

**Step Change Initiative  
April 2006 to March 2007**

**Final Report**

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Treasury's Cross-Cutting Review: "*The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery*" was published in September 2002. The review made recommendations to increase the provision of public services by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). A National Audit Office report in June 2005 showed that, despite government commitment, there had been only a modest increase in the level of services delivered by the VCS although most of the recommendations from the review had been implemented and the problems preventing progress were well known.

1.2 In order to address this, the government agreed in January 2006 to take measures that would ensure a step-change in VCS engagement in the delivery of public services. Key departments – including Health, Education and Skills, Trade and Industry and Work and Pensions were to participate in a cross-departmental initiative. The Home Office had a key role to play and, as stated in the NOMS *Action Plan for Working with the Voluntary Sector*, the Government wished to see a step change in the extent to which the VCS delivers services in NOMS. NOMS had made clear its commitment to ensuring that the voluntary sector can play a full role in the delivery of services to offenders and some actions to take this forward were already in place. These included:

- Issuing guidance to Probation Areas on target areas of service delivery for VCS engagement: unpaid work, low risk offender work, programme delivery, advice on accommodation, debt and financial advice, drugs, mentoring, and work with black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. The focus will be on aiding probation areas to meet existing targets or developing areas of new business to avoid any negative impact on industrial relations.
- Setting a financial target of 10% of main resource grant to be spent by Probation Areas on partnerships with VCS and private sector providers in 2007/2008
- Assisting Probation Areas to prepare for operation in a mixed market in preparation for the introduction of full contestability
- Identifying exemplar projects which could be applied at a national level.
- The funding of pilot programmes through Change Up, looking at ways of utilising mainstream voluntary sector infrastructure to support organisations working with offenders, increasing the involvement in provision of services of black and minority ethnic organisations, and testing models where the strengths of larger organisations are being used to support the engagement of smaller providers.

1.3 A key aspect of the project within NOMS was to be a **regional Step Change Initiative** to test and develop approaches to enhancing the involvement of the VCS in delivery of services to offenders. Yorkshire and Humberside region was selected to lead on this for a number of reasons:

- There has been a strong history of joint working, and the VCS was centrally involved in developing the regional resettlement strategy.

- An independent case study of the region was commissioned from Sheffield Hallam University in 2004 which looked at ways in which the role of the VCS could be enhanced, and the recommendations are part of the Regional Reducing Offending Action Plan (RRAP).
- The ROM and his team have taken an active interest in promoting and supporting work with the VCS in the region, and have included a specific pathway in the RRAP on VCS engagement.
- CLINKS and Nacro had both successfully secured funding, through the Home Office's Change Up Public Sector programme, to deliver two projects tasked with increasing the capacity of VCS organisations to participate in service delivery to offenders. CRISP, (Clinks Regional Information and Skills Project) was operating in three regions, including Yorkshire and Humberside, and NACRO MOVE (Managing Offenders through Voluntary Sector Engagement) was operating locally in Leeds.

1.4 An initial scoping meeting, led by the ROM and attended by public and private sector prisons, probation, VCS and the Home Office to scope the Step Change Initiative took place in December. It was considered critical that the Step Change Initiative sat within the development of an overall regional commissioning strategy and it was agreed that the terms of reference of a Steering Group would be presented for approval to the RRAP Board in January 06.

1.5 The broad elements of work that the Step Change initiative could include were defined as:

- I. Assisting Probation in planning their commitment to meet the financial target on delivery from other sectors.
- II. Examining the potential for increasing the level of services delivered by VCS in prisons
- III. Ensuring planning for commissioning which recognises the strengths and added value brought by the VCS.
- IV. Supporting greater involvement for providers in areas that are underdeveloped across the RRAP Pathways (e.g. Finance , Benefit and Debt , and Children and Families )
- V. Developing mechanisms for service user involvement in NOMs using the VCS
- VI. Supporting the delivery of the VCS Action Plan in RRAP.

1.6 A bid for resources to support the delivery of Step Change was invited by the Home Office, and this bid was successful. A Step Change Development Manager and a part-time Step Change Assistant were appointed in April 2006

## 2. Step Change Governance, Staffing and Resources

2.1 The Step Change initiative operated for 12 months, from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. The staffing resources allocated to the project were a full time Development Manager and a part-time Assistant. The project reported to the Home Office Active Communities Unit (later becoming the Office for the Third Sector, located within the Cabinet Office) through the ROM and the RRAP Board with a steering group made up of key stakeholders. The Development Manager was line managed by the Regional NOMS Strategic Partnerships Manager and the post sat within the Regional Reducing Re-offending Team. However, close links were maintained with the ROM's Commissioning Team.

2.2 In planning the project it was agreed that a close working relationship with Clinks (*a national membership body that supports the involvement of voluntary and community organisations in the Criminal Justice system*) would be extremely important. Clinks provided office accommodation and equipment for the posts, and both post holders were members of the Clinks team. In this way close links were maintained with wider VCS work at national and regional level.

2.3 External links with the public sector Prison Service were through the Area Community Partnerships Manager and with the four Probation Areas in the region through designated Assistant Chief Officers. A link with the Private Sector prisons was through GSL.

2.4 The Development Manager, Jackie Lowthian, was appointed on a 12 month secondment from Nacro, bringing 20 years of voluntary sector experience (9 of these at senior management level) to the post. A decision was taken to recruit the part-time assistant post jointly with Clinks as the organisation was intending to appoint a part-time administrator post at the same time. A decision was taken to implement a positive action approach to encouraging women ex-offenders to apply for this post and the first stage recruitment was through links with a local women's open prison near York, HMP Askham Grange. This reflected the commitment by both NOMS and Clinks to offer an employment opportunity to serving women prisoners. The recruitment process attracted a very strong field of four candidates to interview and a successful appointment was made. Karen Desai took up post in April bringing excellent IT skills, high level mathematics and data handling skills and good knowledge of the service user needs to the role. Karen was employed to work for Clinks three days per week and for Step Change on the other two,

2.5 The Steering Group was Chaired by the ROM and included members from the regional NOMS Commissioning Team, the regional NOMS Strategic Partnership Manager, the Prison Service Area Office, the four Probation Areas, the Home Office Active Communities Unit (which later became part of the Office for the Third Sector within the Cabinet Office), the NOMS National Voluntary Sector Unit, the National Probation Directorate Business Change Unit, SOVA, Clinks and GSL

### 3. Step Change Objectives

3.1 It was clear from the outset that the Step Change project would not be able to act as a commissioner of services – **there were no central resources to invest in service delivery, and work had to be carried out within existing resources.** However, the project was operating in a policy context that sought to speed up the pace of change with Ministerial commitment to ask both prisons and probation to increase their level of spend on voluntary and private sector sub-contractors. In practice this translated into a 'voluntary requirement' for probation Boards to achieve a spend of 5% of main resource grant in 06-07 and to produce sub-contracting plans to increase this target to 10% in 07-08. There were no formal financial targets for public sector prisons although the SLA agreement with the Area Manager for Yorkshire and Humberside sought an increase in the level of services provided by VCS organisations.

3.2 A Step Change Initiative Project Plan was drawn-up (see Appendix 1). The key objectives were:

- > **To achieve a greater spend on VCS service provision by NOMS and partner agencies**
- > **To support the development of consortia involving VCS/public/private sector organisations and have them submitting bids and delivering services**
- > **To secure greater involvement by VCS in developing a commissioning model in partnership with other providers, service users and commissioners**
- > **To help develop increased capacity within mainstream services to meet offender cultural and gender specific needs**
- > **To advise on ways of ensuring that BME and gender specialist services are commissioned to meet inclusion needs**

3.3 Actions to achieve these objectives and progress on the actions was recorded in a project performance management template and reported to the ROM and the Steering Group through quarterly meetings. These reports are attached at Appendix 2.

### 4. Change-up Projects

**ChangeUp is a programme of capacity building for the infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector, developed in partnership with the sector. The aim of ChangeUp investment is to catalyse the modernisation of infrastructure provision in order to improve its sustainability, quality and reach. Led by sector expertise, the Capacitybuilders agency manages ChangeUp.**

4.1 Mid way through 2005, the Home Office secured resources to deliver five Change-up projects specific to NOMS. Yorkshire and Humberside was to benefit from two of these time limited initiatives; The ***Clinks Regional Information and Skills Project (CRISP)*** was managed by Clinks and operated

across three regions – the North East, Eastern and Yorkshire and Humberside. The **Managing Offenders Through Voluntary Sector Engagement (MOVE)** project was managed by Nacro and operated within the local authority area of Leeds City Council.

4.2 These two projects dovetailed perfectly with the work of the VCS pathway and the Step Change initiative in Yorkshire and Humberside, and both contributed enormously to raising the profile of potential VCS opportunities within NOMS.

4.3 The main aim of the MOVE project was to demonstrate ways in which a large, national VCO could work specifically to support the engagement of small, local VCOs in work with offenders. The operational area of the project was local and this allowed for targeted work within one district of one probation area (West Yorkshire Probation Area). It also focused on one large, local prison situated in an urban location (HMP Leeds).

4.4 MOVE employed four key processes to deliver its objectives:

- > Promotion – of MOVE and NOMS
- > Advocacy – advocating to Probation and Prison Services on behalf of VCS organisation, and to VCS organisations on behalf of NOMS to encourage engagement
- > Needs Assessment – of VCS capacity building needs
- > Interventions – in response to identified needs of VCS

4.5 The interventions delivered by MOVE included activity in the following areas:

- > Organisational development
- > Funding and contracting
- > Promotion, liaison and advocacy
- > Information sharing
- > Staff development

4.6 Key interventions included: mailings, focus groups, training events, bi-lateral meetings, conference, consortium development and production of a toolkit.

4.7 All of these activities promoted and supported the delivery of the Step Change.

4.8 CRISP operated across a much wider geographical area – three regions - but activity was similarly intended to increase the capacity of VCS organisations to deliver services to offenders and their families.

4.9 CRISP employed similar processes to MOVE and delivered some of the same activities - needs assessment, conferences, training and information provision however some of the delivery mechanisms were different. Specifically, CRISP delivered:

- > Nine cross-sector Action Learning Sets

- > Regional Skills and Information events
- > Sub-regional conferences
- > Training
- > A weekly e-bulletin

4.10 The sub-regional conferences in Yorkshire and Humberside were delivered in partnership with NOMS, Prisons and Probation and were highly significant in relation to promoting the Step Change initiative and informing VCS organisations about NOMS and developments in relation to offender management and commissioning.

4.11 The Action Learning Sets in Yorkshire and Humberside were extremely popular mechanisms for bringing together individual staff and managers from the public, private and voluntary sectors and aimed to contribute to breaking down the cultural dissonance<sup>1</sup> which existed between public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

4.12 CRISP and MOVE supported the Step Change objectives by providing many activities and forums that were useful in informing the sector about NOMS, building the capacity of the sector to engage with service delivery to offenders and developing effective communication channels between public, private and voluntary sector organisations. I will discuss the impact of these activities on the achievement of key objectives later.

## 5. Step Change Achievements

5.1 The quarterly project progress reports set out activities and achievements over the 12 months and are attached at Appendix X.

5.2 The over-arching aim of the Step Change initiative was to achieve ***a significant increase in the number of significant services and projects delivered by the voluntary and community sector.***

5.3 The activities undertaken to achieve this aim included:

- > Identifying target areas of need linked to pathways
- > Consultation with stakeholders and establishment of steering group
- > Agreement of priority areas for action and target outcomes
- > Identifying other regional and local VCS infrastructure/capacity building and support bodies (including those working with BME organisations) and developing links with these
- > Forging links with a wide range of VCS organisations and promoting NOMS

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural dissonance was identified by Professor Paul Senior, in his report on addressing barriers to VCS engagement, and cited as one of the key issues to be addressed if VCS organisations were to be better integrated into the delivery of services to reduce re-offending

- Promoting the VCS 'offering' to prisons and probation
- Identifying external funding streams that could be used to support VCS service delivery and assisting organisations to make bids
- Contribution to the development of a commissioning model for the region and a regional commissioning plan
- Contribution to the implementation of the Regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan (RRAP)
- Contribution to refreshing the RRAP and the consultation process
- Promoting the need for and developing the means to effectively consult with service users
- Promoting the need for and developing the means to effectively address race equality
- Highlighting the importance of the provision of culturally competent service delivery and promoting the potential role of VCS providers in this area of work
- Supporting the development of partnerships and VCS led consortia
- Seeking feedback on commissioning activity and sharing the learning from this

5.4 This is not an exhaustive list: the full range of activities and some detail about these actions undertaken by the project can be found in Appendix 2 – project reporting templates.

5.5 The overarching aim of achieving a significant increase in the number of significant services and projects delivered by the VCS has been met in Yorkshire and Humberside. This is demonstrated by the successful establishment of two new major VCS delivery partnerships funded through additional resources to deliver services on behalf of NOMS. These are:

**5.6 The Together Women Project** – the Yorkshire and Humberside delivery site for a national programme that aims to test gender specific approaches to reducing offending by women. Funding was secured by the Home Office from the Treasury to support to delivery of exemplar services that test models of preventing crime by women through the provision of holistic, woman centred services to those identified as being at risk of offending and those already within the criminal justice system.

5.7 Two regions, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West were selected as delivery sites. In Y&H, the ROM decided to commission the service through a competitive tendering process. He set the requirement that the provider should be a voluntary sector led delivery partnership. This stimulated the formation of at least five VCS led partnerships and resulted in the award of a contract to a delivery partnership led by Foundation Housing – an established supported housing provider in the region. Other partners include: Shelter (a national homelessness charity), DISC (a North of England cross-regional information, advice and guidance service addressing barriers to employment for offenders), Touchstone (a Leeds based mental health charity providing a range of mental health services in the community) and Doncaster Women's Centre (a community women's centre providing a range of gender specific services).

**5.8 The Y&H Bail Support Scheme** – an Invest to Save funded initiative intended to reduce the use of custodial remand by providing packages of support that address defendants needs and give courts confidence in granting bail. The funding for this was secured via a NOMS-led partnership bid to ISB. The NOMS national Re-balancing Sentencing Unit co-ordinated the bid and the lead delivery partners are Nacro, SOVA and Foundation Housing. The project is being delivered via courts in a number of locations across Y&H and works in conjunction with a **Probation Pathfinder Bail Information Scheme**. The latter is funded through NOMS and is aimed at fostering partnership work involving probation areas. In Y&H the Bail Information Scheme is staffed by seconded probation officers working within the Bail Support Scheme.

5.9 The projects outlined above clearly represent a significant increase in the number of significant services and projects being delivered in Yorkshire and Humberside by VCS organisations. However, what is interesting to note is that all three initiatives have only come about as a result of new investment. This indicates that **where new resources are made available NOMS in Yorkshire and Humberside has chosen to invest in new provision delivered by VCS providers**. This signals a commitment to doing things differently and to making commissioning offender centric not provider centric.

5.10 However, what of the much greater challenge of achieving a step change in the way public sector providers currently spend existing resources?

5.11 The first and key aim of the Step Change project was to achieve a greater spend on VCS services by NOMS and partner agencies. As shown above, NOMS is able to do this when new resources are available. The key public sector partners – the Prison and Probation Services – have not received new resources and clearly face significant challenges in re-configuring their current spending commitments and making changes in how they use existing resources.

### **Developments in Probation**

5.12 The Step change initiative has been strongly supported by the four probation Areas and, in particular, the ACOs with lead responsibility for partnerships. Their Partnerships and/or Contracts Managers have provided useful contact points for information and discussion and many probation managers and staff have contributed to events to promote partnership working.

### **Spending Targets**

5.13 Probation areas were required to achieve a target of spending 5% of their main resource grant on VCS and private sector providers by the end of 2006-07 and to develop sub-contracting plans that would achieve a target spend of 10% on private and VCS partners in 2007-08.

5.14 The Step Change Steering Group received regular updates on progress in this area of work throughout the project's lifetime. National data was being collated by the National Probation Directorate and data for the region was supplied through this route. Analysis of and commentary on the data was provided by the Probation Regional Business Development Manager.

5.15 Baseline data for April 2006 showed a Yorkshire and Humberside regional total spend on VCS and private sector contracts of £1,673,053. This represented an average area spend of 2.33%.

5.16 Figures for individual probation areas at 01.04.06. were:

- Humberside 3.03%
- North Yorkshire 0.95%
- South Yorkshire 2.91%
- West Yorkshire 2.01%

5.17 The trend throughout the year was upwards but showed only marginal increases.

The table below gives information as at 1 October 2006 (latest available)

**Percentage Sub Contract Spend of Area Main Grant:**

	% Spend	% Spend of Area Main Grant compared to 1 4 2006	No. of VCS Contracts	No. of Private Sector Contracts	Total No. of Contracts
<b>SYPA</b>	3.3	+ 0.40%	20	3	23
<b>Humberside</b>	3.6	+0.57%	6	9	15
<b>NYPA</b>	2.1	+1.15%	8	5	13
<b>WYPA</b>	3.1	+1.1%	21	17	38
			<b>55</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>89</b>

SYPA	£633,470
HYPA	£486,747
NYPA	£168,640
WYPA	£957,830
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,246,687</b>

This shows an average area spend of 3%.

5.18 It is worth noting that 62% of these contracts are with the voluntary sector and 38% are with the private sector.

5.19 A breakdown of contracts against pathway (below) shows that FBD and C&F are very poorly served – both pathways where the VCS could make a particular contribution but clearly there are issues about resourcing.

**Contracts Profile by Area and Pathways / OM / UPW**

	Accom.	ETE	Health	Drugs & Alc.	Finance, Benefit & Debt	Children & Fams.	Attitudes Thinking Behaviour	Offender Management	Unpaid Work
<b>SYPA</b>	3	9	1	6	0	0	0	5	1
<b>HYP A</b>	1	2	0	3	0	1	1	6	1
<b>NYPA</b>	1	0	0	5	0	0	1	7	0
<b>WYPA</b>	1	1	4	4	0	0	2	14	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>

**National Data**

5.20 The table below gives national data broken down by region. It shows that Yorkshire and Humberside is placed in the mid-range of percentage spend,

Area	Contract Spend
National	3.63%
England (excluding Wales)	3.30%
South West	4.25%
West Midlands	4.00%
London	3.98%
East of England	3.46%
<b>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</b>	<b>3.33%</b>
South East	3.23
East Midlands	2.98%
North West	2.15%
North East	2.14%

5.21 The average annual value of contracts this year is £24,500 but there are a significant number of contracts below £24,500. Probation Boards have stated that this is evidence of contracting at local level with small VCOs and forms part of a VCS engagement strategy to assist the growth of smaller, VCS service providers.

5.22 The target of achieving 5% will not be met anywhere in the country.

**Sub-contracting Plans**

5.23 Mid-way through 2006, probation areas were asked to begin to produce sub-contracting plans that would show how they aimed to achieve the target of spending 10% of their main service delivery

budget on an annualised basis on services provided by private and voluntary sector partners by March 2008.

5.24 Probation areas in Yorkshire and Humberside made clear their intention to plan to meet this target within an appropriate strategic planning framework that would reflect national, regional and area commissioning priorities, and the overriding priority to deliver Value for Money.

5.25 The Step Change Manager sought to influence thinking in relation to the development of the probation sub-contracting plans and was pleased to be offered the opportunity to be involved in the initial meetings to present the emerging plans to the ROM.

5.26 One of the difficulties for probation areas was formulating plans without having final budgetary information. An indicative level of resource was available and plans were drafted with this in mind. The indicative resource allocation for 2007-08 showed the possibility of a slight increase (under 5%) but probation areas felt that the impact of any increase would be reduced by significant commitments already in place.

5.27 To quote from one of the plans –

*“Achieving the target expenditure would therefore require a reconfiguration of current service delivery in order to release resources that can be spent on partnership delivery”*

5.28 The response from all probation areas to this problem was to consider seconding existing probation staff to partner agencies. Whilst this provides a benefit ‘in-kind’ to the VCS agency and offers the potential benefits of sharing expertise and increasing knowledge and understanding of the cultures and environments of different sectors, it does not provide a long-term means through which the VCS can deliver new significant services and to some extent dilutes the impact of the sub-contracting process.

5.29 The implications of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment Regulations) also impacted on thinking about how best to achieve the required change and inhibited more radical approaches.

5.30 A further important context in relation to sub-contracting plans was the existing arrangements for local co-commissioning and joint commissioning, whereby funding for offender services, particularly in relation to drug treatment and accommodation, is channelled through non-criminal justice sources – for example, DAATS, CDRPs, Supporting People and LSC. Probation Boards have expressed concern that such local commissioning activity cannot be counted towards achieving sub-contracting targets, despite the fact that probation and NOMS resources are committed. Nevertheless, the draft plans made clear the intention for probation areas to take a proactive role in relation to co-commissioning and joint commissioning with local authority and other partners.

5.31 Plans set out existing partnership commitments and, based on an analysis of need (linked to pathways) indicated a broad range of areas that might be considered for sub-contracting – these included unpaid work, accredited programmes, mentoring of low risk offenders, ‘through the gate provision’, victim services, ETE, PPO support, accommodation. In all cases there is an intention to maintain (and where possible) expand and develop effective existing VCS/private partnerships.

5.32 Re-worked draft sub-contacting plans, approved by Probation Boards were submitted by the end of December 2006.

5.33 In December 2006, a draft Regional Strategy for Engagement by Boards with VCS and Private Sector Providers was produced by the Regional Business Development Manager and approved by the Regional Strategic Steering Group. The strategy, which took account of each Area’s initial sub-contracting plan, was subsequently passed to Probation Boards for approval. Subject, to some very minor amendments, each Board in Yorkshire and Humberside approved this strategy. Please see Appendix X for the regional model.

5.34 The regional strategy proposes the need for collaborative working between Boards and suggests consideration of joint commissioning activity resulting in one Board acting as the lead purchaser on behalf of others and managing a sub-contract on behalf of the other boards or, alternatively, one Board acting as the lead provider for the ROM with sub-contracting arrangements in place with the other Boards.

5.35 A further proposal is that Boards will provide appropriate capacity building opportunities to VCS and private sector organisations, including secondment arrangements.

5.36 Links with the Regional Forum and the Regional BME Panel are also proposed.

#### **Unpaid Work Step Change Project**

5.37 Mid-way through the life of the Step Change Initiative, further resources were secured from the Cabinet Office, in order to pilot some work in one part of the region aimed at developing a model of sub-contracting that would attract local VCS partners to delivering unpaid work. Humberside Probation Area was selected to undertake this work and a seconded Senior Probation was allocated three days per week to lead the project.

5.38 The aim of the project was defined as being:

***To enable VCS and Private Sector organisations to make confident and innovative bids for Unpaid Work***

5.39 **The objectives were:**

- > To provide a model of sub-contracted provision
- > To identify potential providers

- > To raise awareness of the opportunity through briefing events
- > To provide an end of project report

**5.40 The main outcomes of this work are:**

- > Development of two potential delivery models
- > Securing the interest of a number of VCS organisations across the sub-region in providing new unpaid work sites
- > Design of the commissioning process to select providers
- > Intention to commission the work from April 2007
- > A report of the project setting out processes and findings
- > Learning from this pilot available for sharing regionally and nationally

A report of the project's activity is attached at Appendix 3.

**Other Developments**

5.41 One further interesting development was the decision taken by West Yorkshire Probation Area to deploy two probation staff to act as local Voluntary Sector Co-ordinators. Building on the work of the MOVE Change-up project in Leeds, the aim of the six month project (December 06 to April 07) is to scope the potential VCS contribution in two probation districts (Leeds and Bradford) and identify potential partners.

**Developments in Prisons**

5.42 The Step Change initiative has been strongly supported by Prison Service Area office and, in particular, through the active participation of the Area Strategic Partnerships Manager and the Resettlement Administration Officer. They have provided a reporting structure through which changes in levels of VCS provision in establishments can be measured and have facilitated important links with prison based Voluntary Sector Co-ordinators. From the outset, the Step Change Development Manager was invited to attend the regular area VCS Co-ordinator Meetings and this provided a route through which the aims of the Step Change initiative could be articulated and advanced at prison level.

**Targets**

5.43 In contrast to Probation Areas, prisons do not have any financial targets to meet in relation to spending any proportion of their budgets on VCS or private sector delivery partners.

5.44 The SLA for 2006 –07 between the ROM and the Prison Service Area Manager contained a requirement to improve the level of service delivery by VCS partners but no monetary value was attached to this.

5.45 Despite this, baseline information on existing levels of spend by prisons was provided by Area Office at the outset. (see Appendix 4). The prisons data shows that the most significant areas of expenditure were at that time:

- ETE pathway – £528,802
- Accommodation pathway - £444,490
- Drugs & Alcohol pathway- £1,762,874

5.46 The expenditure on contracted out Visitors' Centres, £72,515, is likely to be supporting the Children and Families Pathway, but information gathered as part of recent SLA visits indicates the need for greater resources to be directed towards this pathway.

5.47 The expenditure on the Leeds based, Community Chaplaincy Project, supports activities across a range of pathways – primarily Accommodation and ETE, with onward referral and sign-posting into services that support some of the other pathways.

5.48 No further data on levels of spend has been provided but quarterly reports on levels of VCS provision, segmented by pathway have been provided to the Step Change Manager. These are attached at Appendix 5.

5.49 This data reveals a mixed picture but the trend is upwards. The large local establishments show the greatest number of new services – Leeds, Doncaster and Hull all benefit from extremely active full time VCS Co-ordinators and, of course, from their location in inner-cities where there are a large number of VCS organisations that wish to engage with prisons. Hull, in particular, has achieved an outstanding level of increased provision by VCS service providers and used the pioneering multi-agency VCS conference held at the Deep (a local flagship venue) in June 2006 to develop and build on links with new VCS partners that have been sustained over the year.

5.50 There are three significant Area contracts (for housing advice, ETE and CARATS) with VCS providers and these result in generally stable provision delivered by larger VCS organisations. Clearly, this is a model that offers significant potential for further increases in VCS service delivery and, should resources become available in the future, it would be useful to see what other services for offenders in prison could be delivered through the commissioning of a service and the award of an area contract to a VCS supplier.

5.51 Area contracts delivered by larger VCS organisations, however, tend to restrict the opportunities for small, local service providers to play a part and this needs to be taken into consideration. One obvious mechanism to address this would be to require a large provider to sub-contract with smaller organisations to deliver at local level. This can create challenges for the main contractor but work by SOVA through the South Yorkshire Offender Partnership (SYOP) and the Women Into Work (WIW) National Delivery Partnership demonstrates effective models that could be replicated.

## **Step Change Impact on Prisons**

5.52 Some evaluative work was conducted<sup>2</sup> to ascertain how the Step Change project had impacted in prisons and the following key themes emerged:

- Step Change has been useful in driving improvements in information sharing and communication but the lack of funding has prevented development of major new VCS services
- Funding for VCS service provision remains a major barrier – little direct funding for services comes from public or private sector prisons
- The role of the VCS Co-ordinator is central to facilitating access for VCS providers and developing new provision and role works best when full time allocation is given
- Training needs for VCS Co-ordinators need to be addressed and are likely to include sourcing funding opportunities, bid writing and better understanding of how VCS organisations operate
- The VCS Co-ordinator role is often not properly understood by colleagues and more needs to be done to address this.
- There is a need for the VCS Co-ordinator to be better integrated with internal prison structures aimed at reducing re-offending and delivering resettlement objectives
- There is a need for SMTs within establishments to be better acquainted with how work by VCS partners contributes to delivering on performance targets
- There is a strong desire for Area Meetings to continue as they have been extremely useful, perhaps with an element of time given over to training

5.53 The public and the private sector prisons in the region have engaged positively with the Step Change initiative and shown a commitment to securing a greater level of service delivery by voluntary sector partners. However, constraints on funding have resulted in little new investment in the sector itself. The creation of full-time VCS Co-ordinator posts in six establishments represents significant designated resources in developing the infrastructure in prisons that supports and facilitates voluntary sector involvement. Whilst this helps to develop an effective partnership approach it does not in itself make available new resources for VCS service delivery.

## **6. Lessons for Commissioners**

6.1 The commissioning of the Together Women Programme provided the first regional commissioning opportunity and the Step Change Manager undertook a consultation exercise to gain feedback and learning from this process. Some very detailed feedback was received and a summary of this is attached at appendix X.

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<sup>2</sup> VCS co-ordinators in the majority of prisons were asked to respond to a series of questions put to them by an external interviewer and responses were analysed and summarised

6.2 Work to refresh the Regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan (RRAP) was undertaken between December 06 and February 07. Consultation on the draft VCS section of the RRAP produced some useful learning about commissioning.

6.3 Some of the key messages were:

- Processes need to be accessible, transparent and properly communicated in timely fashion.
- Training and support should be made available to small VCS organisations to build capacity.
- Culture change required within NOMS/Prisons/Probation
- Sensible timescales for tenders are a must.
- NOMS to encourage communication between VCS and prisons and probation to ensure that delivery plans are plans are achievable

6.4 Following consultation it became clear that the refreshed VCS section of the Y&H RRAP should focus on commissioning. There was a need to recognise the limitations a pathway team comprised of voluntary members (from all sectors) and to keep objectives realistic and achievable.

6.5 The refreshed VCS section of the RRAP contains the following priorities in relation to commissioning:

- Ensure that VCS views and experience of NOMS, prisons and probation tendering are captured and disseminated
- Ensure that NOMS honours the commitments set out in the Government Publication *Action Plan for the Third Sector*
- Draw on the learning provided by the two Change-up projects in the region and encourage bidding partnerships led by VCS agencies

6.6 A copy of the refreshed VCS section of the RRAP is attached at Appendix 6

## 7. Equality and Diversity

### Objectives

7.1 Within the Step Change project plan there were two objectives relating specifically to diversity and equality. These are set out below:

- **To help develop increased capacity within mainstream services to meet offender cultural and gender specific needs**
- **To advise on ways of ensuring that BME and gender specialist services are commissioned to meet inclusion needs**

7.2 The first of these relates to the need to help increase the knowledge, skills and awareness of staff and managers within the main provider agencies (prisons and probation) that to enable the delivery of culturally competent and gender specific services to offenders. The VCS have specific expertise to offer and it was hoped that the Step Change project could identify ways in which this expertise could be harnessed to improve the capacity of mainstream providers in relation to meeting equality and diversity requirements.

7.3 The second objective was intended to achieve the provision of some gender/race specific services delivered by VCS partners through commissioning.

### **Delivery**

7.4 In the absence of a commissioning budget attached to Step Change and the limited commissioning being undertaken by NOMS in the region, it has been difficult to achieve progress towards these two objectives. However, some work has been undertaken.

7.5 In June 2006, a Promoting Race Equality Conference was arranged by the Step Change project. Delegates from public, private and voluntary sector organisations participated in a day which began with the Regional Offender Manager stating his commitment to promoting race equality and acknowledging the VCS role in helping to deliver this goal. A range of good practice examples from VCS providers were 'showcased' and models of culturally specific service delivery were demonstrated. The workshop sessions provided lively debate and key messages from these sessions were captured and written up in a conference report. (Attached at Appendix 8). A synopsis of these messages were also published in the Spring 2007 edition of the national newsletter, **Clinks News**.

7.6 The conference was the starting point for forming links with a number of BME led community groups and voluntary organisations. Many of these links were used throughout the Step Change project in a variety of ways – for example, some were encouraged to apply to the NOMS Voluntary Sector Grants programme for funding, others were assisted to identify other sources of funding and some were provided with support to form bidding partnerships and produce bids.<sup>3</sup>

7.7 A key element of the objective to build capacity is to involve VCS organisations with diversity expertise in the training programmes available to prison and probation staff. As a starting point, the Step Change project undertook some mapping of how equality and diversity training is currently approached in the four Probation Areas and the public sector Prison Service.

### **Prisons**

7.8 The Prison Service benefits from extensive national guidance specifically on race equality from the national Race Equality Action Group. An updated Prison Service Order (PSO2800) on race

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<sup>3</sup> Y&H achieved a very high level of bids to the NOMS VCS Grants Fund and one outcome was that the Pakistani and Kashmiri Welfare Association led coalition in Kirklees (match-funded by West Yorkshire Probation Area) was successful in winning funds to deliver a service to the children and families of offenders of south Asian origin

equality was introduced in September 2006. It introduces a number of new terms and procedures designed to ensure compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and to improve the management of race equality in prisons.

7.9 A section of the PSO is devoted specifically to training and includes the provisions listed below:

- 8.1 The Prison Service is committed to integrating race equality and diversity training into all areas of staff development and skills training.
- 8.2 Race equality and diversity issues have therefore been incorporated into the Prison Service's general training provision. All courses, from initial training for prison officers to leadership and management development programmes, now include race and diversity elements.
- 8.3 A structured training programme – the Ionann diversity training package - has been produced and should be used by establishments to deliver local staff training in race equality and diversity. This may be supplemented with local material agreed by the Race Equality Action Team.
- 8.4 A new training course on Managing and Promoting Race Equality in Prisons, suitable for members of establishment Race Equality Action Teams has been devised by REAG. This has been successfully piloted in a number of establishments. Training for Area trainers has been arranged, and a programme for local delivery will be agreed with Area Managers.
- 8.5 A revised training programme to support those taking on the new Race Equality Officer role has been devised and piloted by REAG. This will be delivered by REAG.
- 8.6 The revised training programme for REOs includes information that will allow REOs to deliver a training course to prisoners who take on the role of representatives on REATs.
- 8.7 The legal obligation for establishments to consult local communities about their policies and functions and their impact on people of different racial groups is set out in chapters 2 and 5. There is a related need to communicate widely in promoting our work in order to encourage good relations between people of all racial groups.
- 8.8 This is particularly important with regard to groups that have historically been disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, such as black and minority ethnic people and Gypsies and Travellers. This chapter sets out the way in which establishments should go about engaging with these communities.

7.10 The PSO also sets out a requirement that prisons develop strategies for community engagement. Some of this supports the Step Change goal of harnessing the expertise of VCS organisations to support the capacity of prison providers to offer culturally competent services.

Below is an extract from the PSO section on community engagement:

7.1 The legal obligation for establishments to consult local communities about their policies and functions and their impact on people of different racial groups is set out in chapters 2 and 5. There is a related need to communicate widely in promoting our work in order to encourage good relations between people of all racial groups.

7.2 This is particularly important with regard to groups that have historically been disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, such as black and minority ethnic people and Gypsies and Travellers. This chapter sets out the way in which establishments should go about engaging with these communities.

7.3 Some of the other benefits of effective community engagement are:

Identification of the different communities that exist in the area of the establishment;

Partnership working with other agencies;

Involvement in events outside of the prison;

External assistance in impact assessments, giving us a credible community perspective;

Community groups working within the prison to raise awareness of relevant issues or to provide services that are otherwise unavailable;

External monitoring and scrutiny of the work of the establishment resulting in increased trust and confidence of local communities;

Recruitment of a more diverse workforce that reflects the local community.

*Establishments must have a Community Engagement Strategy that sets out how they will communicate and consult with the local community on race equality issues.*

7.4 The strategy must reflect the needs of the prisoner population and the situation in the local area. It should be appropriately linked to the establishment's more general work with the voluntary and community sector.

7.5 The strategy must set out how the establishment will work towards the following high-level objectives:

- Building the trust and confidence of local BME and other minority communities;
- Consulting meaningfully on policies and functions and their impact on people of different racial groups;
- Increasing mutual understanding between the establishment and local BME and other minority communities

7.6 The strategy must include a statement of the business requirements of the establishment in terms of the above high-level objectives.

7.7 In formulating or revising the strategy, establishments must undertake a mapping exercise of existing community engagement work. A database of existing links must be produced setting out:

Name and contact details of partner organisation;

Contact point within the establishment;

Nature of partner organisation;

Purpose of contact / joint working;

Benefits to establishment;

Funding / benefits provided to partner organisation;

Nature of contact / joint working;

Details and dates of contact;

Evaluation of contact to date;

Plans for future contact.

This must be revised annually.

7.8. The Community Engagement Strategy must identify any gaps between this existing provision and the establishment's business requirement and include an action plan for closing these gaps. It must include measures that will be taken to develop capacity in voluntary and community sector groups and to provide suitable induction, training and support for them to function in the prison environment. Action points deriving from the Community Engagement Strategy must be included in the establishment's Race Equality Action Plan.

7.11 The requirements outlined above obviously link closely to the aims of the Step Change objectives around diversity and equality and will necessitate collaborative working between the Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator and the Diversity Manager and the Race Equality Officer

7.12 Within Yorkshire and Humberside there was positive support for the Step Change project from the Prison Service Area Diversity Co-ordinator who, via the Regional BME Panel<sup>4</sup>, and through local links in parts of the region, has been able to begin progress on community engagement. He is hoping to include some VCS organisations in the delivery of diversity and race equality training in the future.

### **Probation**

7.13 The four probation areas in the region had previously been well served by central policies and strategies on equality and diversity emanating from the Diversity Unit within the National Probation Directorate. The unit has transferred to NOMS and is now the NOMS Diversity Unit.

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<sup>4</sup> The BME Panel is the forum for Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector organisations throughout Yorkshire and The Humber. It was formed to raise the profile and needs of BME groups in the region and to develop effective links.

7.14 The NPD Race Equality Scheme (2005) was set up in response to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and continues to provide the structures through which race equality is addressed. The new gender and disability duties, introduced through more recent legislation are also being addressed. Consultation and guidance on a Gender Equality Scheme has been issued to areas, and further support is expected to come from the national unit.

7.15 At local level, some areas are linked with their Local Criminal Justice Boards and are provided with advice on effectively meeting the needs of racial minorities and, in some cases, support with conducting EIAs is provided.

7.16 Probation Areas are attempting to address the question of wider community engagement in a variety of ways; however, there are few obvious mechanisms for consultation at a local level with all relevant parts of the community. Strand of diversity such as disability, age and sexual orientation require attention.

7.17 As far as I have been able to ascertain, probation officers are provided with a one day diversity training package – this may vary, for example, West Yorkshire Probation Area offer the one-day package to probation and administrative staff with a two day package for managers. I was given one example of a South Asian voluntary organisation being involved in training and some colleagues felt that this would be an important area of work to expand.

7.18 Involving the VCS in equality training for prison and probation staff and developing community engagement will require resources. However, costs may not be extensive and expenditure on this area would have additional benefits in relation to breaking down cultural dissonance and developing shared understanding across sectors.

## **8. Partnerships and Issues for the VCS**

8.1 NOMS has expressed its commitment to partnerships and contestability in the publication, *Public Value Partnerships*. The development of the reducing re-offending alliances – corporate, civic and faith/VCS – is highly prized by Ministers as a means of drawing a much broader range of partners into the challenge of reducing re-offending.

8.2 In Yorkshire and Humberside throughout the life of the Step Change project the only regional commissioning exercise was for TWP. The TWP tendering opportunity resulted in five VCS led partnerships submitting bids. Three of these were invited to progress to stage 2 and ultimately a contract was awarded to a partnership led by Foundation Housing – a regional provider of housing and support to offenders. The feedback sought from this exercise (referred to in chapter 6 and attached at Appendix 6) contains some clear messages about the challenges of establishing bidding partnerships within very short timescales and also highlights some of the issues in relation to partnerships having to be re-shaped throughout the process of tendering.

8.3 In chapter 5, two SOVA led partnerships were referenced – SYOP and WIW. These are excellent examples of voluntary sector led partnerships securing funds from Europe to deliver services to offenders. These models could be replicated. However, there are considerable challenges in developing, managing and delivering new partnerships or consortia.

8.4 In Yorkshire and Humberside the MOVE project established a consortium of members. The consortium was made up of agencies that shared a common interest in developing and delivering services to offenders within the framework provided by NOMS and the pathways.

8.5 The rationale for the development of the consortium was in anticipation of an opening up of the market and the application of contestability in the commissioning of services for offenders. The fact that the MOVE consortium was comprised of organisations operating within one local authority area raised difficulties in participating in regional commissioning. The tendering of the Together Women Programme (the only competitive tendering opportunity within the lifetime of the consortium) highlighted these difficulties.

8.6 There are a whole range of administrative and governance matters in relation to partnerships that require resourcing. The MOVE project benefited from Nacro's capacity to take a lead role and manage the development of the consortium; areas of work, such as the creation of a constitution, the provision of training, the production of joint bidding protocols and a governance structure were only possible as a result of the Nacro dedicated staffing resource.

8.7 For any voluntary sector led partnership to succeed it is necessary that the infrastructure needs of that partnership are resourced. This is something that needs to be considered by NOMS.

## **9. Wider Government Agenda**

9.1 The Government has made clear its intention to encourage greater involvement by the VCS in the delivery of public services. The Office of the Third Sector – a department within the Cabinet Office headed by a Minister for the Third Sector – leads on policy to drive forward this agenda.

9.2 In 2006 *Partnerships in Public Service: an Action Plan for the Third Sector* was published. This document contains important actions intended to develop a cross-departmental approach to breaking down barriers to VCS participation and harnessing the innovation of the third sector. The plan contains actions that aim to improve four elements of government's engagement with the sector:

**commissioning** – the cycle of assessing the needs of people in an area, designing and then securing an appropriate service;

**procurement** – the specific aspects of the commissioning cycle that focus on the process of buying services, from initial advertising through to appropriate contract arrangements;

**learning from the third sector** – ensuring that the innovation of the sector is fostered and learning is shared; and

**accountability** – the key role that the sector can play in helping people to hold public services to account for the approach they take to delivery.

9.3 NOMS is one of the named government departments with specific responsibility for carrying out some of the stated actions. These include:

- 1 *Departments will ensure that their commissioning frameworks reflect the principles set out in the plan and that third sector organisations are able to influence the development of those frameworks*
- 2 *Government will establish a forum to facilitate the alignment of individual commissioning frameworks*
- 3 *Government will establish a National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning to invest in the skills of the 2,000 most significant commissioners of the third sector*
- 9 *Government will establish a group to streamline the assurance process for providers that work across government departments and agencies*
- 10 *Government will develop template contracts for individual service areas*
- 12 *Departments will systematically measure the administrative burdens associated with contracts held by the third sector*
- 13 *Departments will develop simplification plans to reduce the administrative burdens on third sector service providers*

9.4 Clearly, there is much here to enhance the potential for VCS engagement within NOMS, however, it is not yet clear what is in place regionally and locally to drive implementation.

## 10. Exit Strategy and Recommendations for NOMS in Y&H

10.1 The Step Change initiative was funded to operate from April 2006 to the end of March 2007. After this time the Step Change Development Manager and the Step Change Administrator posts will cease.

10.2 NOMS in Yorkshire and Humberside remains committed to continuing to promote and develop VCS engagement. The key delivery mechanism for this will be through the VCS Pathway of the RRAP and the Pathway Action Team.

10.3 The VCS section of the RRAP contains the following objectives:

1. **IMPROVE OFFENDER ACCESS TO VCS SERVICES THAT REDUCE RE-OFFENDING**
2. **PROVIDE A ROUTE THROUGH WHICH VCS VIEWS ON AND EXPERIENCE OF NOMS COMMISSIONING CAN BE ARTICULATED AND EXPRESSED AT STRATEGIC LEVEL AND IMPROVE VCS PARTICIPATION IN THE MARKET**
3. **PROMOTE RACE EQUALITY AS A MAJOR PRIORITY FOR THE RRAP AND UTILIZE VCS EXPERTISE TO ENSURE THE PROVISION OF CULTURALLY COMPETENT SERVICES**
4. **SUPPORT AND FACILITATE SERVICE USER ENGAGEMENT IN REDUCING RE-OFFENDING**

10.4 Responsibility for the delivery of these objectives rests with the Pathway Team supported by the designated Reducing Re-offending Manager. However, all the objectives are cross-cutting, impacting on all pathways and it might be useful to consider a new approach in the wake of the end of Step Change.

10.5 The structures put in place to support the Step Change Initiative – the Steering Group, the Prison Service reporting template and the Probation data reports – have been extremely helpful and at the last Step Change meeting it was suggested that these structures be retained in some form after the end of the project's life. This suggestion was well received by the Steering Group. It was felt that the group had served as an important forum in which key senior representatives of NOMS, prisons and probation, private sector and voluntary sector had come together to influence policy and shape actions that advanced the Step Change objectives. It was agreed that the exit strategy should set out proposals by which the Step Change structures might be retained as a driving force for continued VCS engagement in NOMS in the region.

10.6 However, a question was raised about how the Step Change Steering Group could continue to exist alongside a VCS Pathway Team. Whilst there were two distinct programmes of work – one for Step Change and one for the VCS Pathway Team – the need for both structures was clear. With only

one programme of work (that of the VCS Pathway Team) it seemed unlikely that two separate structures would be necessary or useful.

10.7 A way forward may lie in the re-configuration of the VCS Pathway Team to incorporate the membership of the Step Change Steering Group and a re-structuring of the mechanisms for delivering the pathway objectives.

### **Mechanisms for Delivery**

**10.8 Objective 1**, which aims to increase offender access to services delivered by the VCS, will be achieved by actions that are specific to prisons and probation and the re-configured VCS Pathway Team would be well placed to drive these actions and receive updates on progress.

**10.9 Objective 2**, which addresses commissioning, the fundamental 'gateway' to increased VCS delivery under NOMS, will be delivered by actions undertaken by members of the re-configured VCS Pathway Team and the enhanced capacity and seniority of the team will bring important additional influence to bear and ensure effective delivery of these actions.

**10.10 Objectives 3 and 4**, which address race equality and service user engagement, are a continuation of important cross-cutting work that up to now has been delivered by small, sub-groups made up of core members from the VCS Pathway Team and members of the ROM's Reducing Re-offending Team. These groups could be retained and developed with an expanded membership including participation from members of all other Pathway Teams and working to all pathway areas. They should be actively supported by the Regional Reducing Re-offending Team with a member of that team taking lead responsibility for each and the Team Co-ordinator assisting. The status of the sub-groups would be elevated to expert working-groups that would report directly to the RRAP Board. Where appropriate, members from other organisations with specialist expertise, knowledge or skills, could be co-opted to contribute to the working-groups.

### **Leadership**

10.11 The existing Chair of the VCS Pathway Team could be retained but it may be worth considering the possibility of having the ROM Chair the PAT. The influence and impact of the Step Change Steering Group was undoubtedly enhanced as a consequence of the group being chaired by the ROM. It would be enormously helpful if this visible leadership and commitment were retained with the re-configured VCS PAT.

### **Membership**

10.12 The existing membership of the VCS PAT as it is currently configured should be reviewed. Members should be allocated to either a working group or the re-configured pathway team. Existing members of the Step Change Steering Group should be invited to join the re-configured Pathway Team. It would be very helpful to retain the involvement of the Office of the Third Sector through the current Step Change representative, as this would provide a route for information sharing and influence on the wider government agenda around VCS engagement in the delivery of public services.

10.13 There is also value in retaining private sector representation since at some point private and voluntary sector partnerships may be an issue for discussion or action. The value of having the four probation areas represented at a senior level lies in the local commissioning role of probation and the implementation of the sub-contracting plans. At least one of the ROM's Commissioning Managers should sit on the group.

10.14 The Prison Service should continue to monitor and report on levels of VCS delivery across establishments. New work to monitor and evaluate impact and quality of service is being developed and this too should be reported on to the VCS PAT. Information about levels of financial investment in VCS services should be provided in addition to the above.

10.15 Data and analysis on levels of probation spend on VCS provision across pathway areas should continue to be provided by the Probation Regional Business Development Manager.

10.16 Clinks has been represented on the pathway team in the past by the CRISP project. This project was time limited and the member is no longer available. Although the Prison Service Community Partnerships Manager is co-located within Clinks his role currently is to provide the prisons focus. It would be useful therefore to have a representative from Clinks.

10.17 The member representing the Regional Forum (the VCS infrastructure support body and regional voice for the sector) should be retained as should the member representing the regional BME Panel – however the latter may be best placed within the Race Equality Working Group as her contribution to this will be important and her capacity to be actively involved in what will now be two separate meetings may be limited.

10.18 The two significant VCS delivery partnerships – TWP and the Bail Scheme – should also be represented on the re-configured Pathway Team as a means of ensuring that important information about the development of these programmes and specific issues for VCS delivery are monitored and discussed by the Pathway Team.

10.19 Membership from individual voluntary organisations should be retained with a focus on acting as a voice for the sector. It may be necessary to rotate membership across organisations or have some system of nomination or election.

10.20 The above proposals represent a means of achieving a continued focus and drive on increasing VCS delivery in Yorkshire and Humberside. There is a risk that the Pathway Team becomes very large but this would have to be managed.

### **Dissemination of the Learning**

10.21 A further element to the Step Change exit strategy relates to how learning from the project is shared. The obvious route is through dissemination of the final report and, in particular, the learning

from the TWP commissioning process. The ROM may wish to consider the best ways of achieving this.

### **Co-commissioning and Regional Procurement**

10.22 As was stated earlier, the Government is seeking a wider role for the Third Sector and the key tool for making this happen is the publication, *Partnership in Public Services: an Action Plan for Third Sector Involvement*. In order to keep pace with the need to deliver actions across government departments and honour the commitments set out in the publication, NOMS in Yorkshire and Humberside must develop and maintain good relationships with co-commissioners.

10.23 The Regional Forum recently convened a meeting with key representatives from Government Office, Yorkshire Forward, Department of Health, CSIP, Children's Services and NOMS to discuss how best to develop a regional approach to addressing third sector issues within regional commissioning structures. The context and starting point for these discussions was described as *an environment in which the third sector is being expected to play a bigger part in the delivery of public services and this involves switching funding from grants to contracts. At the same time VCS providers operating at local level are facing dwindling resources as a result of longstanding funding sources, such as SRB and ESF, no longer being available.*

10.24 The Regional Forum asserts that *small and medium organisations are going to the wall and big ones are struggling at a time when Government is seeking a wider role for the Third Sector.*

10.25 One proposal which the Regional Forum is pursuing is for the development of a Regional Commissioning Forum, led by either Government Office or Yorkshire Forward. The aim would be to bring together key regional commissioners to share knowledge and develop expertise, taking into account the need to influence how commissioning at local level impacts on VCS providers – for example, some Local Area Agreements have included indicators/targets on increasing procurement from VCS and ensuring that commissioning values include VCS providers. Participation from key commissioning colleagues in Jobcentre Plus, the Health Service, Local Authority Children's Services and NOMS would be invited to be involved.

10.26 Should such a forum be established, the ROM's engagement would provide a route through which the reducing re-offending agenda and the role of VCS providers could be articulated regionally.

### **Capacity Building**

10.27 The Step Change Manager has produced a bid to go forward to Future Builders that, if successful, would generate loan finance to operate a capacity building project for the VCS, managed by Clinks and delivered in the four sub-regions of Yorkshire and Humberside. In order to submit this bid Clinks requires an undertaking that the capacity building service would be considered by the ROM as a service to be regionally commissioned by NOMS in the future.

## **Communication with the VCS**

10.28 There is a need for clarity and honest, transparent dialogue with the sector. This includes the need for an assessment of where and how the VCS can engage in the delivery of services through NOMS and local prisons and probation commissioning. Much has been achieved over the life of the Step Change project to raise the profile of NOMS and to educate the VCS about potential opportunities. However, few opportunities to deliver services have actually arisen and this is leading to a sense of frustration and unmet expectations.

10.29 NOMS in Yorkshire and Humberside must ensure that honest messages (however unpalatable) reach the sector. It is becoming clear that in the medium term Probation Boards (or, in the future, Trusts) will be at the heart of sub-contracting and that most activity to engage the voluntary sector will be at local rather than regional level. This information needs to reach the sector. On-going communication with the Regional Forum is important but equally NOMS must find a way of communicating at local level. Probation Boards must be linked-in with local VCS infrastructure organisations.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. That the VCS Pathway Actions of the Yorkshire and Humberside Reducing Re-offending Action Plan be delivered through a reconfigured VCS Pathway Action Team**
- 2. That the re-configured VCS Pathway Action Team combines membership from the former Step Change Steering Group and the former VCS PAT**
- 3. That consideration be given to the ROM joining the reconfigured VCS PATHWAY team which will be chaired by VCS lead in order for VCS to retain their strategic leadership role within RRAP delivery**
- 4. That objectives 3 and 4 of the VCS section of the Regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan, on race equality and service user engagement, be delivered through the formation of two expert working groups, working across all pathways, comprised of members of all pathways, supported by members of the Reducing Re-offending Team and reporting to the RRAP Board**
- 5. That the re-configured VCS Pathway Action Team acts as a source of expert advice on commissioning models that address VCS participation and that this expertise is offered to Probation Boards (or Trusts) as they develop sub-contracting plans.**
- 6. That the re-configured VCS Pathway Action Team offers advice and expertise to the Prison Service as they develop local commissioning of VCS providers.**

7. That prison and probation managers be encouraged by the ROM to explore ways of commissioning VCS organisations to provide expertise in diversity and equality training
8. That the learning from the Step Change initiative be widely shared through appropriate dissemination of the Final Report
9. That the ROM support a capacity building bid to Future Builders and consider commissioning the service in the future
10. That the Reducing Re-offending Team continue to participate in the Regional Forum drive to establish a Regional Commissioning Forum
11. That, through regular communication channels such as the RRAP newsletter and ROM bulletin, NOMS in Yorkshire and Humberside ensures that VCS organisations receive timely and clear information about how commissioning is developing and what opportunities exist for tendering
12. That NOMS in Yorkshire and Humberside continues to champion VCS engagement in the strategy to reduce re-offending and shares the learning with colleagues in NOMS nationally and in other regions

#### **Into the Future**

10.30 Hopefully, as full contestability is developed, the ROM will be able to require more of public sector providers in terms of how they address offender needs. Commissioning will be **'offender-centric not provider-centric'**. If large, public sector providers wish to continue acting as lead providers they must be required to show how they will incorporate VCS elements of service delivery within their tenders. Equally, large VCS providers will have to show how they in turn will incorporate delivery by small local providers.

10.31 In the meantime, ROMs should use the SLA process to drive current providers to use their resources differently in order to achieve the best possible chance of bringing about the required reduction in rates of re-offending.

## **11. Recommendations for NOMS Nationally**

- 11.1 **Establish mechanisms that will ensure implementation of *Partnerships in Public Service: Action Plan for the Third Sector* at regional and local level**
- 11.2 **Wherever and whenever possible engage in commissioning activity that will enable VCS service providers to offer services**

- 11.3 Consider the possibility of each NOMS Region having a responsibility for driving forward VCS engagement and leading on capacity building for the sector**
- 11.4 Given that most commissioning opportunities for the VCS will be at local level, provide models of sub-contracting that probation areas and prisons are required to use**
- 11.5 Provide clarification of the term 'lead provider' and spell out the implications of this for the VCS**
- 11.6 Expand and develop the NOMS Grants Programme and delegate responsibility for administering and awarding grants to NOMS in the regions**
- 11.7 Establish mechanisms for utilising the expertise of the BME led VCS to develop culturally competent models of service delivery**