

# **Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime**

**The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in  
the National Offender Management Service**





## **Ministerial Foreword**

The National Offender Management Service offers a unique opportunity to sustain and expand existing work whilst opening up the prospect of new areas for partnership and engagement with the voluntary and community sector.

I am well aware of the added value that voluntary organisations can offer and the flexibility and innovation they bring. We are committed to the greater use of the not for profit and voluntary sector in the delivery of services to offenders and their families.

I know there is already a wealth of experience to draw on with over 900 voluntary organisations working in prisons and 600 with probation. NOMS recognises that all organisations, including smaller and local groups must be able to play their full part.

NOMS offers opportunities but there will also be challenges. Challenges, for NOMS, in demonstrating its ability to recognise the special needs and strengths of voluntary and community groups; challenges too for the voluntary sector in being confident and able to work with NOMS. All sectors need to take full advantage of this chance to explore new ways of working together and building effective partnerships.

I welcome the publication of this strategy for consultation and I hope that voluntary and community organisations and those working with them will make full use of this opportunity to comment on and contribute to the development of the relationship between NOMS and voluntary and community groups.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Goggins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Paul Goggins**

**Minister for Correctional Services and Reducing Re-offending.**

## Consultation

### Introduction

This strategy was originally developed as part of the Treasury's continuing review of the role of the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of public services as part of the 2004 Spending Review. It was agreed that the following would be seen as priorities:

- Health and social care for older persons
- Migrant integration
- Employment for minority ethnic communities
- Homelessness
- Support for parents and children
- Correctional Services (NOMS)

These are also priority areas for the *futurebuilders* funding programme, Change Up Public Service Delivery Programme and Invest to Save (2005-8).

The introduction of the new National Offender Management Service from June 2004 has opened up a new range of potential opportunities for voluntary sector involvement in the delivery of services to offenders. It also introduces the idea of "contestability" which may result in new areas of work beyond those in which voluntary groups are currently involved and new challenges. It has therefore been decided to launch this paper as a consultation document to be widely circulated to voluntary and community groups and to staff in NOMS, prisons and probation to seek comments on what is suggested and invite alternative ideas.

The consultation period will run from 1 February 2005 until 25 April 2005. A revised strategy incorporating ideas and information from the consultation process will then be presented to Ministers by June 2005 and published later in the Summer.

**Comments can be sent in writing to the NOMS Voluntary Sector Unit or returned by e-mail. For ease, you may prefer to respond using the attached response sheet which lists the questions posed in this consultation document. If you have not received this electronically as a Word document and wish to email us your response, please contact :**

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## 1. Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Correctional Services

1.1 Voluntary organisations have had a long and distinguished association with both prisons and probation. In the 19th Century there were Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies helping to meet “the urgent need for aid and aftercare”<sup>1</sup> for prisoners on release. Police Court Missionaries created under the Probation of First Offenders Act 1887 enabled magistrates to refer an offender to a volunteer who would try “by personal influence, with material help, if necessary, to persuade those who had found their way into the dock to lead a sober and steady life in the future”<sup>2</sup>. With the 1907 Probation of Offenders Act, courts were given the power to appoint probation officers. From these early beginnings have grown extensive relationships with a variety of voluntary sector groups, who support and add value to the work of both services.

1.2 Whilst the skills and knowledge brought by the voluntary sector have been essential in complementing the work of both services, this has not always been an easy relationship as is illustrated by this quote from the Prisons and Probation Inspectorates: *“We do not believe that either service makes best use of the resources that are available within the community or in partnership with non-governmental organisations. Community links are a vital part of the national and regional strategy we recommend. The report promotes the proper use of the voluntary sector which at present is too often tolerated rather than welcomed and may operate under fragile financial arrangements which expect much for little return, and which are often the first and easiest victims of budget cuts.”*<sup>3</sup>

1.3 The probation service has a good record of working successfully with the voluntary and community sector to provide resettlement services to offenders in the community, particularly for accommodation through hostels and move on housing. The absence of a national probation structure until 2001 meant however that work with the voluntary and community sector was often fragmented, with no clear consensus about when and how partnerships might be most effectively developed.

1.4 In contrast, the Prison Service has worked since 2000, to put in place measures to address a relationship, which was often ad hoc and poorly managed. Following an extensive process of consultation with prison service staff and voluntary and community groups a strategy was developed and published in December 2001. This was translated into a Prison Service Order, which was adopted in July 2002 and led to the adoption of a structure and systems for creating more effective relationships with voluntary groups working in prisons. This has included mapping voluntary sector provision, and the establishing of voluntary sector co-ordinators in all area offices and every prison. There is still some way to go towards implementing the PSO fully in all prisons, but the framework for achieving this has been set out and there is commitment at all levels of the service to ensuring its delivery.

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone Committee Report 1895

<sup>2</sup> Young and Ashton 1956 p177

<sup>3</sup> Joint Thematic Review, Through the Prison Gates, HMI Prisons/Probation 2001

1.5 This work has been overseen by an independently chaired Advisory Group, drawn from the voluntary sector and prison service, operational managers and policy staff. This group reports regularly to the Director General of the Prison Service and to the Minister for Prisons and Probation.

1.6 In 2003/4 the Prison Service's National Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator was seconded, on a part-time basis, to the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit to put in place a more strategic direction for the relationship with voluntary groups who contribute to learning and skills in prisons and with offenders in the community. The first stage of this work was concluded with a major conference to celebrate the contribution of the arts to learning and skills in February 2004 and the launch on 25 March 2004 by Ivan Lewis and Paul Goggins of a strategy and a guide to monitoring and evaluation for Heads of Learning and Skills. A £1million devolved grants programme to support the work of voluntary groups involved in learning and skills in prisons was also announced for 2004/5.

1.7 Since the inception of the National Probation Service in April 2001, probation has followed a similar path, looking to develop a national strategic framework to give a focus to the more than 600 partnership arrangements now in place. Due to other pressures on the service not as much was achieved as it would have liked in developing a strategic vision for its work with the voluntary sector. It too has carried out a mapping exercise and initiated consultation on a strategy but this work was overtaken by changes with the National Probation Directorate and to some extent superseded by the creation of NOMS. A Partnership CLAN (Centrally Led Action Network), comprised of voluntary sector organisations and probation policy and operational staff, supported this work.

## **2. How and in what areas do the voluntary and community sector add value to the work of prisons and probation?**

2.1 Voluntary organisations offer skills, knowledge and expertise not available within the Services themselves and can offer advantages in dealing with the multiple disadvantages faced by offenders. These include:

- A client centred approach and an emphasis on user involvement in their service provision
- Increased trust from offenders due to their independence from the public sector
- The use of volunteers which allows services to increase social contact and in prisons and probation provides an important link to local communities
- Continuity for prisoners returning to the community
- A flexible, innovative and non-bureaucratic style – bringing fresh thinking to problem areas and new approaches with the advantage of being less risk averse and able to put ideas into action quickly

2.2 Prisons and probation have benefited from the involvement of the voluntary sector in numerous ways and across the “full market range”, from high-level

interventions with some of the most difficult offenders, such as the Lucy Faithfull therapeutic community for sex offenders in the community, to relatively low level, but vitally important, activities such as befriending.

2.3 There are large numbers of organisations working with the correctional services to deliver services – over 900 different organisations working in prisons delivering over 2000 projects between them and more than 600 projects working with probation in the community. A high proportion of those organisations working in prisons are local (nearly 90%) and they work only with the prison in their area. A similar picture emerges with probation, but the dynamics of providing accommodation, whether as a hostel or community housing, mean that there is a higher proportion of national providers, e.g. Stonham Housing, for these services. In general, however, and particularly for prison based work, the number of national organisations working with the correctional services is small, and even fewer of these have any regional structure.

2.4 Voluntary and community sector partners are already important players in delivering key services such as drug treatment and resettlement to both prisoners and offenders in the community. Access to support in dealing with substance misuse, suitable accommodation and employment are all known to be key in reducing re-offending. In prisons, much of the drug treatment and assessment provision is delivered by the voluntary sector working under contract. In the community, while drug treatment and rehabilitation services are also supplied by voluntary sector organisations, funding may be either through a contract with the probation service or joint commissioning managed by local Drug Action Teams.

2.5 Resettlement services for prisoners, particularly preparation for employment and housing advisory services, are an area that has grown since the introduction of Custody to Work funding in 2002 and specific targets for prisoners gaining access to employment and securing accommodation on release. Resettlement services are largely delivered under contract. The voluntary and community sector is also a primary partner with many probation areas in securing access to, or supporting offenders, in maintaining accommodation or work.

2.6 Recent centrally funded initiatives such as the development of the Probation Service Prospects programme for short sentence prolific drug offenders and the Intensive Control and Change Programme are beginning to show how voluntary, community and statutory agencies can integrate a range of community-based resettlement activities. This allows them to work with some of the most difficult recidivist offenders on release to address drug misuse, accommodation, community support and offending behaviour needs in a community-based environment.

2.7 With the exception of organisations providing services on a contractual basis, and those receiving national grants; voluntary organisations attract the majority of their income from independent funders, other Government Departments and agencies and EU funding. Many organisations receive no direct funding from prisons or probation. These are often groups who come into prisons to offer support to prisoners and their families through activities such as befriending, faith support, language and cultural

support, counselling, group work or providing refreshments or crèche facilities in visits halls. Such activities add to the general decency of prison environments, help meet the needs of a diverse range of prisoners and add value to prison regimes.

2.8 The Samaritans, for example, are crucial in assisting suicide prevention in prisons and, through their training and support of prisoners as Listeners, bring the added benefit of providing an opportunity for positive engagement for prisoner volunteers.

2.9 Most visitor centres attached to prisons are run by voluntary groups who deploy volunteers from the local community, thereby not only offering an important service to prisoners' families, but also creating contact between the prison and its immediate community. "Time for Families" is an initiative in the Prison Service Eastern Area to promote greater awareness and more effective responses to the needs of children of prisoners. This is a unique collaboration between Prison Service, the Ormiston Children and Families Trust and the Lankelly Foundation. See Appendix 1.

2.10 Organisations also add value to learning and skills in prisons and in the community, by contributing to prisoners and offenders gaining accredited qualifications in basic and work skills, but also providing a means to engage learners who have had little contact with formal education. Arts organisations, for instance, offer a variety of routes to engagement through drama, music, dance, writing, story telling and visual media and opportunities for raising self-confidence and self-esteem. Youth workers offer an informal young person centred approach to engagement with young prisoners and juveniles. Parenting classes and family days offer support in maintaining relationships with partners and children and organisations that provide specific services to women prisoners help to meet their specific needs and offer practical and emotional support.

## **2.11 Questions**

- a) Is what is described above a fair description of the extent and nature of current voluntary sector engagement with the Prison and Probation Services?
- b) Are there other areas of engagement that should be included? If so, please say what these are and why they are important?

## **3. How and to what extent should the voluntary and community sector feature in delivery in Correctional Services/NOMS?**

3.1 Voluntary sector involvement in Correctional Services is central to the delivery of added value services and this involvement will need to be maintained. The work, which the prison service has done to establish a voluntary and community sector strategy, and the emerging probation strategic framework for partnership working, will provide the structure for that involvement. The emphasis on delivery in the SR2004

period (2004-6) will be driven by two inter-linked factors, both of which may have implications for the role of the voluntary and community sector:

- The need to meet the demands of the new sentences introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 2003, particularly the introduction of custody plus and the requirement for all prisoners to be supervised on licence following release from custody. This will significantly increase the workload of the probation service which does not at present supervise adult prisoners serving less than 12 months.
- The creation of the new National Offender Management Service and the extension of current provision under an enhanced “mixed economy” work stream, creating a cost effective service through contestability and opening up services to delivery by public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

3.2 Based on the analysis above there are good reasons for the voluntary and community sector to have an increased role in NOMS as more services become contestable. Current voluntary and community sector involvement in training, employment and housing programmes for offenders could be expanded and there may be the potential for a far greater involvement of voluntary and community sector groups in managing areas of community punishment.

3.3 There are indications that there will be an increase in resources under SR2004 (still to be agreed) to support a growth in volume and intensity of community sentences. To meet this an increased number of probation staff will be needed but given the need for recruitment and training it is likely that an increased level of provision will need to be sourced from voluntary/private sector partners.

3.4 The Carter Report says:

*“More effective service delivery can be achieved through greater contestability, using providers of prison and probation from across the public, private and voluntary sectors”<sup>4</sup>*

The then Home Secretary in his response endorsed this:<sup>5</sup>

*“The new National Offender Management Service will also ensure greater value for money by encouraging the greater use of the private and ‘not-for-profit’ sectors in prisons and in the community wherever it can demonstrate its greater cost effectiveness. In the community in particular we want to make much more use of the ‘not-for-profit’ and voluntary sector by involving communities in the supervision of offenders and the reduction of crime”*

<sup>4</sup>Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime, Pat Carter, December 2003 p 34

<sup>5</sup>Reducing Crime, Changing Lives, Home Office, Jan 2004 p10

3.5 The wider variety of roles the voluntary sector can play in delivery of services to offenders will become more clearly defined as NOMS itself develops. At present the development of NOMS is still at an early stage. Key appointments at national and regional level have now been made and a Voluntary Sector Unit is now established. Although this Unit will provide a lead for work with the voluntary sector within NOMS, this will also form an important part of other strands of NOMS such as: developing a mixed economy, offender management, communities and civil renewal, communications and the role of Regional Offender Managers. Links to the Pathfinder areas in the North West, South West and Wales will be needed to ensure that they are engaging effectively with the voluntary and community sector.

3.6 It will be vital to ensure that there are channels for discussion with voluntary and community groups about the development of all areas of NOMS and involvement of groups in those areas, which are likely to have the greatest impact on their work. A stakeholder group, which includes voluntary sector representatives has already been established for the offender management workstream and a similar group is being considered by the mixed economy workstream. There is also a voluntary sector member of the NOMS Board (Clive Martin, Director of Clinks).

3.7 This is not simply a question of NOMS talking to existing providers. It will be essential for NOMS to find ways to 'grow its market' amongst voluntary groups by:

- bringing in new players to work with offenders where demand is likely to be high,
- confronting existing private sector providers of services to participate with and partner voluntary and community sector providers
- getting groups to prepare for the need to enhance and extend services to meet new demands
- finding ways to encourage voluntary groups to work collaboratively to combine expertise and size and to explore the potential for working with public and private sector providers as partners or sub-contractors.

### **3.8 Questions**

- a) Are the steps outlined above the right ones to facilitate voluntary sector involvement?
- b) What further measures are needed?
- c) How can NOMS ensure that it is able to reach a wide range of organisations, including smaller and more local organisations?

## **4. What barriers need to be removed to enable this to happen?**

4.1 The creation of NOMS provides an ideal opportunity to put in place measures to help overcome barriers which are common across the voluntary and community sector, and many of which have arisen from contractual processes in the past. One of

the central thrusts of NOMS will be the gradual opening of services to outside provision. Achieving this will require altering the attitude of some NOMS staff to outside providers (both voluntary and community sector and private), as well as altering NOMS systems to ensure fair competition between the public sector and other providers. If done well, this will remove two important barriers to increased voluntary and community sector provision: negative cultural attitudes and inappropriate procurement procedures. Other barriers for the voluntary and community sector include:

- Learning the lessons of current and developing practice (for example for integrated service delivery within the Prospects programme see Appendix 2)
- Lack of consultation with voluntary groups about the design of programmes
- Difficulties for the voluntary sector in finding out about contractual opportunities
- Not establishing processes that encourage links between voluntary sector organisations themselves or between voluntary organisations and other potential contractors in the public and private sector
- Complex and costly pre-qualification and tendering procedures
- Not acknowledging the need for full-cost recovery
- Lack of sensitivity in payments and outcome measures for different offender needs (some offenders will require greater help, therefore costs will be higher)
- Delays in payment which create cash flow problems for smaller organisations
- Poor management of contracts with inappropriate and disproportionate reporting requirements
- Lack of access to capital for building and infrastructure needs of voluntary and community sector
- Lack of business, financial and contracting skills within voluntary and community sector groups
- The need to gain training and accreditation to provide certain NOMS programmes e.g. offending behaviour programmes.

4.2 The small number of significant national voluntary and community sector players, is not a barrier in itself, but will require designing a process, which takes advantage of their strengths and is also able to include the far larger number of local organisations who contribute to service provision. National Probation Service experience of developing the Prospects programme with voluntary and community sector partners may offer a model against which to evaluate the benefits of a joint planning approach. See Appendix 2.

4.3 NOMS commissioned a study in Yorkshire and Humberside by Sheffield Hallam University. This region was chosen because of the inclusive approach it has taken to voluntary sector involvement in developing its regional resettlement strategy. The study examines the extent and nature of current voluntary sector involvement with correctional services, identifies good practice in working relationships, assesses the potential for extending involvement, identifies barriers and capacity building needs and suggests ways to help to overcome these. Copies of the report have been circulated with this document and are also available from the NOMS Voluntary Sector Unit.

4.4 A major conference and exhibition (500 delegates +) Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime was held on 22 November 2004, to highlight the contribution made by voluntary and community groups to support the delivery of services to prisoners, offenders and their families. This was designed to showcase and celebrate existing good practice but also provided an opportunity to inform staff and voluntary and community groups about the development of NOMS and the future role they might play. Ideas and concerns from the wide range of workshops offered at the Conference have also been used in this paper.

4.5 Many voluntary organisations lack skills in writing tenders and financial and business management. Support will be needed to develop these skills and to get organisations to recognise the need to invest in staff training and organisational infrastructure if they are to be able to take part in NOMS successfully. It will be essential to get organisations to recognise their strengths, the areas where they need development and to acknowledge their limitations. Thinking creatively about the use of monies available through *futurebuilders* to build the capacity of individual organisations and create collaborative working styles (e.g. consortia) will also be essential. An interesting approach to combining the skills of larger and small organisations and to growing capacity has been explored by the Connect Project. (See Appendix 3).

4.6 Funding (£800,000 over two years) has been secured from the Active Communities Directorate's Change Up programme to commission a number of projects to support the development of infrastructural support for the voluntary sector in this area. This will enable links between specialist and generalist infrastructure and put in place training advice and support to build voluntary sector skills for contestability. This will also include projects where large organisations support small organisations and the development of different models of working together and a project to address the needs of under-represented groups, particularly those from the black and minority ethnic sector.

4.7 Few voluntary organisations have subjected their work to independent evaluation and beyond anecdotal evidence there is, at present, little to support claims for effectiveness or impact on reducing re-offending. To move beyond reliance on "hope and good luck", NOMS will need to work with the voluntary sector to identify suitable research methods to assist in recording "distance travelled" by offenders beyond the blunt instrument of whether they commit a further offence within two years. Voluntary organisations will need to be able to demonstrate that what they do is likely to work and then to show that it has been effective. Some voluntary organisations will have to adjust to the need to evaluate their work properly. NOMS may have to find a way of controlling the costs of evaluation particularly for small organisations.

#### **4.8 Questions**

- a) Are the issues identified the most important?
- b) What other areas of concern for voluntary and community organisations does NOMS need to address?

- c) Are there other areas of support that the sector will need?
- d) Do you think the Yorkshire and Humberside study illustrates an approach to working with the voluntary and community sector that also applies to other regions?
- e) Do you agree with the recommendations of the Yorkshire and Humberside study?
- f) Are there ideas from the study that NOMS should adopt?

## **5 What practical measures are to be implemented or further pursued?**

5.1 NOMS is at an early stage of development. The Chief Executive is appointed and his Senior Management Team is in place. A National Offender Manager was appointed in June and Regional Offender Managers have been recruited. Although an outline design for NOMS is in place, there is considerable work to be done over a far longer timeframe to build a fully operational programme for offender management. This will be based on a mixed economy of providers and a broad resourcing spectrum from grant funding, through contract management, which can build on the “social capital” provided through local community groups. Time will be important because there is a need to “grow the voluntary sector market”. Early decisions will be required on the scope for involving the voluntary sector and in particular whether this is to include broadening from the present concentration of effort on resettlement and rehabilitation interventions to include potential to manage offenders and even operate custodial regimes.

Achieving this will include working with existing providers but the range of areas for involvement in NOMS will mean that NOMS will have to bring in other skills and expertise. For this NOMS will look to mainstream organisations, who may not have seen offenders as part of their traditional client group (but who could extend their services to include them) and organisations working in related areas, such as crime prevention. Growing the market may require some investment to help the voluntary and community sector to overcome its limitations in relation to capital and contracting skills. The volume of work within NOMS will build fairly gradually. The initial focus will need to be on meeting the increased demands for supervision and community interventions likely to be generated by the Criminal Justice Act 2003. This will mean looking to prepare voluntary and community groups to begin to play a greater role during 2005/6 so that contracts and other arrangements are in place from 2006/7 and 2007/8. Funding from the monies identified above to build community capacity will be used to support this development and it will be important to plan for additional funding for this area of work within the SR2006 Review.

5.3 NOMS will need to establish routes for involvement and consultation so that voluntary sector groups not only know what is being planned but also can actively contribute to development at all levels. The relatively small number of national organisations of any significant size and even smaller number of regionally structured

national organisations presents a challenge. So too does the absence of organisations working on a regional basis and the need to engage with large numbers of small and local organisations. Voluntary groups who work with specific groups of offenders, black and minority ethnic groups and women for example are at present under-represented and ways of engaging and developing the work of organisations to meet the diversity of needs of offenders will need to be explored.

5.4 NOMS will need to be “voluntary sector friendly” – this may include training for our staff to open them up to the advantages of work with voluntary sector groups and to overcome misconceptions about voluntary sector capacity and the range of work that can be undertaken by voluntary sector organisations and to put in place effective partnership. Appropriate practical steps to be taken include:

- Analysis of voluntary and community sector organisations not currently operating with offenders and individual approaches to potential new players to establish their capability and interest in performing NOMS services
- Review of lessons to be learned from voluntary and community sector contributions to work in related disciplines, e.g. asylum, health and education
- Promotion of private/voluntary sector partnerships through joint events
- Development of new vehicles for including the voluntary and community sector, such as joint ventures
- Full mapping and assessment of the current market and the capabilities of the organisations within it
- Seminars, information meetings and events open to both private and voluntary sector organisations, large and small to highlight forthcoming opportunities and encourage alliances and sub-contracting relationships
- Asking existing prime contractors to explore the scope for greater involvement of the voluntary sector in existing contracts/services
- For new procurements, making it clear that use of the voluntary and community sector in the supply chain would be welcomed – and where it is considered essential to the delivery of the service, asking contractors to demonstrate how they will involve local community organisations in delivering the required outputs.

5.5 The introduction of OASys (Offender Assessment System) across prisons and probation provides a common assessment tool for identifying risk and needs. As this will be IT based there is also potential for sharing information with voluntary sector partners, although protocols will have to be developed. The involvement of voluntary and community sector providers in the NOMS stakeholder group will be fundamental to ensuring that case management systems and applications for interventions are “boundary proofed” for these purposes.

## 5.6 Questions

- a) Is NOMS right in assuming that it needs to expand the range of voluntary sector providers?

- b) Are the approaches suggested for doing this likely to be successful?
- c) Will voluntary and community groups be willing to consider partnerships with public and private sector providers?
- d) What are the current problems experienced by groups in sharing information with prisons and probation?
- e) Will new protocols help to overcome these?

## 6 What does NOMS propose to take this forward?

6.1 A new Voluntary Sector Unit has been formed within NOMS to lead this process. The Unit will:

- Continue and build on work already established within prisons and probation
- Identify and share good practice between prisons and probation
- Develop a practical and shared vision for working with the voluntary and community sector
- Promote an extension of capacity and capability in proportion to the increased number of offenders to be managed in the community
- Ensure the representation of voluntary sector views in the development of all areas of NOMS
- Explore the use of sources of funding such as *futurebuilders* and infrastructure funding to support this work
- Promote a programme of cultural change and training to ensure NOMS is receptive to working with the voluntary and community sector

6.2 The Unit's work will be guided by an independently chaired Advisory Group, which will draw its membership from national, regional and local voluntary sector and operational managers from both prisons and probation. This body will replace the roles previously played by the Prison Service's Voluntary and Community Sector Advisory Group and the National Probation Directorate's Partnership CLAN.

6.3 Funding has been provided for the newly formed Partnership for Reducing Offending, a network that will combine the strengths of the members of the Alliance for Reducing Offending<sup>6</sup> with those of Clinks<sup>7</sup>. This will establish a body with experience of working with both prisons and probation and a route for disseminating information easily to key organisations in the field, a regular forum for discussion and a means to bring organisations together to discuss specific issues.

<sup>6</sup>The Alliance for Reducing Offending is a network bringing together larger national organisations who work mainly with the National Probation Service

<sup>7</sup>Clinks is a national membership body for organisations working with offenders and their families

6.4 A wider process of consultation will need to be established too. Some early work has already been done to initiate this. A systematic process of regional consultation, linked to the wider consultation being carried out by NOMS, will be put in place and supported by regular dissemination of information through the NOMS website.

6.5 NOMS will need to work with Government Offices of the Region to explore the potential for working with regional and local generalist voluntary sector infrastructure bodies such as Regional Forums, Councils for Voluntary Service, Rural Community Councils and Volunteer Bureaux and regional minority ethnic bodies and to take advantage of links already established through the Crime Reduction Directorates, health, housing, and so on.

6.6 NOMS will explore the potential for developing working relationships with groups working in other parts of the Criminal Justice System e.g. those who have developed expertise in working in crime prevention or with juvenile and young offenders.

6.7 NOMS will put in place measures to ensure processes for contractual arrangements that are appropriate and accessible to voluntary sector groups and allow for the inclusion of groups working at a national, regional and local level. This will include:

- Appropriate procurement procedures
- Ensuring that outcome payments are adjusted to reflect the level of service required to treat different offenders
- Promoting contractual opportunities
- Encouraging links between voluntary sector organisations themselves and voluntary organisations and other potential contractors in the public and private sector
- Avoiding complex and costly pre-qualification and tendering procedures
- Putting in place a process of cultural change and training to create a “voluntary sector friendly culture” amongst staff in NOMS
- Acknowledging the need for full-cost recovery
- Ensuring better management of contracts and appropriate and proportional reporting requirements.
- Prompt payment and systems of payment in advance where necessary
- Avoiding the use of short-term contracts
- Looking at the potential for the use of *futurebuilders* and ACU’s infrastructure funding to overcome capital and skills constraints in the voluntary sector
- Developing a training and accreditation strategy for providers
- Putting in place legislative changes to underpin this work

6.8 It is recognised that a contractual relationship may not be appropriate for the many important organisations that offer practical support to offenders in custody and their families. Ensuring the continuation of work that contributes to decent and humane conditions for prisoners will be essential. Grant funding, relational contracting<sup>8</sup>, joint ventures and commissioning may all need to be considered as other possible routes to voluntary sector engagement.

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<sup>8</sup> Relational contracting is often used where outputs and outcomes are hard to monitor. It involves developing a closer relationship between provider and funder. This can work but requires trust and flexibility from both partners.

6.9 NOMS must acknowledge and involve other partners such as the Big Lottery Fund and the many independent funders, who have been key to developing and sustaining innovative projects and have helped to build much of the added value brought by the voluntary sector to work with offenders in prisons and the community. The Association of Community Foundations Penal Affairs Network, a group bringing together the main independent funders, will be key in helping to ensure that NOMS communicates effectively with funders.

## 6.10 Questions

- a) How can the NOMS Voluntary Sector Unit support and advise the voluntary and community sector?
- b) What information do voluntary and community groups need from NOMS?
- c) Should this be provided through regular events, newsletters and so on?
- d) Would a regular e-mail newsletter be an effective way of reaching most organisations?
- e) Are there specific ways in which NOMS should be seeking to work with independent funders?

## 7. Conclusion

7.1 Voluntary organisations working with offenders in custody and the community can bring considerable expertise and additional capacity to the tasks of supporting offenders and reducing re-offending. There are many organisations with a proven track record of innovative and flexible working that have demonstrated that they are able to deliver high quality services. If the contribution of the voluntary sector is to be harnessed to meet the new agendas emerging for Correctional Services a new strategy and co-ordinated approach is needed to construct partnership frameworks that are meaningful and effective.

7.2 The development of NOMS provides an exciting opportunity to consolidate work already initiated by the Prison and Probation Services towards establishing effective and well managed relationships with voluntary and community organisations and integrating the involvement of the voluntary sector into the design and delivery of the new Service. However, success will require significant investment, flexibility and creativity, new ways of working in procuring and managing performance and outputs with the voluntary and community sector.

7.3 These are first steps, reflecting the evolutionary nature of NOMS, but what is outlined represents an emerging vision and a commitment to embrace and enhance the potential added value offered by the voluntary and community sector.

## Appendix 1

### Time for Families

Time for Families is an initiative of the Eastern Region Families Partnership<sup>9</sup> to promote greater awareness and more effective responses to the needs of the children of prisoners.

The effects on family life when someone is in prison can be enormous. The project aims to get more people to recognise and understand the impact of imprisonment on a family, especially the children. It works with schools, health, social care agencies and voluntary organisations to develop services that better meet the needs of families. The project includes extensive research and consultation with families so that they can influence how services are developed.

The project is working to establish visitor centres in all prisons across the Eastern Area and to put in place children's visits and more child-friendly visit facilities.

Parents in prison are being encouraged to explore ways that they can maintain a positive role in their children's lives and to recognise the impact of their offending behaviour. This will include parenting courses and support work.

The project is producing resource material for families and those who work with them and operates a telephone helpline for families.

Launched in 2002 this is a seven-year programme, which will see the development of community, and prison based services for prisoners and their families. Each partner has agreed to contribute £1 million over the lifetime of the project and it is anticipated that a further £1 million will be raised from other sources.

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<sup>9</sup>A Partnership of the Prison Service, Ormiston Trust and Lankelly Foundation

## Appendix 2

### PROSPECTS

Prospects is a three stage intervention for short-term sentenced prolific drug offenders which is being delivered on a full contractual basis in partnership with the voluntary and community sector in three of the five pilot locations. The other two have been awarded to a private sector company, offering an ideal opportunity to compare and contrast the approach. Analysis of delivery to date suggests that the programme has benefited significantly from working and delivering in partnership. The expertise and experience brought to programme delivery by probation's partners has enabled Prospects to concentrate on local delivery through local community support groups and public sector bodies, establishing links with and being an intrinsic part of strategic drug intervention policies in Local Plans. Part of the formal evaluation is to learn the lessons from the procurement approach as well as pilot the new regimes.

Specific added value for the programme has been reflected at:

#### ***Project Initiation stage:***

- The voluntary and community sector experience of dealing with ex-offenders and operating resettlement premises has enabled probation to validate the Prospects model.
- Their established links within Prospects locations with local community support groups and some of the criminal justice agencies has enabled probation to 'fit into' the local plans for tackling drugs and drug related crime in the areas.

#### ***Project Delivery and Implementation:***

- The voluntary and community sector already have their own supporting structure. They have regime operating guides, processes and procedures tried and tested which only have to be adapted slightly to fit within the operating guidelines for National Probation Service Approved Premises.
- As 'not for profit' organisations the voluntary and community sector have harnessed their experience and expertise to deliver Prospects. On the surface indications are that they are achieving greater value for money than the private sector equivalent. However, ultimately a conclusion on value for money can only be made against speed and effectiveness of delivery, both in project terms and in respect of the effect on re-offending.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Connect : Experiences of Working with the Voluntary Sector**

#### **Introduction**

Connect is a collaborative partnership between the West Midlands Prison and Probation Areas (West Mercia, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Staffordshire).

Connect aims to offer those short sentence prisoners (serving less than 12 months) from the region a seamless transition from sentence, through a period in custody to release and beyond, and an opportunity to deal with their individual barriers to employability. Connect is funded by European Social Fund (ESF) initially until March 2005 with the option to re-bid for a further two years.

#### **Context**

Connect was designed to work “through the gate” providing mentoring support to up to 4000 beneficiaries over two years. Mentoring starts whilst prisoners are in custody and is completed during their time on release in the community. It was decided at the project design stage that it would be better for the project to be developed and delivered by specialist agencies. It was estimated that up to 600 volunteer mentors would need to be recruited during the lifetime of the project.

Following an open procurement process, SOVA and Youth Support Services (YSS) were chosen as the preferred providers. In addition a number of specialist mentoring agencies were selected. The total project value overall is £400,000 over two years.

#### **Responsibilities of the Mentoring Agencies**

The provider agencies are required to meet minimum standards in relation to their mentors in the following areas:

- Recruitment and Selection;
- Training and Preparation;
- Matching and Mentoring Relationship;
- Supervision and Support;
- Monitoring;
- Policies in line with current legislation

#### **Benefits**

Connect’s mentoring provision has only been fully operational since December 2003, but there are already a number of benefits for the voluntary sector, mentors and probation. These include:

- Providing an opportunity for the voluntary sector agencies to strengthen/expand their management and support infrastructure, thereby facilitating further expansion into other criminal justice projects. YSS for example are not only responsible for the provision of mentors to West Mercia and Warwickshire Connect beneficiaries they also are responsible for the mentoring provision of the West Mercia Probation pilot Intensive Control & Change Programme.
- Offering the opportunity for the smaller specialist mentoring agencies that provide a unique service to women, minority ethnic, and faith beneficiaries of the project to gain first-hand experience of detailed contract management, performance and compliance processes. It also provides them with the opportunities and challenges of engaging with prison and probation and offenders. From the projects' point of view it has been good to be able to provide such an experience through facilitating capacity building whilst 'handholding' rather than dropping them in at the deep end.
- Widening the choice of projects' for the mentors, thereby enhancing their experiences and providing motivation, which in return increases retention rates and reduces the recruitment budget for the agencies;
- Establishing links with the private sector employers by encouraging them to promote the concept of mentoring ex-offenders to their staff. The benefits for employers are that it provides them with a means of influencing their staff development and for the project it increases the chances of a beneficiary gaining employment.
- Providing a learning experience for the Board and staff, in working with contractors and also mentors. The procurement process also provided many lessons/learning opportunities.

### **Emerging Lessons**

The engagement with the voluntary sector does offer a number of challenges as well as opportunities:

- Connect was not built in a day, it takes time for the agencies to develop capacity, no matter their size, when you are asking them to venture into unknown territory, whether this is a new location or type of work.
- Engaging with the voluntary sectors requires commissioning projects to fund them adequately; and there is a great need for 'caretaking' during the early stages, even though one is buying in the resources.

### **The Rewards for Connect include:**

- Through outsourcing the immediate gain is access to a whole range of diverse resources which are better placed to meet the needs of the target group;
- The opportunity to work with a sector who are more likely to have greater knowledge of the local community who they are in constant dialogue with, therefore in a position to help re-integrate the ex-offender back into their community;

- The voluntary sector does not attract the same level of 'negativity' as prisons or probation, hence ex-offenders tend to be more motivated to engage with and work with mentors from the community.

### **Mentoring Agencies Progress to Date**

- Since September 2003, YSS have recruited 60 unpaid mentors from across West Mercia and Warwickshire Probation Areas;
- The retention rate for mentors is between 80-85%;
- Of closed cases YSS have found employment for 27% of its beneficiaries with the aid of its mentors;
- SOVA at any one time work with 35 beneficiaries in the community on their release from custody;
- During the last quarter SOVA achieved 1350 contacts with released beneficiaries in the community which represents over 600 hours of mentoring.

### **Research and Evaluation**

- Leeds University are undertaking the evaluation project. Their final report is due in March 2005.

**Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime**  
**The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in the National Offender Management Service**

**Consultation response**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Position</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	

<b>How and in what areas do the voluntary and community sector add value to the work of prison and probation?</b>	
a) Is what is described a fair description of the extent and nature of current voluntary sector engagement with the Prison and Probation Services?	
b) Are there other areas of engagement that should be included? If so, please say what these are and why they are important?	

**How and to what extent should the voluntary and community sector feature in delivery in Correctional Services/NOMS?**

a) Are the steps outlined the right ones to facilitate voluntary sector involvement?

b) What further measures are needed?

c) How can NOMS ensure that it is able to reach a wide range of organisations, including smaller and more local organisations?

<b>What barriers need to be removed to make this happen?</b>	
a) Are the issues identified the most important?	
b) What other areas of concern for voluntary and community organisations does NOMS need to address?	
c) Are there other areas of support that the sector will need?	
d) Do you think the Yorkshire and Humberside study illustrates an approach to working with the voluntary and community sector that also applies to other regions?	

<p>e) Do you agree with the recommendations of the Yorkshire and Humberside study?</p>	
<p>f) Are there ideas from the study that NOMS should adopt?</p>	

<p><b>What practical measures are to be implemented or further pursued?</b></p>	
<p>a) Is NOMS right in assuming that it needs to expand the range of voluntary sector providers?</p>	
<p>b) Are the approaches suggested for doing this likely to be successful?</p>	
<p>c) Will voluntary and community groups be willing to consider partnerships with public and private sector providers?</p>	

<p>d) What are the current problems experienced by groups in sharing information with prisons and probation?</p>	
<p>e) Will new protocols help to overcome these?</p>	

<p><b>What does NOMS propose to take this forward?</b></p>	
<p>a) How can the NOMS Voluntary Sector Unit support and advise the voluntary and community sector?</p>	
<p>b) What information do voluntary and community groups need from NOMS?</p>	
<p>c) Should this be provided through regular events, newsletters and so on?</p>	

<p>d) Would a regular e-mail newsletter be an effective way of reaching most organisations?</p>	
<p>e) Are there specific ways in which NOMS should be seeking to work with independent funders?</p>	

**Please return this form to:**

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