the value of these approaches and that actively involving the VCS in delivery is routinely built into their strategic plans.



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4. Recommendations

In light of this evidence, Clinks would urge the Committee to consider the following recommendations to Government, in order to drive greater collaboration between forces and local VCS organisations as key partners in delivering safer communities, alongside those from the private and public sectors:

- 4.1 Give the new Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) explicit responsibility for ensuring that local VCS partners are fully engaged both strategically (to inform the commissioning of locally relevant, integrated multi-agency interventions) and operationally (to deliver tangible positive outcomes that address locally set priorities).
- 4.2 Clarify as quickly as possible the future local structures to support Government policy in terms of accountabilities and the allocation of budgets and commissioning responsibilities between PCCs, Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnerships, Integrated Offender Management Boards, Probation Trusts, Health Services and Prisons.
- 4.3 Issue guidance / mandate on the composition of Police and Crime Panels, including mechanisms for VCS representation.
- 4.4 Ensure that the PCC recognises and works proactively with existing sources of VCS support such as VCS Local Infrastructure Organisations, in order to encourage and develop local community activism.
- 4.5 Emphasise the role of the VCS as an equal and independent partner, and ensure it is adequately funded to play a central role in local crime reduction.
- 4.6 With the phasing out of the National Policing Improvement Agency, clarify what mechanisms will exist to disseminate and promote guidance on good partnership practice to local forces and individual police officers.

Clinks

31st March 2011