


A review of the Voluntary and Community Sector's involvement in the Northern Ireland criminal justice system

March 2013

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all





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March 2013



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List of abbreviations

CENI	Community Evaluation Northern Ireland
CJB	Criminal Justice Board
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CRJI	Community Restorative Justice Ireland
DEL	Department of Employment and Learning
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DoJ	Department of Justice
DSD	Department of Social Development
EU	European Union
HRS	Housing Rights Service
MoJ	Ministry of Justice in England and Wales
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NIA	Northern Ireland Alternatives
NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OY	Opportunity Youth
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
PCSP	Policing and Community Safety Partnership
PfG	Programme for Government
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SIB	Social Impact Bond
SROI	Social Return On Investment
UK	United Kingdom
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
VSNI	Victim Support Northern Ireland
WSN	Women's Support Network
YJA	Youth Justice Agency



Chief Inspector's Foreword

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) inspections have consistently reported on the 'added value' provided by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in delivering services to victims, witnesses, offenders and their families. The role that they play has for long been acknowledged by both the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the main criminal justice agencies and beyond, as they continue to attract significant additional funding into the system from a variety of sources.

This review shows that despite major contextual changes, many of the positive features we observed in 2006 are still evident, and there have been further improvements. Of particular note is the VCSs role in helping reduce offending, improving access to justice and in supporting key elements of criminal justice reform through consultation and participation.

The report acknowledges the leadership provided by the Minister of Justice to minimise the impact of financial cuts on the VCS which offers tangible recognition of their value from the highest level. It is also reassuring to see the Community Based Restorative Justice Schemes continuing on their journey of development and diversification, and the respect in which they are now held.

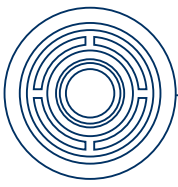
Many larger VCS organisations are operating as businesses, delivering managed services to criminal justice agencies. Current levels of austerity along with the considerable accountability that accompanies receipt of public monies have placed increasing demands on everyone, especially the smaller organisations, and we suggest there should be a more proportionate response to those that are assessed as low risk.

We make a small number of recommendations to the DoJ. These are designed to enable the delivery of even more effective and efficient services by a vibrant and flexible voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

This inspection was led by Tom McGonigle and supported by Stephen Dolan. My sincere thanks to all those individuals and organisations who participated in this inspection.



Brendan McGuigan
Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland
March 2013



Executive Summary

This review examined the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations' contribution to the Northern Ireland criminal justice system. It concentrated on organisations that received or administered core funding for a criminal justice purpose - Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI), Extern, NIACRO, Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA), Quaker Service, Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI), the Department of Justice (DoJ), Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and Youth Justice Agency (YJA) – but also sought and received helpful views from a range of other organisations.

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland's (CJI) last review in 2006¹ found 'a well-developed voluntary and community sector...' The situation here compared favourably with elsewhere in the United Kingdom (UK), and while there were tensions, these were mostly healthy.

There have been some important contextual changes since we last reported. These include:

- justice powers were devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly in April 2010, and local politicians have become more engaged in formulating policy and in overseeing the criminal justice system than previously;
- much of the Northern Ireland Office had been restructured into the new DoJ. The internal structures are different from its predecessor and new liaison arrangements were reported as positive for most of the VCS organisations that the DoJ sponsored;
- the recession and changes to funding arrangements (there was more competitive tendering and less grant-in-aid) were having an impact;
- the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland had been established. While it had yet to become fully operational, organisations were gearing up to meet the governance requirements which it will superintend; and
- Government policy in England and Wales envisaged a greater role for the private sector and VCS organisations in delivering criminal justice services. This was being tested by initiatives such as Payment by Results and Social Impact Bonds (SIBs).

Some positive features from our 2006 review were still evident. The VCS continued to attract substantial monies from other sources to supplement local statutory funding; it could provide flexibility and innovation; and volunteering was a useful way of engaging ordinary citizens in the criminal justice system. There had also been improvements which included:

- the involvement of VCS organisations with formal criminal justice structures was better than when we last inspected, not only in helping reduce offending, but also in improving access to justice, and examples were provided of VCS participation in relevant consultations and working parties;

¹ 'Added Value: a review of the Voluntary and Community Sector's contribution to the Northern Ireland criminal justice system', CJI, 2006.



- the DoJ had protected its sponsored VCS organisations from financial cuts. Whereas statutory criminal justice agencies were subject to 5% cuts, the Minister of Justice had requested that cuts to the VCS be limited to 1.5% as he was keen to minimise the impact on them; and
- restorative justice schemes had become more secure and had developed good relationships with operational agencies. Individual members of restorative projects and other VCS organisations were represented on relevant bodies such as Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), where they were considered to be making a valuable contribution.

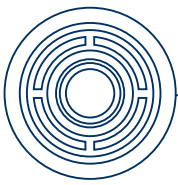
Not everything was positive. The existence of a wide variety of funding streams and methodologies created practical problems for VCS organisations as well as anxiety for funding bodies about possible duplicate funding. Short-term and piecemeal funding remained problematic, and some organisations had to manage without letters of offer for up to six months into a new financial year. These features mitigated against any possible centralised monitoring of total amounts paid out and there was no consistent measure of the impact and contribution of the VCS to the criminal justice system. An agreement known as the 'Concordat' had been put in place in 2011 to regulate engagement between Government and the VCS, and there was a Joint Forum to oversee operation of the Concordat. While the model of engagement was well designed and reported as working effectively in most sectors, several VCS organisations were less positive about its benefits in the criminal justice environment.

There were mixed views about other Government departments' contribution to justice issues. Devolution had helped and the DoJ was involved in areas such as health and education. However there was no statutory duty on all departments to enhance community safety which was considered a missed opportunity to deliver a truly cross-cutting approach. There were lots of relevant strategies, but not always action plans to support their delivery and it was hard to assess their progress. There were also logistical difficulties for operational justice organisations in being aware of, and where necessary able to influence, the funding decisions of other departments that affected them.

Some VCS organisations were struggling for survival as philanthropic funding declined and pressures on Government expenditure increased. The option of providing lots of small grants was attractive for funders as it could purchase local goodwill, though some recipients did not really grasp the criminal justice rationale for the funding they received and it was impossible to assess the long-term impact of providing such monies.

The accountability arrangements that were applied to VCS organisations varied considerably, depending on who allocated the monies. They mainly comprised measurement of inputs and activities to provide assurance to funders. Large organisations were by now well-used to extensive and varying levels of demand for feedback about their finances and practice and they had systems in place to deliver these. However there was scope for a more proportionate response, particularly with lower risk organisations. Likewise the requirement for VCS organisations to commission evaluations of programmes seemed excessive when many of these programmes were already extensively audited. Less compliance for its own sake would enable a reduction in bureaucracy with consequent savings in Government departments.





'Social Return on Investment' and 'Justice Reinvestment' were novel monitoring concepts which appeared to demonstrate significant financial benefits, such as a £19 return for each £1 invested in one case. They should be explored further with the aim of redirecting money saved through efficiencies into services.

There were obvious cultural differences between statutory funders and the VCS. Several VCS organisations felt they were treated primarily as arms length bodies and service providers, whereas they were keen that equal value be attached to their advocacy roles. It was suggested that Government departments did not always take the consultation process seriously and the VCS were generally critical of the lack of policy amendments flowing from their responses. For their part, Government and statutory agencies wanted the VCS services that they funded to add something unique, and to be evidence-based rather than ideologically driven. They needed reassurance about financial probity and practice integrity, and were concerned that routine funding of large groups could impede fresh thinking. We heard examples of both good and bad communication between funders and VCS bodies.

Although badged as 'voluntary,' many VCS bodies actually operated as businesses and delivered a form of managed services. The ones which we reviewed recognised the need for appropriate governance and good business models. They were providing positive outcomes but must not become a cheap option for service delivery nor have their distinctive identity compromised through overdependence on the statutory sector.

In terms of the future the DoJ, statutory funders and VCS bodies were unconvinced about the merits of introducing a contestability culture to Northern Ireland, though there was some appetite for SIBs. There was concern about changes in funding methods and about the continuing effects of recession. Campaigning by politicians, the VCS and others had ameliorated some draft provisions of forthcoming welfare reform legislation, but there was still anxiety about the impact of the homeless and benefits provisions of this legislation on vulnerable sections of the population, including victims and offenders.



Recommendations

The DoJ, its statutory agencies and arms length bodies, and the VCS should jointly define the potential VCS contribution to the main criminal justice strategies. This exercise should result in responsible agencies being identified from within the DoJ family to lead on specific funding relationships by December 2013 (Paragraph 1.33).

Criminal justice funders should standardise their approach to funding, applying a commissioning philosophy rather than simple procurement, with the aim of continuously improving the targeting of funding (Paragraph 1.53).

The DoJ and its statutory agencies which provide funding to the VCS should pilot a risk-based approach to financial and practice monitoring (Paragraph 2.27).

The DoJ should assess the benefits of the DataLab experiment and aim to introduce a similar pilot in Northern Ireland (Paragraph 2.28).



Section



Inspection Report

CHAPTER 1:

Context and strategy



The context in Great Britain

- 1.1 There have always been links between penal reform and philanthropy in the UK, with wealthy individuals funding much of the early work, raising the importance of grant-making foundations, and complementing the VCS which had been working alongside the Probation Service both formally and informally for over 100 years. As the role of the public sector increased, so did the proportion of central government funding of the VCS. Although the VCS had always existed within a mixed economy, its growth in England and Wales during the 1980s and 1990s was largely driven by public sector contract funding. The relationship between the public sector and the VCS became increasingly service-oriented and contractual during this time when funding for offender accommodation, employment and substance misuse was devolved from central government to local probation areas. At the same time, the VCS itself became institutionalised through formal agreements with government and the establishment of the Office for the Third Sector at Cabinet level.
- 1.2 As a result of the changing relationship the Probation Service increasingly became a commissioner of services from the VCS, while the VCS in turn developed innovative ways of supporting probation supervision and offending behaviour programmes. From 1997 onwards, the political discourse under successive 'New Labour' governments introduced the concept of 'partnership' with the VCS and the narrative framed the sector as being close to its users, locally-engaged, innovative and cost-effective.

- 1.3 In 2004 the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) – which essentially unified the Probation and Prison Services – encouraged a renewed interest in the role of the VCS in service delivery, albeit now with the potential to compete with the Probation Service in certain areas. The creation of a Voluntary Sector Unit in NOMS sought to raise the strategic profile of the VCS at both national and regional level. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition continued to recognise the importance of the VCS and extended its role by developing the concept of 'partnership' to include consortia with private sector providers. By 2011, there were at least 245 VCS organisations, social enterprises and charities which supported the rehabilitation of offenders in prisons, and a further 79 private sector organisations supporting rehabilitation activities in prison.²

The VCS in Northern Ireland

- 1.4 The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)³ estimated that in 2009 there were nearly 5,000 voluntary and community sector organisations in Northern Ireland with a total income of £742 million. The sector employed a paid workforce of around 28,000 people (4% of the Northern Ireland total and on a par with the construction industry) with support from some 240,000 registered volunteers. A total of 1.8% of the VCS workforce (equivalent to 500 full-time employees) were directly engaged in community safety and criminal justice activity.

² Hansard House of Commons, 4 July 2011, c1021W.

³ 'State of the Sector 6', NICVA, April 2012.



- 1.5 The main funders were:
- Central Government/Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and statutory bodies (34%);
 - general public (30%);
 - Charitable Trusts, National Lottery and local Government (16%);
 - Health and Education (11%); and
 - European Community Institutions (9%).

1.6 The total Northern Ireland Assembly direct departmental expenditure on the VCS in 2009 was £254 million and DoJ expenditure was £6 million (an increase of 16% on the previous year). More than 50% of the VCS income went to less than 4% of organisations; and there were a large number of organisations which received little or no money from the public sector and had no connection with public bodies.

1.7 The Government/VCS relationship in Northern Ireland has been well-researched. A 2004 consultation review - 'Pathways for Change' - was designed to explore how the work of the VCS should best be resourced after 2006 when PEACE funding was expected to decline. *Pathways for Change* identified several issues that required attention, such as funding mechanisms, the need to build VCS management and governance capacity, agreement about the VCS advocacy role, competition between VCS bodies, funders' non-acceptance of administrative overheads and disproportionate levels of accountability.

1.8 In January 2012 a Northern Ireland Assembly Public Accounts Committee report '*Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector*' recognised that the VCS made a significant contribution to the achievement of the Northern Ireland Executive's strategic goals and priorities, but its experience of working with public bodies was mixed. Whilst the report identified examples of good practice, it also found areas where public bodies could make a significant

difference by reducing bureaucracy and administration costs, and improve value for money for both themselves and the VCS. The report made 11 recommendations to address these matters.

1.9 The Public Accounts Committee recognised the complexity of the relationship between the sector and public bodies, and said it should be built around partnership and mutual trust and respect, but this had not always been the case. It found there had been '*...over-bureaucratic, disproportionate and risk-averse approaches to monitoring of funding and lack of focus on what is actually being delivered. The need to change this has been clear for years; many good practice guides and statements of principles have been in place over the years but have not been applied consistently by public bodies and the Sector.*'⁴

Overarching strategy

1.10 The Department for Social Development (DSD) was in the lead on relationships between government and the VCS in Northern Ireland. The DSDs main strategic focus was on disadvantage and several of its funded programmes contributed significantly to crime reduction. The cross-departmental framework of '*Delivering Social Change*' was one of the key strategic drivers. The concepts of a statutory duty on departments to cooperate and shared departmental budgets were attractive to operational agencies, the VCS and government officials, though everyone recognised these would require top level political agreement in order to be implemented effectively.

1.11 Frameworks to govern the public sector/VCS relationship had been in place since 1994. The most recent was an agreed arrangement between the public sector and VCS known as the Concordat which commenced in September 2011. It recognised the interdependency between Government and the VCS and laid the foundations for a partnership based on mutual trust and respect.

⁴ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Reports/Public-Accounts/Report%20on%20Creating%20Effective%20Partnerships%20between%20Government%20and%20the%20Voluntary%20and%20Community%20Sector.pdf>



1.12 The Concordat was signed off by all Ministers and was therefore binding on each Northern Ireland department. It set out shared values and principles, and contained several priorities including funding and reduced bureaucracy. The Concordat also committed to undertake reviews of key policy issues, explore alternative funding structures, implement an outcome-focussed approach to funding, remove duplication of services, maximise opportunities for VCS participation in procurement processes and develop the concept of Full Cost Recovery.

1.13 The business of the Concordat was delivered by a Joint Forum which included sectoral representatives from the VCS and from each department, including the DoJ. The first ministerial report on Concordat progress in June 2012 reported substantial progress on complex issues such as bureaucracy and cocktail funding. It said the need for partnership input into policy-making and outcomes approach to funding was being addressed by Concordat Action Teams and that there was commitment from the highest levels of the Public Sector and the VCS.

1.14 The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) commenting on the Ministerial report said that: *'The Department for Social Development (DSD) has an important role to play in this context. However, the recommendations from this report are not only for DSD; they are for all departments and public bodies. It is evident to the Committee that there is an urgent need for a joined-up approach, particularly in relation to funding. This will require new ways of thinking... continuing with multiple funding streams to one organisation is inefficient and untenable.'*⁵

1.15 Whilst the Joint Forum and Concordat models were welcomed, contributors to this review – both the DoJ and criminal justice VCS bodies – suggested they had little engagement with the process so far, and neither was involved in any of the Concordat Action Teams where the bulk of the work was undertaken. Abolition of the Civic Forum which was meant to link with the Joint Forum was also considered to be a loss.

1.16 At the time of this review, the DoJ was in the process of establishing a Criminal Justice Consultative Forum to engage with the Criminal Justice Board on strategic issues, in particular improving the quality and outreach of consultations. That Forum was intended to make suggestions as to how the criminal justice agencies could improve current performance and raise issues of strategic significance with the Criminal Justice Board. While this was a helpful development within the criminal justice family, more active participation by both VCS and DoJ in the Joint Forum would be the way to progress the important aim of engaging other departments in justice matters.

Criminal justice strategy and the role of the VCS

1.17 Inspectors attempted to tabulate the individual funding streams that flowed from and through local criminal justice agencies, and monies received by the core criminal justice VCS. However it proved impossible to accurately validate the various funding streams. This was due to the fact that the VCS attracted monies from a much wider range of other sources than criminal justice funders, while the funders engaged numerous VCS programmes, many of which were not criminal justice focussed, to support their work. It was nonetheless possible to establish that the main criminal justice VCS bodies received a total of c. £8m annually from the DoJ and its agencies; and additional funding from statutory and charitable sources amounted to around £12m, making a total spend of some £20m per annum on Northern Ireland's main criminal justice VCS organisations.

1.18 This was a very significant amount of money, most of which would otherwise have been unavailable to the criminal justice system. NIACRO for example, received approximately 40% of its funding from statutory criminal justice agencies, and acquired the balance (£2.3 million) from other sources. Prison Fellowships annual running costs were in the order of £200,000, yet their only criminal justice income was a contribution of under

5 Ibid.



£10,000 from the NIPS. The DSD maintained a government funding database which each department was responsible for updating. It showed that some 500 awards had been made to the criminal justice VCS since 2002, of which NIACRO and Extern received 50%.

1.19 There was no single overarching strategy covering the role of the VCS in the criminal justice sector in Northern Ireland, and indeed this may not be appropriate or possible given the complexity of the arena. Following the devolution of justice powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2010, there had however been developments: victims' strategies, for example were reported as now being better co-ordinated and streamlined than in the past; and a mainstay in defining the strategic direction of the DoJ with significance for the VCS was the recently launched Community Safety Strategy, the overriding aims of which were to achieve:

- **Safer communities**, with lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- **Shared communities**, where each person's rights are respected in a shared and cohesive community; and
- **Confident communities**, where people feel safe and have confidence in the agencies that serve them.

1.20 The Community Safety Strategy explicitly recognised the need to work in partnership with voluntary and community sector bodies in delivering its aims. The Regional Steering Group on Community Safety which was responsible for implementing and monitoring the strategy included representatives of the VCS. Implementation of the strategy at local level was undertaken by PCSPs which included VCS representatives.

1.21 The Community Safety Strategy fed into other strategic building blocks such as the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending, while the Victims and Witnesses Strategy and the Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI) 'Policing


with the Community 2020 Strategy' also highlighted the need for partnership working with the VCS. In summary the DoJ approach to criminal justice policy was framed in strategies that embraced partnership with the VCS.

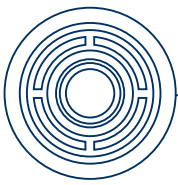
1.22 That was all well and good, but partnership with other Government departments and agencies was also essential to delivery of a cohesive and shared policy. CJI's 2011 inspection of *the care and treatment of victims and witnesses* identified that *'the requirements of victims are often complex and need effective integration between not only the justice system, but other Government departments, such as health and the voluntary and community sector.'*⁶ Primary responsibility for the Victims and Witness Strategy rested with the DoJ, though a range of non-justice organisations were involved in its oversight and delivery.

1.23 The draft Justice (Northern Ireland) Bill 2010 had contained a duty on public bodies to have due regard to the likely effect on crime and anti-social behaviour when exercising their functions, and to do all that they reasonably could to enhance community safety. In including this clause the Minister was keen to promote the potential benefits such a duty could deliver in creating a focused approach to community safety matters. However during the passage of the Justice Bill the clause faced considerable opposition and was ultimately removed. The benefits that such a provision could bring in terms of joined-up working remained evident and there was some support for its reintroduction, though before bringing it forward again the Minister intended to gauge the level of support and revisit the content to determine the best way forward.

1.24 It could be difficult to gain consensus across departments at the highest level of policy formulation. The DoJ contributed to Programme for Government (PfG) priorities which collectively aimed to reduce offending by tackling anti-social behaviour and crime against older and vulnerable people, by more effective

⁶ 'The care and treatment of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland,' CJI, December 2011.

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- and appropriate sentences and by improving access to justice. The most directly-relevant PfG target was framed around an aim to ‘Reduce serious offending.’ Many criminal justice agencies and VCS bodies were disappointed by the emphasis on seriousness because the numbers of serious offenders were small and this focus ignored the benefits that could accrue from dealing with all range of offenders. Nonetheless the DoJ Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending had aspirations to deliver across a much wider front.
- 1.25 There were other relevant strategies and associated funding streams that contributed to crime reduction. These included the DSD-led Volunteering Strategy which was developed in conjunction with the VCS and provided a Northern Ireland-wide policy context and framework for volunteering activity. The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership was led by the Health and Social Care Board, with the NIHE, YJA and the DoJ closely involved. The DSDs Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy was a cross-governmental initiative that aimed to bring together the work of all departments in partnership with local people to tackle disadvantage and deprivation. Neighbourhood Partnerships that included key political, statutory, voluntary, community and private sector stakeholders were established as a vehicle for local planning and implementation. Each Partnership developed long term visions and action plans designed to improve the quality of life for people living in the area. The Collaborative Working in Disadvantaged Areas strategy led to Government departments and agencies working in partnership on initiatives such as Summer Intervention programmes.
- 1.26 The DSD – through the NIHE – delivered the Supporting People Programme. With a budget of some £50 million this was one of the largest programmes in Northern Ireland and it made a direct contribution to the criminal justice system through funding approved premises and other related initiatives.
- 1.27 Although these strategies all had an impact on the criminal justice system they could not be captured in any central policy assessment, and the diverse nature of the funding landscape – lying as it did with a plethora of funders and funded bodies – did not lend itself to overall evaluation.
- 1.28 The fragmented nature of the public sector’s engagement with the VCS had a number of implications: VCS organisations needed to be schooled in funding and bidding mechanisms, which was time consuming and tended to favour larger organisations. Well-tested benefits of economies of scale could conflict with funders’ preference for localism. Boundaries between the VCS and the public sector could become blurred with the risk that the former might become an extension of the ethos and practice of the latter. Introduction of social enterprises could generate further difficulties if VCS bodies were exposed to up front costs and competition, which in turn could lead the VCS to become risk-averse and lose innovation in service delivery - a criticism that has been levelled at services delivered by central government. It would therefore help if public sector funders could define what they want from the VCS by engaging the sector outwith the strictures of the procurement process, formulaic payments by results and risk-averse monitoring arrangements.
- 1.29 At an operational level strategies such as the NIPS Resettlement Strategy and PBNIs Community Development Strategy influenced how the criminal justice VCS pitched its services and approach. Although these operational plans linked back to higher level strategies, many within the VCS were frustrated by the lack of an overarching vision for their role since funding applications and accountability reporting frequently required multiple submissions of duplicate material and could occupy a significant amount of their time.
- 1.30 There could also be confusion among funders, for example when a department provided core funding to groups whom arms length bodies




also funded; and it was even more difficult for operational criminal justice organisations to always be aware of other funders' involvement when they had no mechanism for contributing to decisions of departments other than the DoJ.

- 1.31 Another consequence of multiple funding streams was difficulty for VCS bodies in defining outcomes that mirrored any strategic direction. The result was an emphasis on inputs, tasks and outputs that provided a sense of security for funders, but really only satisfied short-term monitoring demands rather than evidencing longer term changes that the strategies set out to achieve. In addition, from the VCS point of view, this increased the risk that the public sector, rather than the intended service users would become client and customer for its services.
- 1.32 Attempts were being made to promote the collective approach envisaged by the Public Accounts Committee. The PBNI was attempting to distinguish areas where it should lead on VCS funding – such as the INSPIRE project for female offenders – from areas where others should lead – such as the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) in relation to offender training and employment. The PBNI had submitted a proposal to the Criminal Justice Board (CJB) in December 2011 to scope all the monies awarded to criminal justice VCS bodies, and their sources. It proposed to explore the feasibility of directing some of its Community Development budget into a partnership fund, with the aim of attracting a cocktail of monies from other Government sources, the European Union and charitable foundations, to establish whether there was a realistic prospect of creating a sustainable partnership approach that could deliver benefits for their own and other funders' business needs.
- 1.33 Although the PBNI submission was not endorsed by the CJB, the principle of lead responsibility was broadly favoured by other operational agencies such as the YJA and the NIPS, and by the VCS. Whilst the concept of

partnership was endorsed in the strategies and policy statements of public sector funders, the realities needed to be considered in the context of increasing emphasis on formal procurement arrangements and payment by results. The experience of VCS bodies in England and Wales, where the NOMS had moved towards more formal contract management and increased competition with acceptance of 'supplier neutrality' was that these arrangements were not conducive to partnering arrangements. Given the significance attached to the principles of integrated funding and accountability by the PAC and the commitments in the Concordat on VCS funding, **we recommend the DoJ, its statutory agencies and arms length bodies, and the VCS should jointly define the potential VCS contribution to the main criminal justice strategies. This exercise should result in responsible agencies being identified from within the DoJ family to lead on specific funding relationships by December 2013.**

Operational Infrastructure

- 1.34 Devolution of justice powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly in April 2010 had changed the dynamic. Many community organisations gained increased levels of access and influence with local politicians. Government for its part recognised the value and contribution made by the VCS, though sometimes found it difficult to know who really represented 'the community'. It was keen to encourage fresh approaches and expected that measures such as the PCSPs would encourage fresh local players into the broad criminal justice arena. Other VCS bodies had strong private sector relationships, while nationally branded organisations enjoyed the strength of scale and influence that came with engagement at Westminster level.
- 1.35 Besides the VCS bodies which were involved in commissioning and/or delivering criminal justice services in Northern Ireland, many other organisations contributed significantly to the criminal justice system even though it was not their primary raison d'être. The NIHE



provided a good example. They dealt with some 5,000 antisocial behaviour reports per annum, often involving serious social and criminal justice issues. They applied mediation processes and worked in conjunction with organisations such as VSNI who helped with advice about criminal injury compensation claims. While the NIHE had a well-developed system for tackling anti-social behaviour there was more limited evidence of effective practice within the housing association movement. Housing associations had only limited powers to deal with anti-social behaviour and the NIHE was working with them to improve current practices. If, as was mooted, the remaining NIHE housing stock was transferred to housing associations, then this crime prevention work would be at risk, unless the role of housing associations were to be widened or the residual NIHE were to retain responsibility for managing residents' antisocial behaviour.

- 1.36 The NIHE was also involved in funding crime prevention work. For example they, along with others funded NIACROs 'Good Morning' programmes which provided daily wellbeing checks for isolated and elderly residents. The NIHE was a member of the National Community Safety Network and it acquired £47,000 from the European Forum for Urban Safety, plus Belfast City Council and Assets Recovery funding for a programme which supported young prisoners who were being released from Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre.

Governance

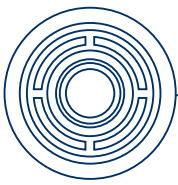
- 1.37 Public sector criminal justice bodies were mindful of the need for good governance in the VCS organisations that they funded and this was evident in compliance arrangements that were applied to the sector. While financial impropriety was the most obvious governance concern, it was recognised that reputational risk could arise from other forms of mismanagement or malpractice. Funders were alert to the consequences of providing public monies to organisations whose stewardship was inadequate, especially as the Departmental

Accounting Officer would be held to account for every element of departmental funding to bodies that were within its control. Inspectors heard there was not always sufficient sharing of information between funders about risks or performance monitoring of organisations, or feedback from funders to VCS organisations about their performance; and multiple funding arrangements often led to funders requesting assurances about their unique element of the funding to the frustration of the VCS bodies.

- 1.38 Establishment of the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland raised expectations of more rigorous governance arrangements and the VCS bodies with whom we met were aware of these. Governance was more manageable for large organisations, but most VCS contributors to this review were already well-advanced in updating their procedures and now had Management Boards, finance sub-committees, Annual General Meetings, corporate and business plans, annual reports and risk registers, and chairpersons were finding they needed to be much more involved than in the past.

Interfaces between Government, other funders and the VCS

- 1.39 Previous CJI recommendations aimed to strengthen the interface between the VCS and its sponsoring bodies by recommending a structured relationship, a strategic overview and five-year plan for the VCS, and an overview group that would meet regularly. Similar recommendations had been made as far back as the Criminal Justice Review in 2000: Recommendation 266 specifically advocated VCS representation on the Criminal Justice Issues Group, Prisons, Probation & Youth Justice Advisory/North-South Groups, development of a Community Safety Strategy and adequate funding to fulfil these roles.
- 1.40 There had been progress. The then Northern Ireland Office had met to triangulate CJIs recommendations with a 2006 consultancy report and the Justice Oversight Group's recommendations. Although the DoJ had



found it difficult to obtain buy in from other departments for some time, they said things had improved since 2011 thanks to devolution and cross-cutting strategies such as Delivering Social Change. The Community Safety Partnerships, Policing Board and PCSPs (and their predecessors the District Policing Partnerships) were helpful in strengthening links between the community and statutory sectors, especially with the PSNI at senior level.

- 1.41 The VCS was well represented at strategic levels e.g. in Children's Services Partnerships, PCSPs, the Faster, Fairer Justice Programme Executive, Victim and Witness Steering Group and Vulnerable and Intimidated Witnesses Working Group and the Criminal Justice Issues Group. The VCS was also represented on the Regional Community Safety and domestic and sexual violence Steering Groups; and on sub-groups that addressed topics such as Hate Crime, Victims and Witnesses and the Elderly.
- 1.42 The VCS view had been formally sought in consultations about matters such as the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending, the Prisons and Youth Justice Reviews, fine default, criminal records and community safety. While views were not always accepted, the VCS generally felt their voice was heard in these matters. At strategic level a mechanism was being established for them to feed into the Criminal Justice Board. At operational level a NIPS Multiagency Resettlement Forum met for the first time in October 2012. It aimed to align VCS objectives with those of NIPS and the Programme for Government, and NIACRO, the Housing Rights Service, Barnardos, Quaker Service, Opportunity Youth and Extern were invited to participate at both strategic level and on subgroups.
- 1.43 Devolution of Justice powers had led to restructuring of sponsoring departments, and the new DoJ emerged from the NIO. NIACRO and Extern felt their sponsorship arrangements were suitable, with officials reported as interested and applying reasonable and proportionate levels of accountability, though

VSNI were less certain about the benefits for them.

Commissioning and procurement

- 1.44 A key driver in defining the interface between funders and funded bodies was the extent to which formal commissioning processes were in place, how transparent these were and the extent to which procurement influenced relationships. One overriding issue for VCS bodies was that very few had substantial reserves and were therefore wholly dependent on contract delivery for their cash flow. This made it difficult for them to be critical or be seen to "bite the hand that feeds."
- 1.45 Although the VCS accepted that a businesslike relationship should exist between funders and funded bodies and some VCS organisations found tendering could be a useful discipline, it was frustrating to have to tender when nobody else offered the same services. The process also felt pointless when no feedback was provided about the quality of tenders. There was concern that future funding arrangements would be driven by greater use of competitive tendering with more restrictive specifications and a consequent loss of the diversity and innovation that the VCS brought to the table. One recurring theme centred on the diverse approaches to commissioning adopted by the various agencies, which ranged from annual grant allocation to tendering for managed services. Inspectors heard a constant refrain about the need to provide greater certainty to funded bodies, especially in relation to the duration of funding, once they had overcome the various application hurdles.
- 1.46 Despite some positive sentiments in respect of partnering, a few VCS bodies felt that a commissioning process, which would have offered some form of consultation, was too often rolled up into the procurement process with funders specifying activities and inputs without accurately assessing local need or agreeing delivery outcomes. This was in part driven by a renewed emphasis on good procurement practice in the public sector,

- which was welcome, but not at the expense of losing VCS involvement in designing the most suitable delivery mechanism.
- 1.47 Formal procurement for VCS services was not dominant in the Northern Ireland criminal justice environment though Inspectors heard of a contract where performance-related specifications were applied in an effort to drive innovation. The contract was stymied by a payment regime whereby the VCS bidder was solely dependent on referrals from statutory agencies and paid in arrears, thus transferring all volume-related risk to the VCS provider. In such instances, an element of shared risk would have better reflected the business operating environment. Funders who were serious about true partnership with VCS bodies needed to temper the procurement process with a commissioning approach. This would include engaging with VCS partners before procurement commenced to:
- assess need;
 - identify resources in conjunction with the VCS;
 - plan and prioritise how to use the resources;
 - arrange service delivery through a procurement process; and
 - monitor and review service delivery and its outcomes.
- 1.48 The PCSPs provided useful lessons for commissioners since they operated at a more local level than central departments; and they had to engage with communities and service providers to assess need and identify the most suitable resource and priorities. The move towards localisation in Northern Ireland accorded with the prevailing approach in England and Wales based on the principle of decentralising power to the lowest appropriate level. In England and Wales the aim was to remove direct commissioning from the hands of the central Government departments and place it in the hands of the regional and local funders.
- 1.49 Whatever the actual commissioning model to be adopted, there were specific considerations to be taken into account: the voluntary sector risked becoming divided between bodies providing services, tantamount to quasi-Governmental organisations which were reliant on Government contracts for their very survival; and those which remained truly independent (Neilson 2009). However commissioning in itself was not seen as a wholesale threat to the sector as research suggested there was a growing feeling amongst state and voluntary sector organisations that the quality of service provision and potentially improved outcomes for offenders had remained the most important factors (Meek et al. 2010).
- 1.50 Some research (such as Neilson in 2009) suggested the expansion of commissioning in criminal justice provision was leading certain VCS bodies to compromise their campaigning and advocacy roles through bidding to run services. Opinions were evenly split when a range of interviewees were asked whether they thought commissioning and contestability would affect the ability of VCS to critique Government policy.
- 1.51 The upshot of all of this was that an emphasis on commissioning, as opposed to simple procurement would incorporate a consultative, joint process with VCS organisations to define and assess need, identify the resources available to meet this need and engage VCS organisations in agreeing programmes of delivery. Client-contractor engagement does not in itself pose any conflict with the procurement process as long as it is properly managed⁷; and there are specific procurement processes such as competitive dialogue that provide a framework for such eventualities.
- 1.52 To date the engagement process had been varied in Northern Ireland. The DoJ core department and family of agencies applied a range of funding mechanisms. These ranged from the YJAs Small Grants Scheme which provided amounts of up to £1,500 to local

⁷ *Think smart...think voluntary sector!*, Office of Government Commerce, June 2004.



community groups for items such as equipment and furniture, up to and including large projects that were competitively tendered. The YJA scheme provided a useful avenue for formal procurement which could avoid the overly-bureaucratic risks that may attach to awarding small amounts of money. The DoJ's Community Safety Unit had local co-ordinators who could provide a prompt response when specific issues arose. This had the added benefit of overcoming the disadvantage to small groups that lacked the expertise and resources to mount successful bidding campaigns, and they also encouraged community groups to approach them directly with proposals.

- 1.53 Levels of authority for funding approval varied, and even within a single agency there could be a diverse funding philosophy. The DoJ had some concerns about the different funding models that its sponsored statutory bodies applied and they were keen to work towards a more consistent approach. **We recommend that criminal justice funders should standardise their approach to funding, applying a commissioning philosophy rather than simple procurement, with the aim of continuously improving the targeting of funding.**

CHAPTER 2:

Delivery



A typology of the VCS

2.1 The voluntary and community sector cannot be treated as a single homogenous entity, but should be viewed as a sector of great variety and diversity, characterised by a number of shared fundamental themes. In practice most organisations were primarily categorised as service deliverers, though policy comment and advocacy roles were also common features. A rough classification might be as follows:

- **Custody-related services**
Drugs projects, art and literacy projects, independent representation for young people in custody, prison visits, prison visitor centres and family transport services;
- **Working with offenders in the community**
Community service projects, community restorative justice schemes, approved premises, mentoring for isolated offenders;
- **Working with victims and witnesses of crime**
Witness services in Magistrates', Crown and Coroners Courts, including child witnesses; emotional support for victims of crime at court and at home, assistance with compensation claims;
- **Diversionary measures for young people**
Youth clubs, sports clubs, Outward Bound projects, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme; and

- **Other crime prevention**

Community safety projects, Neighbourhood Watch schemes, community regeneration projects.

2.2 Northern Ireland's VCS organisations delivered services in all of these spheres and this work was generally viewed by sponsoring bodies as helping to further their aims. The VCS frequently collaborated on policy comment, but in the main their service delivery programmes were unique to each organisation. For example:


- CRJI and NIA delivered mediation programmes and undertook sensitive community negotiations in support of the formal criminal justice system in several areas of high social deprivation;
- Extern managed approved premises, and provided training and employment schemes for ex-prisoners;
- NIACRO provided prison visitor centres, transport to prisons, benefits advice and employability training for offenders;
- Quaker Service managed the Maghaberry Prison Visitor Centre which provided services for prisoners and their families; and
- VSNI supported victims and witnesses of all categories of crime in the courts and in making claims for compensation.

The changing environment

2.3 All of these services and many others were being delivered within a context where



- statutory housing, local Government and health services were undergoing prolonged restructuring. This caused a degree of uncertainty and it was therefore beneficial that established providers could offer consistency when statutory bodies were preoccupied with their own internal changes. Despite the prevailing austerity, the VCS groups were preparing for an active future, engaging with politicians, policy makers and operational managers to deliver current commitments and plan ahead.
- 2.4 It was apparent that the VCS was responsive to the needs of the public sector and emerging events, and in tune with the longer-term strategies that drove their statutory partners. They had to be to ensure they survived. For example, Northern Ireland Office requests had led to VSNI developing a Criminal Injuries Compensation Service; NIA and CRJI were delivering programmes targeted at serious and persistent offenders on PBNIs caseload; Extern was assisting refugees and providing a furniture assembly project for otherwise unoccupied prisoners in Maghaberry Prison at the request of the NIPS.
- 2.5 While the DoJ's Community Safety Unit funded regional initiatives such as Women's Aid centrally, it would also approach VCS organisations for assistance in relation to particular themes – for example domestic violence, hate crime and crimes against the elderly. They found the VCS was useful in responding to local emergencies such as the victimisation of Roma people in South Belfast and anti-social behaviour in Belfast's Holyland district. The Community Safety Unit referred many funding approaches to PCSPs because of their local knowledge and their proven ability to use statutory funding as leverage to acquire additional funds. Local PCSP coordinators (council employees who were jointly funded by the Community Safety Unit and the Northern Ireland Policing Board) had levered in an average 40% extra funding in each area during 2011-12, and up to a maximum of 80% in one council area.
- 2.6 The VCS could identify gaps in provision in areas such as the longstanding issue of prisoners' children where the consensus was that – despite years of campaigning and clear evidence which showed the necessity of intervening early if prisoners' children were to be helped to lead crime-free lives – the DoJ and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) were far from unified in relation to meeting their needs. Opportunity Youth (OY) made a successful case for funding to provide independent representation of young prisoners in Hydebank Wood who were charged with breaches of discipline.
- 2.7 OY and the NIPS provided an example of effective working engagement in a VCS-funder relationship. OY had been working in the prisons since 1999 when it began providing a drug and alcohol intervention service at Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre. Sharing offices with NIPS personnel and other disciplines had led to improvements in professional relationships over the last four years and OY had developed well beyond its origins, becoming involved in daily management meetings, prisoner induction and supporting vulnerable prisoners. Some of these activities were instigated by OY while others came at the request of the NIPS, and it was closely involved in designing its Service Level Agreements with the NIPS. OY now delivered services in the three Northern Ireland prisons and also provided services for the Youth Justice Agency in Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre and for the PBNI.
- 2.8 The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) had a clear aim of protecting children and keeping them at the centre of all relevant services and strategies. As many of these strategies were led by the Departments of Education or Health and Social Services and Public Safety as well as Justice, the NSPCC were well-represented on a range of relevant infrastructure groups that straddled several Government departments.



2.9 The VCS experience was that there was a willingness to listen. One representative said that in recent years there had been a “*huge amount of movement...we are chipping away successfully...*” Nonetheless cultural barriers remained and sometimes the VCS felt it was viewed as peripheral. As the terms of service delivery were being ever more highly-specified by statutory funders, the VCS increasingly felt they were treated as arms length bodies. This could cause a degree of tension in relationships, though this was no bad thing – a level of dynamic tension between the two sectors inhibited a climate of complacency from developing – and the VCS challenge function was seen as integral to the relationship.

Working relationships

2.10 The YJA and PBNI placed a lot of emphasis on working collaboratively with community groups. In addition to funding, they evidenced this in practical ways such as sharing premises and involving VCS partners in wider aspects of their role, for example meetings with public figures. The Department of Finance and Personnel’s Central Procurement Directorate had provided useful mentoring for the YJA in the early days of its role as a funder. While this entailed the YJA sacrificing a degree of autonomy, it also helped them ensure proper application of criteria and fair scoring of funding submissions. The PBNI successfully nominated the partnership of organisations working with women offenders for a Butler Trust Award. The application of an equality-based and complementary philosophy between funder and funded bodies, rather than a purchaser/provider split was an important determinant of success in these professional relationships.

2.11 In order to work productively together it was also important for the VCS and statutory agencies to clearly differentiate their roles and adhere to boundaries. Statutory agencies articulated an explicit view that while VCS agencies fulfilled a valuable support role, it

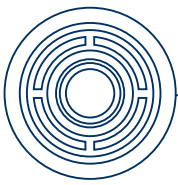
was for their officials to assess and manage risk and exercise discretion in case management.

2.12 Bureaucracy could impede service delivery, causing problems for both the VCS and their funders. Large statutory organisations sometimes found it difficult to maintain clear lines of communication with their voluntary partners, even when there were formal structures for doing so. For example the Quaker Service was well-respected by the NIPS for its work at Maghaberry Prison Visitor Centre and a good formal communications mechanism was in place. The Visitor Centre manager was invited to prison management meetings, there were regular contacts at headquarters level and working relationships were positive. However in practice things were not always effective: Quaker Service only learned indirectly at three days notice that Sunday and Friday visits were to close for four months during 2012. This had major implications for their staffing arrangements as well as for prisoners’ visitors.

The community sector

2.13 Things had become difficult for some community organisations since the last CJI review. The West Belfast Parent and Youth Support Group, once a hive of activity with 20 staff and a large number of volunteers, had reduced to just three part-time staff and was having difficulty in maintaining its premises. Only a few of its constituent groups remained active because personnel had moved on when funding ceased; and the current funders excluded pension contributions or programme and running costs.

2.14 On the other hand things had improved considerably for NIA and CRJI. They were more secure than in 2006, with the DSD as their main funders, supplemented by charitable trusts and a pool of monies from local statutory agencies. CRJI said “*Things have come on leaps and bounds and we are on a solid footing for the first time...we have very good relationships*




with all the operational agencies.” After years of considerable uncertainty neither had ultimately lost any staff and they had maintained most of their operational bases. Their progress was due to a range of factors including the improved political landscape in Northern Ireland and the fact that their work was strongly endorsed by criminal justice agencies, with the police in particular attaching unequivocal value to their contribution.

- 2.15 NIA and CRJI had evolved into sophisticated organisations with appropriate governance apparatus. At the same time both retained close community linkages which were an important element of their ethos. Their key personnel had significant networks of influence, recognised the benefits of collaboration and could join with others to provide programmes or respond to policy consultations without diluting their own value base.
- 2.16 Just as other voluntary organisations changed tack in response to the needs of statutory funders, so too community organisations inevitably shifted focus with the passage of time. The Ex-Prisoner Interpretative Centre for example, while continuing to deal with ex-prisoner welfare and policy issues, now considered conflict transformation, community safety and conflict legacy issues - funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund - to be their main tasks.

Volunteering

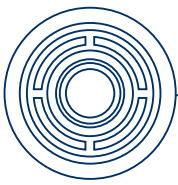
- 2.17 Volunteers made an important contribution to all sorts of VCS activity in the criminal justice sector. Examples included Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, mentoring and befriending schemes and participation in management committees. VSNI deployed 200 volunteers who delivered 24,400 hours in 2011-12 in support of victims and witnesses. There were a range of youth programmes and intergenerational activities whereby volunteers helped create safer communities and impacted positively on community relations. These roles provided valuable civil and social engagement given longstanding mistrust of the criminal justice system in many Northern Ireland communities during the ‘Troubles’.
- 2.18 Volunteer Now, an infrastructural body for developing quality and consistency in volunteering estimated that Northern Ireland was on a par with the rest of Western Europe in levels of participation. Development of a Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland in 2012 was a welcome step in defining the way forward and the DoJ recognised the added value of volunteering to the local criminal justice system via, for example the ‘Justice in the Community’ awards scheme. The value of volunteering could be gauged in a number of ways including its role in the lives of people at risk or who had been involved with the criminal justice system, although ex-offenders were still underrepresented in volunteering in Northern Ireland.
- 2.19 Some prisoners were deployed in volunteer roles such as Listeners, Housing Advisors and peer educators. However security concerns, regime limitations, and in some cases concern about prisoners performing an equal status role with Prison Officers limited the opportunities. The tangible value of prisoner volunteers was reflected in the fact that only 15% of 556 referrals to Housing Advisors during 2011 had to be referred to paid staff for specialist input.
- 2.20 The funding matrix to support volunteering was no less challenging than elsewhere in the VCS, and there was an expectation that financial support would become further complicated after the Review of Public Administration was implemented. Good volunteer management practice and procedures were essential as organisations providing volunteering opportunities had to be careful not to substitute volunteers for paid employees. They also had to be mindful of the potential impact of volunteering on Social Security benefits, and volunteers’ expectations needed to be carefully managed. There were



also continuous challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers and deploying them in the right place at the right time.

Accountability mechanisms


- 2.21 VCS bodies that received funding were held accountable for their financial probity, governance and practice effectiveness. Accountability began at the point of application when considerable information was required by funders to ensure they were dealing with bona fide organisations. In this sense formal accountability arrangements tended to favour existing providers who were tried and tested and 'knew the rules' which could make it more difficult for new players to enter the field.
- 2.22 Accountability relationships worked best when funders identified their needs and imparted these clearly to applicants. Whilst most funders had dedicated administrative support to oversee practice and financial accountability, they recognised their responsibility to assist funded bodies which did not have the human resources, information technology or finance machinery to handle their bureaucratic demands. Inspectors heard that relationships were generally mature, especially between established organisations in each sector. The large VCS organisations had become well-used to differential levels of demand and were able to cope with them. Indeed some VCS organisations gathered more monitoring data than funders required in order to address their own key questions such as whether their interventions had made a difference.
- 2.23 That is not to say that accountability mechanisms were free from frustration. It was suggested to Inspectors that targets and objectives were in some cases imposed with the emphasis on compliance rather than agreed in a true spirit of partnership; and that not all funders recognised the merit of qualitative measures. Clear distinctions were made between funders, with European Union (EU) funding programmes reported as particularly exacting to the extent that some funded bodies needed a dedicated member of staff to deliver the minutiae of their monitoring requirements. On the other hand, the NIHE was described as applying a proportionate approach to monitoring; and Belfast Regeneration Office and the DSD applied risk-based monitoring which was felt to be particularly helpful. An illustration was provided of the DSD assessing the Housing Rights Service as 'low risk' following a corporate governance audit and consequently applying lighter touch reporting.
- 2.24 The DoJ conducted quarterly bilateral meetings to supplement the financial and practice monitoring data that they received. The DoJ's Community Safety Unit required strong initial proposals and conducted a significant amount of due diligence when initial funding applications were received. Their ongoing scrutiny was thorough and local project development officers had a verification role to help funded bodies conform to their requirements. Operational agencies such as the YJA and the PBNi involved local managers as well as headquarters personnel in assessing applications and validating monitoring returns to ensure compliance with Service Level Agreements.
- 2.25 The DoJ-VSNI funding relationship and associated accountability mechanism was unique since VSNI was 100% funded (£2.1m per annum) by the DoJ to deliver services that were solely commissioned by Government. On the one hand this meant that VSNI had greater security of funding, only reported to one funder and were paid in advance due to their total dependence on DoJ funds. On the other hand VSNI felt the DoJ exerted too much control over the running of their organisation. VSNI fully accepted the need to account for public funding, and having always satisfied financial probity and practice requirements argued that they should be subject to risk-based monitoring which would reduce the levels of scrutiny applied. Efforts were being made to address the issue of monitoring and a new reporting arrangement requested by VSNI was being



tested at the time of this review.

Notwithstanding different perspectives the interface with VSNI was generally effective and they were involved in relevant DoJ policy fora such as contributing to the new Victims and Witnesses Strategy.

- 2.26 Without doubt an emphasis on targets and variances in actual and forecast budget lines was a useful part of any monitoring arrangement and provided a sense of security for the funding body. However there was little data or analysis of the costs of compliance, either for public sector funders or for VCS bodies. Calls for a reduction in bureaucracy would therefore benefit from an analysis of costs, comparison across the sector and adoption of best practice to reduce costs. Even without such analytical evidence there appeared to be considerable scope to reduce the cost and level of bureaucracy in accordance with recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee.
- 2.27 Risk-based monitoring was constantly advanced to Inspectors as a more proportionate means of holding mature organisations to account. This would mean that levels of financial and practice monitoring would be determined by an organisations performance and compliance history. Many of the larger VCS bodies had independent boards who received detailed reports on funding and business objectives, and reporting the same material onwards to a range of funders represented unnecessary duplication of effort. Risk-based monitoring would mean that an organisation would report only on strategic objectives, with detailed operational monitoring information available to be shared with funders if required. The DSD – which led on VCS-statutory relationships – applied a risk-based approach and was leading a team which was considering all departments’ administration of funding arrangements. **We recommend the DoJ and its statutory agencies which provide funding to the VCS should pilot a risk-based approach to financial and practice monitoring.**
- 2.28 It was extremely difficult, if not impossible for VCS organisations to attribute tangible added value to their contributions because they could not access data such as rates of rearrest, reoffending and reconviction. In this respect the Ministry of Justice’s (MoJ) DataLab initiative was an innovative approach. It aimed to allow VCS groups to access important recidivism data in summary form via the Police National Computer and the National Probation Services risk assessment analyses, without compromising sensitive personal information. While this was a complex undertaking with legal and compliance issues, the initiative was being prioritised by the MoJ. Such access would assist considerably in levelling the playing field between funder and funded in Northern Ireland. **We recommend the DoJ should assess the benefits of the DataLab experiment and aim to introduce a similar pilot in Northern Ireland.**
- 2.29 A wide range of other external validation applied to funded VCS bodies including inspections, financial audits, Environmental Health assessment (for example of residential premises), and quinquennial reviews. The purposes varied with some of this validation simply aimed to ensure compliance, while other exercises aimed to assist organisational development. For example NIA and CRJI felt that CJI inspections had helped to provide clarity about what they were doing and in establishing their bona fides with funding bodies.
- 2.30 However many evaluations were considered to be a waste of time and money. VCS organisations had to issue tenders and then engage an evaluator who was unfamiliar with their work. The evaluator had to be external in order to demonstrate independence. These evaluations usually focused on annual expenditure against budget, with a retrospective analysis of the achievement of objectives. Usually the VCS organisation would have already accounted extensively through routine accountability mechanisms for their annual expenditure and achievement of business objectives. In these cases a lighter touch



process would make sense, as it could do the VCS justice yet still account adequately for their expenditure of public monies.

2.31 UK research has shown that funders tended to focus on activities and financial probity, and that evaluation approaches were often inconsistent without producing robust outcomes measurement. A recent exercise by Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI) developed a practical approach to capturing 'hard to measure' qualitative outcomes produced by community and voluntary activity. The CENI 'Measuring Change' approach involved:

- facilitating funders to define the changes they want to make and articulating these as outcomes; and then
- supporting funded projects to estimate their baseline position against these outcomes at the beginning of their funding, and assessing progress made over time.⁸

CENI piloted the approach to help identify and baseline outcomes of the Community Renewal programme. Additional exercises were conducted with other funders, including the Big Lottery Fund, Belfast City Council and Department of Agricultural and Rural Development who were exploring the potential for further application of this methodology.

2.32 A central assessment of the VCS contribution could add value by providing an ongoing assessment of its cumulative benefits/achievements over, say a five-year programme measured against the delivery of departmental strategies and applying an assessment of qualitative outcomes. Considering the cumulative funding of the 10 largest VCS bodies operating in the criminal justice system equated to around £100 million over five years (plus another £20 million budget for the PCSPs over three years), there is a strong case to be made for quantitative and

qualitative assessment of achievement rather than repetition of annual monitoring by departments.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

2.33 Social Return on Investment was a framework for measuring social value by placing a monetary value on the contribution made by VCS organisations. It was expounded in the 'Measuring Social Value' project run by the Office of the Third Sector that aimed to increase the capability of VCS organisations to understand, measure, prove and articulate their social and environmental impact and the value this created. It also aimed to support social investors and commissioners of public services to understand this social value and thereby make more intelligent investment or purchasing decisions using a measure of the social return on investment.⁹ SROI incorporated the main elements of a cost benefit analysis but used much wider involvement of stakeholders to assess the value of the work or services provided, giving a rounded view of what a VCS body was achieving. As such there is merit in assessing the use of SROI, and also the CENI approach in respect of VCS bodies that contribute to the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland.

2.34 The VCS funding and accountability model in the Republic of Ireland was quite similar to that in Northern Ireland. The Probation and Youth Justice Services assessed applications and made decisions about funding VCS groups while the Department of Justice and Equality was the sanctioning body for all expenditure. A total of 46 VCS organisations received €11 million in 2011 through the Probation Service, and another 15 organisations received €3 million via the Youth Justice Service. In addition the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime allocated €1.2 million to 46 non-governmental organisations that were providing front line services in 2011.

8 'Measuring Change - A New Approach,' Community Evaluation Northern Ireland Briefing Paper, June 2011.

9 'Social Return on Investment,' New Philanthropy Capital Position Paper, April 2010.



2.35 In each case the VCS objectives had to be strategically aligned to those of the operational agencies and funded organisations were required to sign an agreement which was linked to specific performance targets in order to avoid drift between their objectives and those of the funder. A single funding source within the criminal justice family for each community organisation was considered the most prudent way to ensure best value for money and clear communication. As a result a central financial control unit was established within the Department of Justice and Equality.

CHAPTER 3:

Outcomes



Added Value

3.1 The VCS added value to Northern Ireland's criminal justice system in various ways. Among the most significant were attracting significant additional funding from a range of sources such as the EU and charitable trusts, involving non-criminal justice professionals in the system and providing local participation in the process of resettling offenders. The VCS was also recognised for providing services which could not be readily outsourced or market-tested; and it could provide access to the justice system for communities that did not readily engage with funders or statutory agencies. A major success was the working relationship between the PSNI and VCS bodies in the field of community relations and youth work.

3.2 Some examples of VCS added value are set out below:

- Quaker Connections volunteer programme was providing a significant service for prisoners and their families at no revenue cost to statutory justice agencies apart from a small amount for capital investment. Their revenue and equipment costs were coming from other sources;
- The Princes Trust worked with over 3,000 disadvantaged young people in Northern Ireland each year. 21% of these were adjudicated offenders. During 2011-12 it helped 78% of the young people that completed its programmes move into education, training or employment. The Trust ran a personal development programme in Hydebank Wood Young

Offenders Centre which supported prisoners in making the transition back into the community. In addition, it delivered programmes in 70 schools which provided additional benefit by involving secondees from the PSNI, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and DSD for 12-16 week placements;

- The Prison Arts Foundation provided 20 artists – who provided music, art, drama and creative writing instruction – in the three prisons and in community justice settings, of whom five came at no additional cost since they were externally funded. By comparison 100 out of the 149 prisons in England and Wales had artists;
- The Women's Support Network (WSN) worked with women on probation under the auspices of the *Inspire* project to support their integration into the community. It also visited the women prisoners at Hydebank Wood and supported them in local Women's Centres after release. They treated women holistically, as citizens who were often needy and vulnerable, as well as offenders, and helped with issues that had brought them into conflict with the law. While participation in WSN community programmes was voluntary, they would not collude with offenders, and failures to comply were reported to the PBNi and the NIPS;
- The Samaritans Prison Teams trained and supported Listeners – volunteer prisoners who supported other prisoners when they were depressed. Samaritan volunteers also visited each prison weekly to meet prisoners who were being held in Care and



Supervision Units and those deemed to be at risk of self-harm. They had a very good relationship with the NIPS and said *“There has been a sea change in the NIPS attitude in recent times...we are very impressed with levels of care and thought that the NIPS at all levels puts into prisoners...”*

- The Housing Rights Service’s (HRS) origins lay well outside the criminal justice system, yet they were helping to reduce criminal behaviour by dealing with contributory social issues such as prisoners’ accommodation problems. They had tentatively agreed to work in the prisons in 2006, initially with NIHE funding, and could identify major improvements since then. The HRS had also begun to provide helpdesks in County and High Courts to assist people who were facing repossession or homelessness due to mortgage and rent arrears;
- Prison Fellowship made 6,500 prison visits each year and supported 650 ex-prisoners and 750 families for just £10,000 per year criminal justice funding;
- The Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) received its core funding from the Health and Social Care Board, and small amounts from the DoJ for specific issues such as facilitating young peoples’ contribution to the Youth Justice Review. They engaged with young people on an exclusively voluntary basis and as a matter of principle did not respond to tenders that required them to support statutory agencies’ enforcement of court orders.

3.3 The European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (the PEACE programme) had invested some €1,300 million directly (€1,800 million when match funding was included) in Northern Ireland since 1995. It funded major projects, many in disadvantaged areas that were affected by crime, applying the principle of additionality which meant their monies were intended to add to, rather than displace funding that should come from Government. The

PEACE programme was reviewed most recently by NICVA in September 2012. A range of benefits and challenges were identified.

Benefits included:

- increased political stability and secure political institutions;
- ‘de-sectarianised’ community relations in Northern Ireland;
- certain areas, small groups and individuals had dramatically benefitted from PEACE funding; and
- the voluntary and community sector was now filling a gap by delivering a range of services from which the public sector had withdrawn.

3.4 Challenges included:

- increased and inflexible administrative procedures and bureaucratic delays which negatively impacted on the programme’s successful and timely deliverance;
- there was a lack of qualitative feedback; and
- the system was considered to be risk-averse and did not encourage innovation.


3.5 Themes for the next round of funding (PEACE IV) included:

- there should be greater focus on long-term and small innovative projects, as well as those benefitting groups most in need; and
- smaller organisations needed help to improve their capacity for funding and in the application process.

The Big Lottery and Rowntree Foundation were reported as exemplars in terms of funding structure and trust-building which would be useful models for others to follow.¹⁰

3.6 A strong case was made for the benefits of ‘spending to save’ initiatives. For example the WSN in a ‘Social Return on Investment Report’ carried out with one of the women’s centres posted a £19 return for every £1 that was

¹⁰ ‘A Review of PEACE III and considerations for PEACE IV’ NICVA, October 2012.

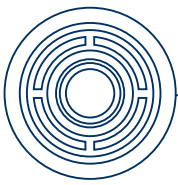


invested in their criminal justice work. The WSNs funding was precarious – after four years working in the criminal justice system its only statutory funding was £11,000 from the PBNi which had to be applied for on an annual basis. The rest of their £40,000 funding came from charitable trusts and was due to end in March 2014. The Princes Trust indicated that their programme in Hydebank Wood helped reduce reoffending by participants to a rate of only 7%. They had planned to scale up the project to support 240 young offenders over three years, at a cost of £1,500 per participant with a projected nett saving of £10.1m during the period 2012-2015. However, despite positive outcomes for young offenders and projected cost benefits for the justice system, when funding expired in March 2012 the Princes Trust had not been able to secure monies to continue the project. A charitable trust was offering 50% of the required amount, but the other 50% had to come from public funds and it was simply not available.

- 3.7 There was no way of demonstrating how much the WSN or the Princes Trust inputs contributed to these projected savings, and funders always had to assess applications in light of other similar services and proposals. However the figures suggested the concept of ‘justice reinvestment’ merited further consideration. Justice reinvestment would mean that notional savings accrued from diversion from prosecution or reduced usage of prison places could be redirected towards crime prevention work.
- 3.8 Some reinvestment initiatives were already in hand: the Minister of Justice allocated £800,000 in 2012 under the criminal confiscation scheme to local communities to help tackle crime and the fear of crime; and the PSNI was allocating assets recovery monies at district level to local crime prevention schemes. These initiatives were attractive to the VCS and welcomed as tangible contributions which should be explored further.

Advocacy and consultation

- 3.9 Many VCS organisations viewed advocacy as an important element of their role and invested a lot of resources in raising the profile of issues that mattered to their clientele. Politicians and senior officials were primary targets for advocacy, which was usually undertaken to heighten awareness of issues and lead to their inclusion in strategies such as the Programme for Government.
- 3.10 Statutory bodies and funders generally accepted the VCS advocacy role, though varied in the extent of their acceptance. Advocacy could be a sensitive topic as the risk of public criticism was a source of some anxiety for funders. Apart from VSNI, virtually all criminal justice VCS bodies had access to non-statutory funds which they could use for advocacy purposes. This degree of independence was valued and it helped that MLAs were keen to hear VCS views. Funders usually had higher levels of confidence in organisations which could provide a strong evidential base for their work and maintain balance in their commentary.
- 3.11 The NSPCC benefitted from being part of a large national organisation which was well-connected to UK Government structures, and their authorised status also helped. They created the initial remit and model for the Young Witness Service in the Crown Courts, which provided 13 staff and 50 volunteers in return for just under 90% of the projects funding. Although components of the service such as management and human resourcing were not funded, this was not a concern for the NSPCC as it was able to advance the broader safeguarding agenda which was important for them, while the DoJ still received the services that it required. The NSPCC was quite comfortable in this relationship with the DoJ and felt they were equally treated.




- 3.12 The DHSSPS and Social Services Trusts actively encouraged advocacy as they were required to seek users' voices in fulfilment of their governance obligations. Whilst the DoJ did not want to fund bodies which might offer criticisms, they recognised and valued the VCS' independence and did not have an issue with advocacy as long as it was done in a manner which they felt was constructive.
- 3.13 VCS organisations noted the value of being able to comment on issues which, although outside the criminal justice system, still provided potential for people to be involved with the system or criminalised. Examples included the Department of the Environment's Cleaner Neighbourhood Strategy which could result in prosecutions for littering, and the use of videolink in Lakewood Secure Centre which represented a criminal justice solution in a child-centred environment.
- 3.14 VCS organisations attached a lot of importance to Government consultation exercises, though some suggested that agencies and Departments did not always follow Government guidance which highlighted the implications of not consulting properly. While the VCS commented favourably on how their feedback was reflected in some consultations, they were critical of the quality of others and the lack of policy amendments flowing from their responses. They said the same questions were repeatedly asked which implied that previous comments had not been heeded and was embarrassing when service users were assisting in the response process. Inspectors were also told that consultations sometimes issued too late which constrained meaningful VCS input. A suggestion had been made at one stage that the DoJ would develop a standardised framework for its consultations. This had not been done, though at the time of this review the DoJ was establishing a Consultative Forum which aimed, inter alia to improve the quality and outreach of consultations.
- 3.15 Other criticisms of consultation were that there was poor screening to assess equality for minority groupings during consultations. Some

VCS organisations felt the DoJ was defensive and viewed Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) as a means to criticise them rather than serving its intended purpose of ensuring services were provided on an equitable basis for everyone.

- 3.16 Inspectors did however hear examples of beneficial outcomes from VCS advocacy: a locally-sensitised understanding of Conflict-related convictions was taken into account when the Independent Safeguarding Authority was being established; and it was suggested the VCS contribution to the Justice Committee on the Victim and Witnesses Strategy had been well-received.

Flexibility

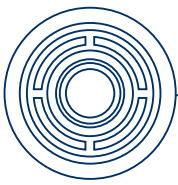
- 3.17 Inspectors frequently heard that VCS organisations were valued for being flexible and innovative, responsive to the changing needs of statutory bodies, and indeed the VCS itself promoted these as important attributes. Approved premises provided a good example: over the years their role had shifted significantly from providing accommodation for homeless offenders to playing a central role in Northern Ireland's Public Protection Arrangements. They provided close supervision and support for released prisoners whose licence conditions required them to live there, often against their will. All six approved premises were run by VCS organisations, and the changed requirements had significant impact for them in terms of staffing levels, physical security arrangements and high levels of community and media interest. These pressures were more keenly felt in an era when budgets were being flat-lined.
- 3.18 Flexibility was also essential: although criminal justice funding was withdrawn from Extern's *Floating Support* programme, adjudicated offenders still constituted 50% of its referrals and the programme had to be reconfigured to address the shortfall. When financial cuts were implemented, loss of funding from one body could have a knock-on effect, for example, a



reduction in local criminal justice funding for Extern's Axis project – following a review of referral rates and uptake of places – impacted adversely on their income from the European Social Fund and DEL since match funding was reduced proportionately.

Outcomes for funders

- 3.19 Funders were able to specify their requirements in terms of numbers and risk levels of clients, duration and intensity of contact and a range of other criteria that they wanted the VCS to meet when delivering programmes. Monitoring returns took account of adherence to, or deviation from these targets and factors that influenced their performance.
- 3.20 It was easier to measure quantity than quality as the qualitative benefits of VCS involvement were often considered to be subjective. Numerical data was therefore reflected in all monitoring returns. For example, approved premises had to run at as close to full occupancy as possible in order to ensure financial viability. Thousands of prison visitors were transported, benefitted from childcare and used visitor centres each year. Hundreds of volunteers contributed to the criminal justice system by, for example sitting on boards of management or supporting victims at court. These activities undoubtedly made a more significant social contribution than mere numbers could indicate.
- 3.21 Likewise nearly everyone could agree that, even though it was often impossible to quantify their contributions communities were better-off for targeted injections of funding or involvement in formal justice processes and programmes such as those delivered by CRJI and NIA. These ranged from supporting police in serious crime investigations to mediating between young offenders and local victims.
- 3.22 The NIPS benefitted from community participation in its business – some 23 partners, mainly from the VCS were engaged in various roles within Northern Ireland's three prisons. The NIPS valued this input as it provided external involvement in the formerly closed world of prisons. VCS organisations that responded to the strategies that mattered to funders' (such as the Youth Justice Review of September 2011 and the Prison Review of October 2011) were more likely to be successful in identifying relevant services and acquiring funds to help deliver the outcomes that these strategies mandated. For their part the more enlightened funders recognised that true 'partnership' meant sharing risks and liabilities as well as buying in service provision.
- 3.23 The VCS depended on funders not only for monies, but often also for referrals. In these circumstances VCS projects could be vulnerable if operational personnel were slow to refer. This was usually due to limited awareness, though sometimes preciousness on the part of statutory practitioners also contributed, and their senior managers had to work hard on occasions to generate referrals in order to maximise return on their agency's financial investment.
- 3.24 Statutory funders were clear that they needed the VCS to enhance and complement their role rather than duplicate what they were doing. They did not necessarily endorse the suggestion that VCS groups could engage better with offenders just because they were local and/or non-statutory. They also preferred organisations that acknowledged the mutuality of roles and delivered their services in a non-competitive manner.
- 3.25 The PSNI felt they received very good value for the contribution of some £250,000 per annum that they allocated to the VCS. Most of this was delivered via the eight PSNI Districts in support of local initiatives that enhanced their policing practice, and there were other funding streams available from the centre for programmes such as restorative justice and community mediation programmes. In contrast nearly all NIPS funding was centrally delivered and managed, and governors had very little local discretion or control of monies.



3.26 The PBNI had spent some years right-sizing its business needs to identify the outcomes they wanted, and delivered their community development budget via open advert. This was supported by local manager involvement, panel assessment and an appeal mechanism. The PBNI approach created expectations and had led to increased applications as well as more appeals. However they assessed that by now they had a “pretty close match” between money available and the various criteria that had to be satisfied such as numbers of offenders, levels of deprivation, geographical spread, size of funded organisations, and provision for specialist groups such as females and young offenders. Their conclusion was that outcomes for PBNI’s £1.4 million Community Development expenditure were multiplied to a greater extent than if they spent the same amount on extra Probation Officers; and that they would lose a key ingredient in offender management if the budget was reallocated. In recognition of the VCS significance the PBNI had appointed an Area Manager in 2012 whose responsibilities included oversight of VCS relationships.

3.27 The YJA had a wide range of VCS engagement in order to provide placements for the young people with whom it worked. They developed funding relationships at local level, many on a one-off basis, and found this broad scope of engagement generated a considerable amount of goodwill as well as opportunities to promote their philosophy in numerous communities. The YJA felt their funding was going directly to programmes that supported YJA responsibilities and, having received positive audit feedback on their external spend, were content with their current model of funding.

3.28 Funders did not like to be unduly bound by existing arrangements and needed freedom to do things differently as circumstances changed. The statutory/VCS relationship was not evenly balanced and much hard work was required to make relationships work professionally and productively for everyone involved. Notwithstanding these challenges there was

unequivocal high level endorsement of the value attached to the VCS role in criminal justice. This was most tangibly represented by the Minister of Justices’ request that funders should not reduce funding by more than 1.5% in 2012-13, which was symbolic and financially significant for VCS groups in a difficult fiscal climate.

The future

3.29 Northern Ireland’s statutory and VCS agencies and the DoJ were carefully watching initiatives - particularly contestability and Social Impact Bonds (SIB) – that were underway in the England and Wales criminal justice sector. Social Impact Bonds entailed VCS organisations entering into partnerships with private sector companies to deliver programmes, including running prisons; while contestability meant the VCS was bidding for work such as managing Community Service schemes that had traditionally been the responsibility of Probation Trusts. In essence, they entailed parts of the VCS becoming sub-contractors to large corporate organisations.

3.30 Everyone with whom Inspectors spoke considered that Northern Ireland did not have the same gaps in the market as England and Wales, that changes of provider would only unhelpfully displace current providers in this small jurisdiction without adding any benefit, and in any event the cohort of eligible offenders was deemed too small to be viable. Therefore it was intended at the time of this inspection that Northern Ireland would retain existing arrangements for service delivery, which was largely the same approach that was being taken in Scotland.

3.31 Although there was little appetite for contestability, some possible SIB pilots were identified. The DoJ was intending to scope a SIB approach to establishing a youth version of the *Inspire* project as recommended by the Prison Review Team; and Extern was considering participation in a SIB after Big Lottery funding expired for one of its main



programmes. They felt this would be attractive as it would remove the need for a procurement exercise.

- 3.32 There was concern within the VCS and operational criminal justice agencies about pending legislative changes that were expected to adversely affect their clientele. In particular, introduction of the Welfare Reform Act and Universal Credit were expected to lead to increased levels of vulnerability and homelessness among 18-24 year olds, many of whom were involved with the justice system, both as victims and offenders.
- 3.33 VCS organisations that were closely aligned to statutory operational agencies envisaged their future would be framed by the policies and strategies which drove their funders, such as the Community Safety Strategy and the 2011 Prisons and Youth Justice Reviews. Community organisations emphasised that their future lay in partnerships with statutory bodies, but preferred to locate themselves on the margins of the criminal justice system while engaging in broader community development issues and fostering political linkages to address social problems.
- 3.34 Inspectors did not receive any sense of mission drift within the local VCS. They were alert to the risk of compromising their independence and value bases in the quest for funding, and recognised that pursuing money could dilute their capacity to influence. They aimed to retain a focus on vulnerable people, identify unmet need and reduce the impact of the criminal justice system on victims, offenders plus their families and children, as well as providing diversion and exit strategies for those already in the system.
- 3.35 The funding environment will be highly significant in determining how closely the VCS can adhere to their principles. The trend towards tendering had generated a greater sense of pressure for the VCS. Funders suggested that tendering was beneficial insofar as it allowed them to specify their needs, though they also realised the process required

refinement if it was to serve everyone's best long-term interests. The more proactive VCS organisations aimed to continue bringing their own ideas to funders as well as responding to tenders. Optimal levels of success will be achieved by Government Departments and agencies working together and with the VCS more closely. This aim has been repeatedly spelled out over the years, but it remained aspirational in some important respects at the time of this review.



Section



Appendices



Appendix 1: Terms of reference

A review of the Voluntary and Community Sector's involvement in the Northern Ireland criminal justice system

Introduction

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) is undertaking a review of the Voluntary and Community Sector's (VCS) involvement in the Northern Ireland criminal justice system. This is a follow-up to the review that was published in November 2006. It is a high level examination of overall involvement rather than an inspection of individual organisational efficiency.

A wide range of VCS organisations are involved in reducing offending behaviour and improving access to justice, both directly and indirectly. While this review aims to take account of all relevant contributions, the main emphasis will be on organisations which receive core funding from central Government or statutory bodies for criminal justice purposes.

Context

There have been some important changes since CJI last reported on this topic. The Northern Ireland Assembly has had devolved powers since May 2007, and Justice powers were devolved in April 2010. The recession and changes to funding arrangements have had an impact, and a local Charity Commission is now in place. At UK level, current Government policy envisages a greater role for the private and third sectors in criminal justice service delivery - this is currently being tested by initiatives such as Payment by Results and Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). The European Union is consulting on new structural funds, and undertaking a review of Procurement Directives which have been complicated for VCS organisations until now.

Aims of the Inspection

The broad aims of the review are to:

- identify current levels of VCS involvement in the Northern Ireland criminal justice system in terms of service provision, advocacy and other roles;
- identify the VCS contribution to DoJ Public Service Agreement targets;
- assess levels of support - financial and other - that the VCS receives, plus accountability and reporting requirements that are applied; and evaluate whether current funding arrangements are the most efficient means of assisting its contribution to the aims of the justice system;
- assess the impact of changes since the 2006 CJI review;
- identify future challenges and opportunities; and
- make recommendations to improve VCS involvement in criminal justice work.

Principles

Underpinning all inspections and reviews conducted by CJI are the principles of inspection outlined in the Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services. These include the purpose of improvement and a focus on outcomes for end users, rather than concentrating on internal management arrangements. The principles of inspection are set out more fully on the CJI website at: <http://www.cjini.org/CJNI/files/7d/7d3551e8-8b7e-4df1-a409-e448a1400ea2.pdf>



Methodology

The methodology will be based on the CJI approach as outlined in the Operational Guidelines, the Inspection Management Checklist and the Inspection Framework. The methods of gathering evidence will include:

- background reading - policies, Service Level Agreements, feedback and commentary on contributions to Public Service Agreement targets, minutes of inter-agency and other meetings;
- structured interviews/questionnaires/focus groups with organisations listed in Appendix 1. These are identified on the basis that they receive or administer core funding for a criminal justice purpose;
- invitation to other organisations (around 50 have been identified) to contribute in writing or by meeting with Inspectors;
- analysis of service delivery and outcomes data from VCS and statutory agencies - caseloads, trends, internal audit and monitoring reports;
- financial cost/benefit analysis; and
- literature search in relation to the VCS contribution in other jurisdictions.

Feedback, drafting and publication

At the conclusion of fieldwork Inspectors will provide emerging findings to senior managers in the core agencies at Appendix 1. Following factual accuracy checks the CJI report will be submitted to the Minister of Justice for approval to publish. Once permission is received a press release will be prepared and shared with the core inspected agencies prior to final publication.

Timetable

Key target dates are:

- June - August 2012: Undertake fieldwork
- 19 October : Draft report to agencies
- 9 November : Feedback from agencies
- December 2012: Publication

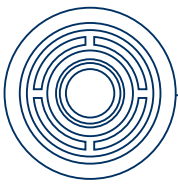
Appendix 1:

VCS organisations

Community Restorative Justice Ireland
Extern
NIACRO
Northern Ireland Alternatives
Quaker Service
Victim Support Northern Ireland

Statutory organisations

Department of Justice
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Northern Ireland Prison Service
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Youth Justice Agency



Appendix 2: Organisations which contributed to this review

Community Restorative Justice Ireland

Department of Justice – Reducing Offending Division, Community Safety Unit, Criminal Justice Development Division, Probation & Prisoner Ombudsman Unit

Department of Social Development - Voluntary & Community Unit

Disability Action

Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre

Extern

Housing Rights Service

Irish Probation and Welfare Service

Irish Department of Justice and Equality

Ministry of Justice - Reducing Reoffending Branch

Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders

NICVA

Northern Ireland Alternatives

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Northern Ireland Prison Service

NSPCC

Opportunity Youth

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Princes Trust

Prison Arts Foundation

Prison Fellowship Northern Ireland

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Quaker Service

Samaritans

Victim Support Northern Ireland


Volunteer Now

Voice Of Young People In Care

West Belfast Parent & Youth Support Group

Women's Support Network

Youth Justice Agency



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