

**THE CHANGE UP PUBLIC SERVICE
PRIORITY PROGRAMME**

APRIL 2005 – DECEMBER 2006

EVALUATION FINDINGS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to Research

The government's "Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan" (2004), "National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan" (2005) and five year "Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending" (2006), emphasise the potential role that voluntary and community organisations (VCOs), as well as private organisations, can play in the provision of services to offenders whether in custody or the community. However, VCOs face a number of challenges in preparing to work with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), with the concept of contestability causing concern.

The Change Up Public Service Priority Programme included five pilot projects commissioned nationally by the NOMS Voluntary Sector Unit (now NOMS Partnerships Unit, Voluntary and Community Sector Team) to test out approaches to building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector in order to enable agencies to engage and respond effectively to NOMS and the commissioning of offender services.

Methodology

Each pilot project utilised a different methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of their project in achieving their objectives including questionnaire surveys, structured and semi-structured interviews, feedback forms from events, and review of documentation pertaining to the projects.

Small sample sizes and the lack of information about response rates and the characteristics of participants limit the generalisability of the findings reported. Nonetheless, the findings provide useful illustrative data as to the value and limitations of the different pilot projects.

Project Descriptions

Clinks Regional Information and Skills Project (CRISP) – worked at a national, regional and sub-regional level with specific pilots in Yorkshire and Humberside, the North East, and East Midlands to develop infrastructure links so that VCOs are better equipped and resourced to deliver services to offenders. Activities undertaken included: Regional Information Skills Events (RISE); weekly information e-bulletin; sub-regional conferences; action learning sets; and the provision of training, resource packs, information and reports.

Managing Offenders Through Voluntary Sector Engagement (MOVE) – a Nacro led project covering the Leeds Area, with the aim of providing a business advice service and training to voluntary sector organisations to enable smaller organisations to compete to be service providers within NOMS. It organised a number of activities including: running focus groups; e-mailings and mailings; training events; consortium development; and developing a self-assessment VCO toolkit to prepare for NOMS.

Step Up – a Crime Concern led project covering the West Midlands NOMS region, with the objective of piloting a locally accountable, integrated and responsive community sentencing service, rooted in the community, joining up provision by disparate VCOs, using the social franchise model. Step Up engaged in a number of capacity building activities, as well as becoming involved in specific projects with the aim of piloting the social franchise model of delivery.

Partners in Reducing Re-offending (PiRR) – PiRR was a Revolving Doors led pilot covering the London Area that aimed to increase the ability of VCOs to form effective partnerships and meet the reducing re-offending objectives of the ROM. PiRR engaged in a wide variety of activities to achieve its objectives including: joining the London Resettlement Strategy Implementation Group and attending regular one-to-one meetings with the ROM for London; running a series of Reducing

Reoffending Network seminars (RNNs); developing a monthly e-newsletter and an interactive webpage; organising a number of consortium building groups (CBGs) and steering groups; activities to facilitate skills sharing across VCOs; and the development of a '*What you need to know about consortia building*' toolkit.

Sustainability, Empowerment, Engagement and Development (SEED4BME) – was run by the National Body of Black Prisoners Support Groups (NBBPSG), covering the North West and South West regions. Its primary aims were to identify the needs of existing BME providers and engage with existing national and regional BME forums to identify potential providers and sources of support; as well as develop information and training. SEED4BME undertook a range of activities including: completing a regional mapping exercise and profiling the North West and South West regions; running a number of capacity building workshops and regional forums; developing links and meeting with key stakeholders; supporting the development of a BME strategy group in London; providing information and training.

Findings

Findings from the evaluation of each pilot suggest that individuals participating in the research gained a number of benefits resulting from their involvement in one of the projects, which are detailed below.

Information leading to better understanding of NOMS/the policy agenda – respondents indicated that their involvement helped them gain a greater understanding of the NOMS agenda and what it would mean for their organisation. In addition, respondents indicated that the projects helped to facilitate a greater understanding among statutory sector providers of the potential value of VCOs in providing services for offenders and similarly, respondents also reported a greater understanding and appreciation of the statutory sector in delivering interventions for offenders.

Networking opportunities (including drawing in organisations not previously involved) – of high importance to the respondents was the opportunity to network with other agencies that provided services to offenders, or who planned to provide services in the future. In some cases, respondents reported an enhanced culture of collaboration between VCOs and statutory sector agencies, with agencies sharing information, making cross referrals, and enhancing service take up.

Promotion/advocacy/brokering role of the consortium – a key aim for the pilot projects was to improve capacity among VCOs with some projects facilitating the development of consortia. For many respondents, the activities they engaged in proved beneficial in terms of helping their agency prepare for NOMS commissioning, including identifying potential bidding collaborations and enhancing the organisational capability of their agency. While commissioning opportunities under NOMS did not arise during the course of the projects, some consortia were developed and were supported by the host projects to submit applications for funding outside of NOMS.

Ability to consult a wide range of stakeholders – because of the knowledge and experience of the different agencies involved in delivering a Change Up project, respondents were able to consult and liaise with a wide range of statutory sector agencies and VCOs, helping to facilitate communication across agencies. In particular, some respondents indicated that their engagement with one of the Change Up projects, enabled them to voice their concerns, and to comment on and respond to the proposed changes to offender services and commissioning arising from NOMS.

Provision of specialist knowledge/expertise – the host organisations also provided relevant and useful information to facilitate the VCOs in developing their knowledge of NOMS and improve their capacity building, including providing support and advice on bid writing, supporting and developing training opportunities, providing relevant reports and publications, and developing resource packs and toolkits. Overall, the advice and support provided by the projects was widely appreciated by respondents.

A point of contact – the Change Up projects acted individually as a single point of contact for VCOs, responding to questions and concerns as they arose, as well as providing timely information through mailings, e-mailings and in some cases an interactive website, which many respondents reported as being particularly beneficial in terms of helping them keep abreast of developments. This was of particular benefit to some smaller VCOs who, due to limited resources, were unable to attend some of the other activities organised by the projects.

While the feedback received from respondents was broadly positive, some nonetheless indicated that they derived little benefit from their involvement with the projects. In some cases, this was a result of expectations of the project not materialising, while for others, this was due to frustrations emanating from the lack of opportunity to bid for the provision of custodial and community interventions and services for offenders.

A common concern raised by respondents across the projects was one of resources. This was particularly true for smaller VCOs who had limited resources available to participate in the activities organised by the different projects, which influenced their ability to engage in capacity building activities.

Conclusion and Overall Findings

Overall, respondents participating in the research reported a number of benefits from engaging in one of the pilot projects, including gaining a better understanding of NOMS; opportunities for networking with agencies already providing services to offenders and with others not previously involved; the ability to engage with a wide range of stakeholders; the acquisition of skills through specialist knowledge to help build their capacity and prepare for NOMS commissioning; and the ability to contribute their views through the host organisation's regional and national engagement. However, some reported gaining little benefit from their involvement, with expectations not being met. The lack of NOMS commissioning also led to frustration among some agencies.

Key considerations for future infrastructure building and partnership working include the need to ensure credibility and suitability of host or lead providers in terms of their local and regional knowledge and contacts; the lead in time to establish projects and the need for focused management support from the outset; the potential for disparity between the benefits of localised capacity building projects and the need for strategic engagement at a regional or national level; capacity issues around the engagement of smaller voluntary sector organisations; the need for central and regional NOMS support; the need to manage expectations and to align such initiatives to commissioning plans; and the sustainability of consortia.

The key learning points arising from the evaluation of these projects will be used to inform the new NOMS Third Sector Action Plan which is to be developed in April 2008, in consultation, by the NOMS Partnerships Unit, Voluntary and Community Sector Team and which will form part of an overarching Ministry of Justice Third Sector Strategy.

Contents

Executive Summary	i
1. Introduction and Background to the Research	1
2. Methodology	3
3. Project Descriptions and Outputs	7
4. Evaluation Findings	14
5. Conclusion and Overall Findings	23
Executive Summary – Evaluation of the CRISP Project	25
Executive Summary – Evaluation of the MOVE Project	28
Executive Summary – Evaluation of the Step Up Project	32
Executive Summary – Evaluation of the PiRR Project	36
Executive Summary – Evaluation of the SEED4BME Project	39

1. Introduction and Background to the Research

The correctional services was one of five areas identified by the then Home Office Active Communities Unit (ACU) to increase engagement with the voluntary and community sector by targeting specialist infrastructure and capacity building support.

The Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan¹, published by the government in 2004, aimed to support the Government's commitment to reduce re-offending through greater strategic direction and joined-up working. It was developed to support NOMS achieve integrated service delivery with end-to-end offender management delivered through regional structures, and co-ordinated interventions focused on the needs of individual offenders. One of the main themes running through the Plan was the requirement for more joined-up working across Government, requiring greater information sharing between the agencies and, the development of partnerships to support regional working. The plan identified seven pathways aimed at reducing reoffending: accommodation; education, training and employment; mental and physical health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefit and debt; children and families; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Across the seven pathways, the Action Plan recognised the role of voluntary and community organisations (VCOs), in addition to statutory services, as service providers to offenders at a local level.

The National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan², published the following year, reflected on progress, outlined further priorities for work on the pathways, and highlighted the importance of partnership working to help reduce re-offending, including the establishment of cross-agency effective partnerships at national, regional and local level and alliances with the corporate, civic, and voluntary/faith sectors.

(NB A new strategic plan³ for reducing re-offending was published for consultation in November 2007).

The government's "Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending"⁴ was published in 2006. The strategy set out the Government's five-year plan to reduce re-offending and protect the public. The priorities are to protect the public effectively from violent and dangerous people; combine punishment, reparation and rehabilitation; use offender managers to supervise offenders throughout the sentence, whether in prison or the community; and to ensure a vibrant system which values its staff. The latter includes the introduction of contestability to make sure services are provided by the best possible partners and providers, including VCOs and private organisations, to get the most effective and efficient services possible.

It has been recognised, however, that the majority of VCOs and particularly some small providers, face a number of challenges in preparing to work with NOMS, including:

- Learning the lessons of current and developing practice, and issues around evaluation and demonstrating outcomes
- Difficulties in accessing contractual opportunities, overburdensome procurement processes, and unrealistic procurement timescales
- Establishing processes that encourage links between voluntary sector organisations themselves or between voluntary organisations and other potential contractors in the public and private sector
- Access to capital for building and infrastructure needs

¹ *Reducing Reoffending: National Action Plan*. Home Office (2004).

² *National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan*. Home Office (2005).

³ *Strategic Plan for Reducing Re-offending 2008-11: Working in partnership to reduce re-offending and make communities safer*. Ministry of Justice (2007).

⁴ *A Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending*. Home Office (2006).

- Lack of business, financial and contracting and project management skills
- Excessive burden of monitoring and evaluation diverting resources from front line delivery
- Failure to share risk effectively
- Gaining the training and accreditation needed to provide certain NOMS programmes e.g. offending behaviour programmes

In addition, the development of NOMS, and the concept of contestability, has caused concern within the voluntary sector. Some smaller voluntary organisations have a particular concern that they will lack the capacity to bid competitively against larger organisations and against the private sector. It is, however, important that a wide variety of organisations should be able to compete to deliver services in order to meet the wide-ranging and diverse needs of offenders. To harness the ideas and innovation of VCOs, especially of smaller VCOs, partnerships and collaborative working will be essential, both within the voluntary and community sector and between the sector and statutory and private organisations.

The Change Up Public Service Priority Programme

The NOMS Change Up programme was part of a £4 million programme to increase the engagement of the voluntary and community sector in geographical areas of deprivation and priority public service areas. It involved five pilot projects commissioned nationally by the then NOMS Voluntary Sector and Assisted Prison Visits Unit to test out approaches to building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector in order to enable agencies to engage and respond effectively to:

- Structural changes arising from NOMS in relation to purchasing and providing of services for offenders
- Anticipated changes to the commissioning of services for offenders which would introduce contestability allowing VCOs to bid on their own or with other partners against other voluntary, public and private sector competitors
- An anticipated opening up of the market for the delivery of services to offenders to a wider range of private and voluntary and community sector organisations, in particular, those that worked with hard to reach groups
- An over arching government commitment to widening the involvement of VCOs in the delivery of public services

Three key areas were identified by NOMS to help facilitate VCOs in meeting the challenges they may face:

- Developing Specialist/Generic Infrastructure Links
- Large Organisations Supporting Small Organisations
- Focusing on Under-Represented Groups

The projects were funded from April 2005 to December 2006. The purpose of this report is to outline the progress made by each project; to report the findings from the individual project evaluations in terms of their impact; and to summarise the key learning points from the NOMS programme.

2. Methodology

Each pilot project utilised a different methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of their project in achieving their objectives, as well as identify lessons learnt (see Table 2.1).

Project	Methodology	Response Rate
CRISP	Web based survey	189 (26.6%) answering some or all of the questions
	Group discussion with participants of action learning sets	Unknown
MOVE	Semi-structured telephone interview	6
Step Up	Desk top review of documentation	N/A
	Semi-structured telephone interview with participants attending conference and not engaging further with Step Up	16
	Semi-structured interview with participants attending conference who engaged further with Step Up (face to face or telephone)	6
	Brief telephone interview with participants who attended conference, indicated that they would engage further with Step Up and didn't	7
	Semi-structured interview with statutory sector	3
	Group interview with members of Step Up project team	2
	Observation of one of the regional 'Working Lunches' organised by Crime Concern	7
PiRR	Evaluation forms and questionnaires disseminated at all events and training days	Unknown
	Feedback collected through steering groups	Unknown
	Analysis of minutes of meetings and correspondence	N/A
	Data collected through PiRR team meetings	N/A
SEED4BME	Review of documentation relating to capacity building and the project	N/A
	Phone based survey with statutory sector agencies	10
	Phone based survey with VCOs who had contact with SEED4BME	40
	Face to face interviews with SEED4BME steering group members	8
	Case study analysis using in-depth questionnaire	7

Table 2.1: Summary of the evaluation methodology employed by each project

Developing Specialist/Generic Infrastructure Links

Clinks Regional Information and Skills Project (CRISP)

The evaluation of the CRISP pilot project utilised a web based survey to collect participants' views on the delivery of the project, including their expectations of the project, its achievements, the potential for action learning to effect change in multi-agency relationships and how the project had been managed and whether it could be replicated. The survey consisted of a number of closed choice and free text questions.

Participants for the survey included all individuals who had been involved in any of the activities undertaken by CRISP during the pilot, and who were listed on CRISP's email database. 710 contacts were identified, with 189 respondents completing all or part of the survey, representing a response rate of 26.6%. Table 2.2 shows the profile of participants who responded to the survey.

In addition, group discussions were undertaken with participants attending the action learning sets to assess the extent to which the sets addressed issues of cultural dissonance and facilitated knowledge management, with the data collected being analysed using qualitative research analysis.

	Percentage
Organisation participants worked for	
VCOs	68.8
Statutory services (NOMS, HMPS, Probation)	17.5
Other	13.7
Primary work of organisation	
Working with offenders	16.2
Education, training or employment	16.2
Infrastructure (i.e. developing the capacity of other VCOs)	14.6
Accommodation and housing	8.5
Families and children	8.5
Drugs/alcohol	6.9
Other (including older people; young people; ex-servicemen and mediation/conflict resolution)	23.1
Location	
Yorkshire and Humber region	47.7
North East region	16.5
East Midlands region	14.8
National	10.8

Table 2.2: Profile of participants completing questionnaire survey

Large Organisations Supporting Small Organisations

Managing Offenders through Voluntary Sector Engagement (MOVE)

The MOVE evaluation utilised a semi-structured interview to collect data on participants' experiences of the project, with the interviews being conducted over the phone. The interview addressed the following topics: the type and quality of services provided by MOVE; ways in which services could be improved; awareness of NOMS and offender service delivery pathways, before and after MOVE; and the impact of MOVE on the capacity of VCOs in relation to the operational and strategic development of services for offenders.

Participants for this research were two members of Nacro staff involved in MOVE and four representatives from a purposive sample of VCOs who had engaged with MOVE, with the organisations being chosen to reflect the range of experiences of VCOs with MOVE. These agencies included: two organisations that were involved in delivering services to offenders in Leeds and West Yorkshire and which had joined the VCO Consortium initiated and developed by MOVE; one infra-structure support organisation that had a brief to develop skills amongst VCOs across West Yorkshire; and one national organisation that supported the development of services for offenders which was also running a NOMS Change Up Pilot Project across Yorkshire and Humberside.

The data collected was analysed based on the themes and topics guiding the structure of the interview and the theories of change model, using qualitative research analysis.

Step Up

The analysis of the effectiveness of the Step Up pilot project consisted of three stages.

Stage One involved a desk top review of documentation relating to activity in the scoping phase, including records of numbers attending the regional conference in January and subsequent numbers participating in Step Up, and feedback from the scoping phase.

Stage Two involved data collection from participants who attended the launch conference of Step Up and had not expressed a desire to take up the capacity building opportunities offered by the

project. Semi-structured telephone interviews were undertaken with fifteen representatives from VCOs, with an additional email response being received by a further participant. The interviews explored participants' perceptions of the conference, their views on the social franchise model and developing partnership agenda for the region; and reasons for non-engagement.

Stage Three involved interviewing those VCOs which had both participated in the conference and subsequently in the Step Up project in order to explore their views on the conference and social franchise model as well as their perceptions of the Step Up Project and any suggestions for changes or improvements to organisation and delivery of the project.

Telephone contact was made with representatives from the thirteen organisations which were indicated as participating in further aspects of the Step Up project. Of those, only six confirmed at the time of the interviews that they had participated in the project beyond the conference. Semi-structured face-to-face or telephone interviews were undertaken with these individuals and brief telephone interviews with the respondents who had not participated further in the project.

Further semi-structured telephone interviews were undertaken with the West Midlands Regional Offender Manager and two representatives from Probation areas within the region. A group interview was also held with two members of the Step Up project team.

A member of the evaluation team attended and observed one of the regional 'Working Lunches' organised by Crime Concern in November 2006, which was attended by representatives from seven VCOs.

Partners in Reducing Re-offending (PiRR)

Data for the evaluation of the PiRR project was collected through evaluation forms and questionnaires from all events and training days organised by PiRR, as well as through feedback collected from the members of the PiRR steering group. The steering group consisted of representatives of each of the Consortia Building Groups (CBGs), as well as representatives from statutory sector organisations. In addition, throughout the course of the project, minutes of meetings and correspondence were also analysed.

Because the PiRR team conducted the project as a piece of action research, data was also collected throughout the course of the project from the PiRR team meetings, where discussions of their experiences and the strengths and weaknesses of the project were undertaken.

Working With Under-Represented Groups

Sustainability, Empowerment, Engagement and Development for Black and Minority Ethnic Offenders (SEED4BME)

Evaluation of the SEED4BME pilot project consisted of a review of various documents relating to capacity building and the project, orientated towards the general aims of the NBBPSG. In addition, a phone-based targeted survey was completed with ten statutory sector agencies and forty VCOs who had had contact with the SEED4BME project. A further eight face to face recorded interviews with the SEED4BME steering group members and an analysis of seven case studies using an in depth questionnaire was also undertaken. Participants for the surveys were identified through random sampling to present a more accurate assessment of the project's outcomes.

Limitations of the evaluation

The small scale nature of the evaluation for each pilot project means that the generalisability of the findings reported is limited, and thus the responses reported for each pilot evaluation should be viewed in the context of that pilot project only. Because the funding for each project ended in December 2006, it is also not possible to report on any long-term impact the individual projects may have had.

It is also important to recognise that because each project utilised different research methodologies to evaluate the impact of their projects, comparison across the different projects in terms of what they achieved and their impact will be limited.

While some projects specified the response rates for their research, this was not universal. In addition, information pertaining to the characteristics of respondents was not always detailed by the different projects. Consequently, it is unclear as to what proportion of individuals who engaged with the pilot projects subsequently participated in the research. It is also unclear as to the representativeness of the sample of respondents who participated in the research in terms of the characteristics of individuals who engaged with each of the pilot projects. It is possible that there will be a positive skew towards participants responding to the research who derived some benefit from their engagement with the project, thus biasing the findings reported.

Given the above limitations, it is important that caution is taken in interpreting the findings. However, despite these limitations, the findings reported provide useful illustrative data as to the possible benefits respondents who participated in the research derived from their engagement with the pilot, as well as identify any limitations associated with the pilot projects. This will provide useful information for the development of any further work and policy in this area.

3. Project Descriptions and Outputs

Developing Specialist/Generic Infrastructure Links

CRISP

The CRISP project worked at a national, regional and sub-regional level with specific pilots in Yorkshire and Humberside, the North East, and East Midlands. It was tasked with the following objectives:

- To develop specialist/generic VCO infrastructure links so that the sector is better equipped and resourced to deliver high quality services to offenders
- To support frontline VCOs to improve both capacity and service delivery to offenders
- To raise the awareness of and exploit the untapped potential that other mainstream VCOs may bring to working with offenders

Project Outputs

Table 3.1 shows the activities undertaken by CRISP throughout the duration of the pilot.

Activity and Location	No. Of Events
<i>Regional Information Skills Event</i>	
North East region	2
Yorkshire and Humberside region	1
East Midlands region	2
<i>Action Learning sets</i>	
North East region	2
Yorkshire and Humberside region	4
East Midlands region	3
<i>'Light Lunch' weekly information e-bulletin</i>	Started 18/4/06
<i>Sub-regional conferences (all Yorkshire and Humberside)</i>	
'Risk or no Risk'	1
'Just Visiting'	1
'One Vision'	1
<i>'Volunteering with Offenders in the Community' training</i>	
North East region	1
Yorkshire and Humberside region	1
East Midlands region	2
<i>'Taster day' for action learning' (North East)</i>	1
<i>'Taster day' for coaching or buddying' (Yorkshire and Humberside)</i>	1
<i>Provision of resource packs, publications and reports</i>	
'Volunteering in Prison'	
'Volunteering with Offenders in the Community'	
'Enhancing the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector'	
'An introduction to working with the Prison Service'	
'Action Learning Matters Toolkits'	

Table 3.1: Activities undertaken by CRISP

The main groups of focus for the activities of CRISP were VCOs who currently provided services for offenders, former offenders or their families, as well as those organisations that hoped to work with this group in the future. CRISP also targeted VCOs who help frontline VCOs improve their infrastructure, often referred to as second tier or infrastructure organisations. CRISP also engaged

the statutory and private organisations involved in working with offenders, for example, NOMS, HMPS and the probation service.

CRISP ran two focus groups in October 2005, involving sixteen VCOs from national, regional and local level, who either worked with offenders, or hoped to do so in the future, to establish their key needs. As a result of this, and ongoing consultations with key stakeholders in three sectors, the project evolved a variety of activities to enable VCOs to:

- Learn about the NOMS agenda
- Make contacts with those in statutory agencies likely to be able to offer service opportunities and further networking
- Build capacity through information, training and resources

Some of these activities, such as the Regional Information and Skills Event (RISE), were envisaged from early in the project; others such as the sub-regional conferences, emerged in response to the interest shown and opportunities made available by various individuals already involved in the project. In total, 710 individuals engaged in at least one of the activities CRISP undertook.

Large Organisations Supporting Small Organisations

Three pilots were run, using large organisations with relevant skills to work constructively with smaller providers. It was envisaged that this would include encouraging the creation of federated working with a mix of providers, partnership development and the formation of consortia.

MOVE

MOVE was a Nacro led project covering the Leeds Area, with the aim of providing a business advice service and training to voluntary sector organisations to enable smaller organisations to compete to be service providers within NOMS. The organisations were to be assisted in building capacity, preparing and managing bids, sharing good practice and developing partnerships. The overall objects for MOVE were:

- To equip smaller organisations with the skills to compete in a contestable market place
- To increase the range of organisations able to bid

Project Outputs

MOVE engaged in a number of activities to address the following tasks specified in their proposal:

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

Table 3.2 shows the interventions delivered by MOVE against the five broad activities specified above, with some addressing more than one activity.

	Organisation development	Funding and contracting	Promotion, liaison and advocacy	Information sharing	Staff development
E-mailings			√	√	
Mailings			√	√	
Focus groups	√		√	√	√
Training events	√	√	√	√	√
Bi-lateral meetings			√	√	
Conference	√		√	√	√
Attendance at forums			√	√	
Consortium development	√	√	√	√	
VCS self assessment toolkit	√				√

Table 3.2: Interventions delivered by MOVE against activities

Step Up

Step Up was a Crime Concern led project covering the West Midlands NOMS region. It aimed to enhance the involvement of communities and VCOs in the delivery of community sentences and the supervision of offenders. In particular, the objective of Step Up was to pilot a locally accountable, integrated and responsive community sentencing service, rooted in the community, joining up provision by disparate voluntary and community groups.

To achieve this objective, Step Up utilised the Social Franchise Model, which it describes as “a means of brokering assured services to offenders through new VCO partnerships and alliances which harness and extend their reach into communities, best practice and experience.” The key components of the model described by Step Up were:

- Training in key concepts and issues
- Quality assurance and performance management for services and organisations
- Business support and organisational capacity building
- Brokerage and negotiation services with commissioners and purchasers
- Raising the profile of franchisees and the delivery opportunities they present to purchasers

Project Outputs

In the early stages of the Step Up project, a scoping study was undertaken to obtain a broad picture of the involvement of VCOs in working with offenders in the West Midlands; their understanding of the NOMS agenda and its opportunities and challenges; and their interest in collaborative and partnership approaches within the sector. This phase involved contact and interviews with more than 50 organisations and four consultative seminars held during October and November 2005. As a result of this work, a comprehensive report was produced detailing knowledge, expertise and capacity within the VCOs that were interested in working with offenders in the region and barriers to their engagement with the NOMS agenda.

This was followed by baseline assessments of the organisations which had expressed an interest in participating in the Step Up pilot (17 organisations in total). These organisations were contacted in May 2006 and invited to take part in the social franchise model.

Following the regional conference in January 2006, a further project plan was set out for subsequent phases of Step Up, including capacity building activities. The content of the capacity building stage was based on an individual assessment by Crime Concern of each organisation and on the requirements of commissioners. Six respondents who attended the conference subsequently engaged with the Step Up project until November 2006. Table 3.3 shows the activities arranged by the Step Up project.

Activity	No. attending
Regional conference: Findings from scoping review Discuss and finalise social franchise model Determine next phase of project	46 delegates from 30 VCOs and 18 representatives from national and local public sector organisations
Seminar on 'Working with offenders in prison and the community'	10
Seminar on 'Introduction to probation'	17
Seminar with Skills for Justice: Guide to organisations as to how best to access appropriate training opportunities	Not detailed

Table 3.3: Activities undertaken by Step Up

One of the aims of the Step Up project was to pilot a social franchise model of delivery and consequently project managers sought to become involved in specific projects that might test the model. The following potential projects were investigated:

- In West Mercia, discussions with Probation led to two project plans being prepared, although these were subsequently not pursued by Probation.
- In Staffordshire, discussions were held about working with Relate to develop family work and these discussions were still being pursued at the time of the evaluation.
- Discussions with Probation took place about two potential projects: one concerning unpaid work opportunities for offenders and another involving mentoring for offenders. The unpaid work project was unable to progress due to commissioning opportunities not arising during the lifetime of Step Up. The offender mentoring project was not progressed because of resource issues.

PiRR

PiRR was a Revolving Doors led pilot covering the London Area that aimed to increase the ability of VCOs to form effective partnerships and meet the reducing re-offending objectives of the Regional Offender Manager (ROM). In particular, PiRR acted as a liaison point between agencies and the ROM, supplying the ROM with information about what was available through VCOs, including identifying new organisations that might wish to engage in work with offenders. In particular, PiRR was tasked with the following objectives:

- To build effective partnerships between VCOs to help reduce levels of re-offending
- To co-ordinate the skills and capacities of VCOs
- To support the delivery of cost-effective, holistic services to offenders
- To increase the ability of London-based VCOs to form effective partnerships
- Improve performance
- Strengthen governance

- Increase the diversity of providers

Project Outputs

PiRR undertook a range of activities to achieve its primary objectives, which are detailed below:

To mediate and communicate between the ROM for London and VCS service providers

- Organised a launch event, with the aim of bringing together a broad range of VCOs from across London to be introduced to the ROM for London and the PiRR project, with over 150 organisations attending the event
- Joined the London Resettlement Strategy Implementation Group, with the aim of representing the views of the smaller VCOs
- Attended regular one-to-one meetings with the ROM for London, with information gathered being communicated back to the VCOs via the CBGs, the PiRR e-newsletter and the PiRR website
- Ran a series of seven Reducing Reoffending Network (RRN) seminars, with each seminar focusing on a different pathway of the London Resettlement Strategy
- Established links with a variety of existing VCOs infrastructure networks in order to share information about the work of NOMS and the potential implications for London's VCOs
- Developed a monthly e-newsletter and an interactive website to facilitate the sharing of information between NOMS and the VCOs
- Organised four steering group meetings, providing representatives (including VCO and statutory sector providers) with an opportunity to convene and steer its discussions with NOMS and other key statutory sector stakeholders
- In partnership with the London ROM, Government Office for London and London Probation, organised and hosted a one-day conference for the VCOs, which aimed to provide an opportunity to bring together different agencies and engage in a constructive dialogue on how the sector could take forward NOMS and the reducing re-offending agenda in London

Develop a model for effective consortia building between VCOs

- Established a number of CBGs with the aim of competing for contracts from the London ROM. Because of delays in NOMS commissioning, PiRR developed detailed models of consortium-based interventions that supported the delivery of the Offender Management Model and submitted consortium-based funding applications to both statutory and charitable funders
- The steering groups were used to ensure that synergies and opportunities for joint working were identified, with a view to the development of holistic service models
- In collaboration with EDS, PiRR organised and facilitated a pan-sector learning set, with the aim of enabling representatives across the VCOs, statutory and private sector to establish stronger links
- PiRR liaised with the South East region, where many of London's prisoners are held, with the aim of establishing opportunities for VCOs to develop links and build consortia across the two regions
- Developed a 'What you need to know about consortia building' toolkit.

Facilitate a skills sharing service between VCOs to increase their competitiveness as service providers

- Conducted a skills audit of VCOs
- Developed a SkillShare service to create opportunities for organisations wishing to trade skills and knowledge
- Where the skills audit revealed sector-wide skills deficits, PiRR developed resources and training opportunities designed to respond to these gaps, including developing a risk

assessment template and training days on bid writing, fundraising, partnership working and monitoring and evaluation

- Established links with other capacity building initiatives to develop and deliver training courses.

Working With Under-Represented Groups

SEED4BME

SEED4BME offenders was a project run by the National Body of Black Prisoners Support Groups (NBBPSG), covering the North West and South West regions. The pilot project was tasked with identifying the needs of existing BME providers; engaging with existing national and regional BME forums to identify potential providers and sources of support; and developing information, training and access to advice to assist BME VCOs in identifying and accessing service delivery opportunities in NOMS.

In particular, the objectives for SEED4BME were:

- To address the imbalance of culturally sensitive services for black offenders by supporting, co-ordinating and networking with smaller black offender support groups to build capacity and increase the voice of the sector to partners within the criminal justice system
- To engage relevant forums at a national and sub-regional level and provide an effective communication route for the black offender support groups
- To improve services and infrastructure within support agencies working with BME offenders and enable them to successfully identify and access service delivery opportunities within NOMS.

Project Outputs

SEED4BME completed a range of activities to achieve its objectives, which are detailed below.

Regional Mapping Exercise

The report examines the number of specific organisations from BME VCOs that provide services for BME offenders in the North West and South West and identifies support groups that will fortify the capacity building activity. The report also highlights the barriers that some BME VCOs face when working with the prison and probation services, explores gaps in service provision and suggests ways these can be addressed through partnership working.

Profiling of the North West and South West regions

- Meeting with the NOMS commissioning manager and the ROMS development manager in the North West took place to clarify the diversity agenda for NOMS.
- A joint meeting with the Prison Service Community Engagement Manager, Diversity Manager and Voluntary Sector Development Manager in the North West was held in order to assess current co-ordination of community engagement within prison establishments and if necessary, better this.
- A roundtable discussion with the South West ROM took place to consider diversity issues and the involvement of BME VCOs.
- The formation of BME alliances throughout the South West region.

This profiling was delivered as part of the mapping report.

Engaging with support agencies and identifying capacity and infrastructure needs.

SEED4BME undertook a number of assessments to identify capacity building needs and provided subsequent training, and also established a BME reference group. In addition, in collaboration with other Change Up partner projects SEED4BME supported the following activities:

- Establishment of a BME strategy group in London for which a funding bid was made
- Establishment of two forums in the West Midlands for BME VCOs to inform them of the funding and the commissioning model being adapted by NOMS.
- Raising awareness of the capacity needs of support agencies

SEED4BME established a number of mechanisms to facilitate the capacity building needs of support agencies, including:

- Meetings with the Prison Service Race Advisory Group
- Meetings with agencies such as NOMS, HMPS, Probation, Apex Trust
- Presentations to a variety of forums
- Supporting the development of a BME strategy group in London
- Presentations to statutory service provider conferences
- Developing information and training
- Establishment of a website and e-bulletin, as well as mailings and circulations

In addition to the above activity, SEED4BME ran a number of training and capacity building workshops, regional forums, a national conference and developed a good practice guide (see Table 3.4).

Activity	Region	No. attending
<i>Capacity Building workshops</i>		
Preparing for funding/what funders want	North West	17
Business planning	North West	15
Partnership and consortia	North West	11
<i>Regional Forums</i>		
Lost in Diversity (mini conference)	North West	66
Regional forum and reception	North West	16
2 nd regional forum	North West	19
3 rd regional forum	North West	28
4 th regional forum	North West	24
5 th regional forum	North West	30
<i>2 day national conference</i>	South West	92 and 86

Table 3.4: Details of the events organised by SEED4BME and the number of delegates attending

4. Evaluation Findings

Described below are the key findings emerging from the evaluation of each of the pilot projects. As indicated, the small scale nature of the evaluation for each pilot and the general lack of information about the response rate and characteristics of respondents means that caution needs to be taken when interpreting the findings reported.

Developing Specialist/Generic Infrastructure Links

CRISP

Of the different activities undertaken by CRISP, the Light Lunch bulletin was rated as the most practically useful item, with the conferences being rated as the next most useful activity. Respondents' beliefs regarding the usefulness of the action learning sets varied. While 40% (n=22) indicated that they found it very useful, 29% (n=16) reported that it was not very useful, with the remainder being ambivalent about the usefulness of it (31%; n=17). Similarly, respondents' beliefs about the practical usefulness of the RISE events also varied.

Respondents indicated that they had several expectations of the CRISP project, with many indicating that they wished to develop new contacts or make progress on building working relationships across organisational boundaries. Other expectations of the project expressed by respondents included gaining more information, including key references and reliable resources, and training. Respondents also indicated that they wanted to see the development of a bigger range of services for all offenders, as well as the development of more services for female offenders, drug and alcohol users, offenders with mental health problems, BME offenders and offenders with disabilities.

Overall, respondents indicated that the primary achievement of the CRISP project was the provision of information, including key reference and reliable resources, followed by the development of new contacts and useful networks. Less successful elements of the work undertaken by CRISP included the building of working relationships across organisational boundaries, training and developing specific skills, and the development of new services for offenders. Overall, there appeared some ambivalence among respondents as to whether they had greater confidence in the ability of VCOs or statutory sector agencies to deliver quality services for offenders as a result of the work of CRISP.

In terms of respondents' beliefs regarding what they could now do as a result of their engagement with CRISP, many reported that they were now able to broaden their networks. In particular, respondents suggested that in addition to strengthening their professional contacts and networks, new opportunities had opened up, particularly with HMPS staff and other VCOs, to develop or improve future services for offenders.

Respondents also indicated the value of CRISP as an information broker, whether as a central point for information and guidance or more specifically in terms of helping respondents be aware of developments and opportunities, especially regarding funding. In addition, some respondents reported that CRISP helped in the development of their knowledge of the broader context, both about the voluntary sector and about NOMS. However, other respondents indicated that they had gained little from their involvement with the CRISP project.

As a result of the work of CRISP, some respondents indicated that they developed a more positive belief that HMPS and NOMS valued and wanted to work with the voluntary sector, and that VCOs had a role to play in the NOMS agenda. In addition, respondents indicated that they also had a more positive view of the willingness of the statutory agencies to work further with VCOs. Some respondents also reported that their awareness of the volume of VCOs who provided services to offenders increased, as did a realisation of their role in the delivery of services to offenders. A small number of respondents further indicated that the work of CRISP helped increase their awareness

that opportunities were available to VCOs to provide services to offenders. However, other respondents indicated that the work of CRISP had achieved little in changing their beliefs about the willingness of the statutory sector to engage with VCOs or the opportunity for VCOs to deliver services to offenders.

Despite the different benefits respondents derived from their involvement with CRISP, some indicated that they had had a number of expectations of the project which did not materialise. In particular, some respondents reported that they believed CRISP would help persuade strategically influential people to provide more resources while others indicated that they expected CRISP to generate a greater confidence in the VCOs' ability to deliver quality services for offenders, with this not being achieved. Other expectations that respondents felt were not delivered included training and more information as to potential funding streams for their type of work.

There was divergence of opinion among respondents about the success of CRISP in helping them access funding to expand or improve existing services for offenders. Similarly, while some respondents indicated that they had made contacts or accessed organisations that would enable new or expanded services to be set up, others reported that such contacts had not been made.

Overall, respondents indicated that they believed that the CRISP project was successful, although some felt that the project was only successful in certain areas. Particular successes included: provision of practical and useful tools, contacts and information; creation of a sense of possibility and opportunity; meeting an essential need; and fitting well with the strategic imperatives.

With regard to whether the project could be replicated, just under half of respondents (46%; n=16) indicated that they believed that the project could be replicated. A further four respondents (11%) indicated that replication would be dependent on managerial will, availability of resources, a willingness to engage among members and adequate documentation of the process. Other respondents also noted that there was a need for NOMS and probation to engage with the project more overtly.

The primary loss identified by respondents, if CRISP's activities did not continue, was loss of information, as well as training and support. In addition, some respondents saw the impact in terms of a loss of networks, contacts, regional infrastructure and the potential for collaborations and partnerships, while two respondents indicated that the loss of CRISP would undermine the confidence of VCOs in NOMS. However, some respondents also indicated that should the activities of CRISP cease, they would experience little or no impact on their immediate work.

Respondents' beliefs about the value of the action learning sets in breaking down stereotypes and removing attitudinal barriers between staff from different organisations and sectors varied. Forty-five percent of respondents (n=35) indicated that they believed the action learning sets were helpful in achieving this aim, while 22% (n=17) reported that the action learning sets were no more effective than joint training, working together on projects, or other joint activities.

Respondents also indicated that the action learning sets were useful in disseminating knowledge across organisations and agencies, with many suggesting that they were an effective way of gaining knowledge about improving how they worked, learnt and achieved things, as well as gaining a sense of what the individual's responsibilities were, the opportunities and constraints they faced, and the nature of their organisation.

Feedback from the group discussion indicated that many respondents valued the action learning sets because they gave individuals the time and space to express themselves, and to examine different issues and their attendant emotions in more depth than they had done previously. Respondents also indicated that, as a result of their involvement with the action learning sets, they became more thoughtful about work issues they confront and manage their emotions arising from these issues better. Some respondents also alluded to a new sense of confidence and ability which arose from their participation in the action learning process.

Respondents also commented that the sets provided them with an opportunity to exchange views, see other people's work experiences, and concerns and constraints, which enabled them to develop a broader perspective and re-assess their own position.

Respondents participating in the group discussions reported that they felt that a wide range of organisations and individuals could benefit from action learning. However, respondents to the survey further reported that action learning could only build solutions and the acceptance of solutions across organisations and agencies where set members also had access to the decision-making system in their organisations.

Respondents to the survey expressed some difference of opinions regarding whether the action learning sets gave them the skills to resolve or change problematic issues in their immediate working environment. While 63% (n=26) believed that the action learning set did provide them with skills to address these issues, 27% (n=15) indicated that the action learning sets did not provide them with such skills.

In terms of improving the action learning sets, respondents contributing to the group discussions indicated that it was important for set members to have a clear understanding of what action learning was and what they will be doing. Respondents also suggested that it was important to increase management's understanding of, and support for, action learning. Some respondents also expressed the need to be able to integrate learning and feedback from the set into the organisation, suggesting that this would be difficult if only a small number of people were involved in action learning. Respondents also identified a number of challenges to successful set functioning, including a lack of commitment to attend, participants not being honest, and judgemental attitudes. Respondents made reference to the lack of understanding between the VCOs and the statutory sector organisations, which was also seen as a hindrance to effective set functioning, although this finding validates the need for action learning as a place where cross-sector understanding could be improved.

Large Organisations Supporting Small Organisations

MOVE

Some respondents noted that MOVE may have missed out on opportunities to engage with key agencies such as the Office of the Regional Offender Manager and West Yorkshire Probation Service due to the mismatch between the operational boundaries of MOVE (Leeds City Council area) and key agencies which were sub regional or regional.

At the time of the MOVE project, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), key commissioning bodies of services for offenders, were re-structuring and were not able to engage with the project. It was also acknowledged by some respondents that PCTs and LSCs were already commissioning work for offenders, suggesting that they may have regarded MOVE and the ROM as duplicating their own functions.

During the operational period of MOVE, probation services were required to re-allocate a proportion of their resources to commission services from voluntary and private sectors, which benefited MOVE in terms of encouraging VCO engagement in NOMS. It also led to some offender based service development within the VCO sector. Two agencies engaged through MOVE (one of which had not previously delivered services to offenders) secured contracts with the Probation Service.

While the lack of anticipated change to the commissioning of services for offenders did not have a detrimental impact on the engagement of VCOs with MOVE during the lifetime of the project, some respondents reported that there was some evidence that, after committing themselves to capacity building in response to anticipated opportunities, VCOs were becoming dissatisfied with the lack of progress on commissioning.

Respondents reported that MOVE provided VCOs with the opportunity to learn about NOMS, while for some agencies MOVE also provided them with an opportunity to learn about working with offenders. It was also reported by one respondent that at the commencement of MOVE, prison and probation staff were not fully aware of NOMS, with the project contributing to their understanding of the national and regional changes.

Through MOVE, VCOs also reported that they were provided with an opportunity to comment on and respond to the proposed changes to offender services and commissioning planned through NOMS. With the ending of MOVE, some respondents expressed concerns about whether the mobilisation of VCO views and exchange of views would continue. Some respondents further commented that, while NOMS expressed a desire to value VCOs, there did not appear to be any planned resources allocated to sustain this engagement following the end of the project.

Respondents reported that, through their involvement with MOVE, VCOs were prepared for NOMS commissioning, suggesting that they had acquired knowledge about the reducing re-offending pathways; matched their services to the pathways; and identified potential bidding collaborations. However, respondents also raised concerns that this preparedness was being put on hold, because of delays in changes to commissioning and the opening of the market for offender services to be delivered by new providers.

Respondents commented that, as a result of their engagement with MOVE, the organisational capability of their agencies had been enhanced. Respondents also indicated that MOVE enlarged the range of VCOs that Probation and Prison Services engaged with and improved the understanding between the VCO and public sector agencies, which helped to inform the ways in which the agencies could work together. The engagement between VCO and public agencies facilitated by MOVE contributed to the appointment of VCO liaison officers by West Yorkshire Probation; and the creation of a Prison and VCO forum at Leeds Prison.

The relationships that developed between agencies brought together by MOVE also enabled providers to reassess their services and identify ways in which their own services could be enhanced with contributions from other agencies and vice versa, with some respondents reporting that service users had benefited from the development of links between VCOs brought together through MOVE.

Overall, respondents indicated that the work of MOVE had contributed to the fostering of a culture of collaboration, through the events and training that it had run for VCOs and public sector agencies, with agencies sharing information, making cross referrals, and enhancing service take up. However, when tested, the collaborations between agencies which had been developed, worked less well. In addition, some respondents also reported concerns that, following the end of MOVE, this culture of collaboration might not be sustained.

Through advocacy and relationship brokering, respondents reported that MOVE appeared to have contributed to changing the culture of the probation service. In particular, while probation had previously had reservations about the delivery capacity of small VCOs, services were commissioned from two small VCOs during the operational period of MOVE.

Although as previously indicated, concerns were expressed about the ability of MOVE to impact strategically on the development of NOMS and offender services in Yorkshire Humberside, the project was able to engage at a regional and strategic level with the Office for the ROM by establishing links with CRISP, the ROM VCO Pathways Group and the Step Change programme in Yorkshire and Humberside. Respondents reported that MOVE had advanced the ROM agenda around VCO engagement in a practical manner, through its work with local VCOs in Leeds. They also indicated that MOVE had assisted in addressing the cultural dissonance that existed between VCOs, public and private sectors.

One of the most tangible outcomes for MOVE was the development of a consortium of Leeds based VCOs. The consortium was serviced by MOVE and drew together agencies which shared a common interest in developing and delivering services to offenders within the framework provided by the NOMS reducing re-offending pathways. Respondents reported that there were benefits to being involved in the consortium including access to free training on working with offenders, gaining contacts, and finding out about agencies to which they could refer their clients.

While MOVE serviced the consortium and brokered the development of the consortium among members, it had insufficient resources to fully develop the protocols needed to enable the consortium to work, although some respondents indicated that protocols developed by other NOMS Change Up pilots could have been adapted for use by them. Some respondents also suggested that, if the role of the consortium was to bid collaboratively for funding, then additional resources were needed to enable it to function in that way. Following the closure of MOVE, respondents indicated that it was unclear how the consortium was going to be sustained without a dedicated resource.

Despite some of the issues raised, respondents nonetheless suggested that the consortium had brought agencies together and there was some acknowledgement that some agencies were bidding together in small partnerships for pieces of work. In addition, the existence of the consortium had enabled the probation service to develop their links with VCOs, with the relationship continuing through bilateral meetings between the probation service VCO liaison officers and individual agencies.

Despite some of the benefits respondents identified as a result of their involvement, MOVE was unable to deliver on some areas, for example capacity issues prevented MOVE from delivering detailed assistance with bid writing. Some respondents recognised that, had there been more capacity, more training would have been delivered in response to needs identified by VCO agencies engaged with MOVE.

Step Up

Respondents attending the Step Up launch conference identified a number of reasons for attending including obtaining further information about NOMS, Step Up and future opportunities for VCOs to deliver services within the changing structures. Partnership and networking were also important motivations for many respondents, while for some organisations further information on the social franchise model was identified as their reason for attending.

Respondents who attended the conference but did not subsequently engage with the Step Up project reported that time or capacity prevented them from engaging further, and this was particularly the case among smaller VCOs. Some respondents from larger organisations reported that they believed the project was appropriate for smaller organisations, while others reported that they were not convinced that the social franchise model was appropriate for them, or had doubts about its viability. Where staff had been delegated to attend, they did not follow up opportunities themselves and there appeared to be no-one else in the organisation who engaged subsequently. Although some respondents reported that they were interested in pursuing the social franchise model further, there appeared to have been a break in communication in some cases, which some respondents attributed to restructurings taking place in Crime Concern.

Of those organisations which engaged further in the project, most reported that they gained valuable information from the conference, although some did feel that further detail was required about how the social franchise model would work in practice before they could consider committing themselves. Some respondents also reported that they were disappointed that the funding opportunities through NOMS appeared to be less than originally anticipated. There was a general feeling of a lack of clarity about future opportunities, although this was because the process and timescale for commissioning of offender management services had not been determined.

The organisations which did engage further with Step Up activities reported enthusiasm about the social franchise model, which was seen to offer capacity for forming a consortium to bid collectively for contracts. The opportunity for sharing good practice and learning from other organisations was seen as a benefit of the model, while others suggested that it also had the potential to raise the profile of smaller VCOs.

Respondents who expressed concern about the social franchise model referred variously to losing enthusiasm as a result of the lack of impetus following the conference, and concerns about retaining their individual focus and independence should they decide to participate in a Step Up consortium. There were also some concerns that the work of the smaller VCOs would be absorbed by the larger organisations and that smaller organisations would be put out of business.

Following the launch conference, Step Up engaged in a number of capacity building activities, including seminars, bespoke consultancy and the follow up of individual organisational assessments, undertaken by Crime Concern, of those agencies that had expressed an interest in continued participation in the project.

Some respondents attending the seminars reported that they gained a number of benefits, including gaining further opportunities to network and hear about other projects, with two organisations developing ongoing working relationships with other VCOs as a result of engaging in the Step Up events. Other respondents suggested that the seminars and newsletters enabled them to keep up to date with changes and to appraise their position as an organisation in relation to their ability to take advantage of opportunities.

While some organisations had already been involved in delivery of public services and were familiar with NOMS, others reported that the seminars provided them with the opportunity for further engagement with NOMS and other statutory agencies.

However, some respondents were less positive about the capacity building work undertaken by Step Up, particularly after the enthusiasm built up during the earlier stages of the project, with one respondent, for example, reporting that the seminars provided information that was easily obtainable elsewhere.

Many respondents commented that changes in staffing part way through the project influenced the way they viewed the operation of the project. In particular, staffing reorganisations within Crime Concern and the resignation of a member of staff led to the loss of the two regional members of the project team. Although the national team continued to oversee the delivery of Step Up, some respondents reported a lack of continuity in the project which they perceived as being due to staff changes, affecting their ability or willingness to participate in the project. The fact that the new regional manager of the project was not physically based in the West Midlands also concerned some respondents. Members of the Step Up project group acknowledged that the lack of a regional presence might have impacted on the way in which the project was perceived.

Because the full regional commissioning of services did not take place during the course of the project, the Step Up team was not able to test a social franchise model in practice. As a result of this, some respondents commented that the project had delivered too little for there to be obvious benefits, particularly for those organisations that had already been networking and engaging with NOMS independently of Step Up.

Although the project did not progress as originally anticipated, respondents nonetheless identified benefits associated with their engagement with the project, particularly in terms of awareness raising and capacity-building.

With regard to the future development of Step Up, some respondents suggested that the project might play a role in further capacity building and facilitating networking, although perceptions on the viability of a social franchise model continued to be mixed. The majority of study participants saw the potential for further collaboration and engagement with a project such as Step Up in the future.

Similarly, some respondents who had not participated in the project since the conference expressed an interest in further engagement with Step Up should it continue in future, although most indicated that they would need more information about how it would work and what the structures and potential outcomes would be, with some suggesting that capacity might continue to be a problem. For other representatives from VCOs, retaining their ethos and objectives were important conditions for participation in Step Up. However, a few respondents reported being disillusioned with the project as a result of a lack of communication over a period of time, indicating that they did not believe it worthwhile to engage with the project further.

Respondents who had both engaged further with Step Up and those which had not, identified additional capacity-building needs which a project such as Step Up might help to address including IT training, support with tendering, human resources and financial monitoring. For others, it was not so much an issue of building specific skills as creating the opportunity to develop their services further, with some respondents suggesting that developing partnerships presented an opportunity to improve services. Respondents also suggested that Step Up had the potential to facilitate greater networking and collaboration, enabling different organisations to work together and learn more about one another.

Some respondents highlighted their regret that the Step Up project had not fulfilled its original potential, although some acknowledged that national circumstances regarding the creation of funding opportunities had prevented the social franchise arrangements taking place during the life of the project and were happy with the support they had been given within this context.

One regional stakeholder expressed concern that although Step-Up was sponsored by NOMS, information about the project came primarily from Crime Concern rather than NOMS and had there been greater evidence of central support, then it might have influenced probation areas to give greater consideration to ways of utilising the project. Another respondent noted that there seemed to be a lack of awareness of the project on the part of local probation staff and it is possible that further dissemination within probation would have helped, for example, in developing projects with offenders that were more appropriate to the aims of Step Up.

Many respondents, both those that had participated further in Step Up and those who had not, saw greater scope for partnership and collaboration within the region, although some were aware of the pitfalls of this model of working and had had negative experiences in the past (for example in relation to conflict of organisational and partnership agendas, over clarity of partnership aims, and disparity between the capacity of different organisations). There remained some enthusiasm for the social franchise model, although there was also a general feeling that more discussion was required about how this particular model would work in practice.

The concerns about the clarity and viability of the social franchise model were also echoed by participants from statutory organisations, with some probation area respondents suggesting that the social franchise model would add costs to service provision because it appeared to add an extra layer of bureaucracy to the process. One probation respondent noted that the expertise and commitment of local VCOs was important, but that this did not necessarily preclude some form of consortium arrangement with a larger national organisation, while a regional stakeholder felt that the social franchise model might be more appropriate for some organisations than others.

There was general acknowledgement of the need to work in some form of partnership in order to respond to the changing national agenda and structures, although some concerns remained about how the delivery of public services through VCOs would work in practice. A further issue raised was the question of sustainability of provision through VCOs, and linked to that the need for contracts to be issued for a more extensive period than is currently the case, to allow organisations to develop their services and provide security for service users.

PiRR

Although some concern was expressed by VCOs regarding the impact of NOMS on them gaining access to statutory funding, respondents indicated that the work of PiRR was critical in communicating the needs and anxieties of the smaller VCOs. In addition, PiRR was successful in promoting greater awareness of the needs and potential contribution VCOs could make to NOMS with the ROM for London.

Overall, feedback on the Reducing Re-offending Networks was positive, with respondents indicating that they received clear and concise information about the policies that underpinned NOMS, stimulating discussions within VCOs about the possible impact of NOMS on their work.

However, respondents indicated that the ROM for London and NOMS more widely did not maximise their opportunities to demystify NOMS as no clear information about commissioning priorities was published until after the end of the project, despite this information repeatedly being requested, both regionally and nationally. Because of the lack of clarity about timescales and commissioning priorities, some respondents reported that they felt some frustration towards NOMS.

The PiRR launch event was positively reported on, with respondents indicating that the event was beneficial in terms of providing networking opportunities between organisations from across the different reducing reoffending pathways.

The PiRR monthly e-newsletter, which was designed to provide an easily accessible means of engaging with PiRR and NOMS, received positive feedback, with respondents working for smaller VCOs indicating that they found the e-newsletter to be particularly helpful.

While one of PiRR's objectives was to facilitate the development of Capacity Building Groups (CBGs), this proved difficult, particularly early on in the project. Limited resources meant that the PiRR staff found it difficult to strike the right balance between providing opportunities for all sectors and specialisms to come together and ensuring that the project could be delivered on budget. Despite this, when requested, PiRR successfully established a Women's CBG, which has subsequently had some impact locally. Similarly, through the formation of a partnership with NBBPSG's SEED4BME project, PiRR was able to develop a BME Strategy Group.

The CBGs that were developed through PiRR engaged in the development of models of consortium-based interventions. For example, the Housing CBG developed a model that was subsequently presented to the ROM for London's team and the London Resettlement Strategy's Accommodation Pathway Group, thereby promoting the model to a wider set of statutory and voluntary sector providers, with the model also being included in the accommodation chapter of the South East region's Resettlement Strategy.

Feedback from respondents indicated that the process of developing models for consortium-based interventions enabled them to improve their understanding of the implications of the Offender Management Model and how their services could support its delivery through a consortium arrangement. Similarly, where the CBGs participated in the completion of consortium-based funding applications to statutory bodies other than NOMS and charitable funders, respondents indicated that the process was beneficial in terms of providing a clear focus for their activities and partnership formation.

However, while some CBGs provided organisations with the opportunity to engage with NOMS, to access information and contribute to the development of the Service, others questioned the value of having both CBGs and the London Resettlement Strategy's Pathway Groups, with respondents indicating that their investment of resources in both groups was difficult to maintain. Similarly, while some organisations welcomed the opportunity to receive additional support in the development of consortia, others reported that they found PiRR unnecessary, indicating that they believed VCOs were fully capable of effectively working in partnership and developing the kinds of consortia needed to deliver interventions commissioned by the ROM. The PiRR Steering Group was intended

to provide the CBGs with a structure to work across the pathways, thus avoiding the silo approach. However, each of the CBGs became preoccupied with their own work and the needs of their particular client groups and did not reach the point of engaging across the CBGS.

Overall, the learning sets developed by PiRR in collaboration with EDS, were well received, with respondents indicating that they provided an excellent starting point for the development of stronger working links between the voluntary and private sectors.

Overall, respondents reported that they found the additional capacity-building resources developed by PiRR relevant and valuable, in particular in terms of facilitating opportunities for peer support and tailoring the training to meet the needs of smaller VCOs. However, other respondents questioned the effectiveness of PiRR in boosting the skills-base of the sector, particularly in the case of smaller organisations. It is likely that this is partly a consequence of the lack of NOMS commissioning opportunities arising during the pilot period, with some organisations struggling to financially justify their involvement in the capacity building exercises.

While the principles underpinning the SkillsShare work developed by PiRR were generally well received, overall it failed to achieve any tangible outcomes. Only three requests for training support were received by PiRR, with none of these requests being for skills trading, with organisations seemingly unwilling to invest the time and resources needed to benefit from the SkillsShare service, particularly with the quality and value of the skills support received being unmonitored.

Working With Under-Represented Groups

SEED4BME

One of the key elements of the SEED4BME pilot project was to deliver a range of training and capacity building events. Although the first two capacity building events were cancelled due to poor response, many respondents attending the remaining events reported they were a success. The highest level of attendance was for *'Preparing for Funding/What Funders Want'*, possibly reflecting an interest in receiving funding to implement their own projects. In addition to the benefits of training opportunities, all of the respondents indicated that the events facilitated networking with other agencies, with many also suggesting that the events were useful in helping to increase capacity.

The regional forums run by the SEED4BME project were also viewed positively, with many indicating they were helpful, and some reporting that they benefited greatly. With regard to the individual forums, overall levels of satisfaction were high, with respondents giving positive feedback.

Every respondent attending a regional forum indicated the event had, in some way, improved their capacity to engage with the statutory sector, and the NOMS agenda in particular. However, some felt the forums were too professionally run, suggesting that the project would have benefited from more community focused events, placing emphasis on the statutory sector meeting VCOs.

The work of NBBPSG was also widely appreciated, with some reporting that the organisation should be more involved in key events on a national rather than regional level. Also, respondents in the South West region indicated that the work of NBBPSG, in relation to the SEED4BME project, had acted as a springboard for the establishment of a BME commissioning reference group.

Feedback received following the national conference organised by SEED4BME was also positive, with respondents reporting that it provided them with an opportunity to meet with professionals who worked with the same client group and share good practice. Respondents also indicated that they benefited from hearing information about NOMS and the direction it was taking.

Overall, respondents reported broad anticipation of the development of a good practice guide and the regional mapping report that SEED4BME was producing, with respondents from both the statutory sector and VCOs indicating that they believed that both documents would be a useful resource.

5. Conclusion and Overall Findings

The projects which contributed to the Change Up programme delivered a range of activities to enable VCOs to respond effectively to changes arising from NOMS and the government's Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan and Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending. The range of activities undertaken by the different projects varied, although this in part reflected the different aims and objectives specified for the projects.

Overall, participation in the different activities organised by the projects was good, involving a variety of VCOs and statutory agencies. This suggests there is a genuine interest among VCOs and the statutory sector to respond positively to the changes emerging through NOMS, in particular with respect to widening the involvement of VCOs in the shaping and delivery of services to offenders.

Findings from the individual evaluations suggest that individuals participating in the research derived a number of benefits from their involvement, including gaining a greater understanding of the NOMS agenda and what it would mean for their organisation; and opportunities to network with other agencies already providing services to offenders and with others not previously involved.

For many respondents, the specialist knowledge and expertise of the host projects, and the activities they engaged in, and their ability to act in a brokering role, also proved beneficial in terms of helping their agency prepare for NOMS commissioning and the delivery of services to offenders. Some respondents across the different projects also indicated that the Change Up projects fulfilled a promotion and advocacy role, enabling them to voice their concerns, comment on and respond to the proposed changes to offender services and commissioning arising from NOMS.

One of the common aims of the different projects was to address the cultural dissonance that existed between statutory service providers and VCOs. Overall, respondents indicated that the projects helped to facilitate a greater understanding among statutory sector providers of the potential value of VCOs in providing services for offenders. Similarly, respondents also reported a greater understanding and appreciation of the statutory sector in delivering interventions for offenders.

One of the broad aims across the projects was to increase capacity of VCOs to help facilitate the delivery of services to offenders. The different projects engaged in a number of activities to help achieve this, resulting in a number of consortiums being developed within the different projects. However, the lack of commissioning opportunities through NOMS during the course of the pilots led to a general sense of frustration and dissatisfaction among participants engaging in the different activities organised by the projects. This also meant that the benefits participants derived from engaging in the capacity building activities organised by some of the projects was limited, with some respondents questioning the usefulness of the work undertaken, particularly where resources in their organisation were already stretched.

Despite these challenges, participants who engaged in the three pilot projects aimed at using larger organisations with relevant skills to work constructively with smaller providers (MOVE, Step Up and PiRR) were provided with opportunities to develop models for consortium working, with some positive results being reported.

Organisations involved with the work of MOVE developed a Consortium of Leeds based VCOs, which enabled the probation service to develop links with VCOs. Within the Step Up pilot project, participants were able to explore the benefits of a social franchise model in developing a number of project plans to bid for the provision of services for offenders. Although some of these were unsuccessful, others were continuing to be pursued. Finally, PiRR established a number of CBGs which developed detailed models of consortium-based interventions, as well as the submission of consortium based funding applications to both statutory and charitable funders, although the applications submitted were unsuccessful.

While the feedback received from respondents participating in the different projects was broadly positive, some nonetheless indicated that they derived little benefit from their involvement with the projects. In some cases, this was a result of expectations of the project not materialising, for example, the development of a wider range of services for offenders; developing the skills base of VCOs; or the provision of support in preparing funding bids. In other cases, this was the result of frustrations emanating from the lack of opportunity to bid for the provision of custodial and community interventions and services for offenders.

A common concern raised by respondents across the projects was one of resources. This was particularly true for smaller VCOs who had limited resources available to participate in the activities organised by the different projects. This ultimately influenced their ability to engage in capacity building activities, with some respondents indicating that it would remain difficult to sustain their engagement with the capacity building work over an extended period of time.

Overall, these findings suggest that in helping build the infrastructure and capacity of the voluntary sector to engage as a service provider, NOMS should recognise that:

- The consortium approach is seen as positive in enabling greater partnership working and in facilitating members' contributions to future developments;
- Commissioning processes should ensure the suitability of agencies to act as hosts for infrastructure support or as consortia leads in terms of credibility within the specialist field; the extent of local and regional knowledge and contacts; expert knowledge of the specialist area; links with strategic networks; and project management capability;
- A consortium or lead agency needs time to consult with partner organisations; projects take time to evolve and it is unlikely there will be a single model;
- A consortium or lead agency needs to provide for greater management support in the early stages of projects;
- There could be disparity between the benefits of localised capacity building initiatives and the need to engage strategically at a regional or national level, and there needs to be a mechanism by which local organisations can represent their views regionally or sub-regionally;
- The capacity of and resource implications for smaller voluntary sector organisations to engage in a consortium needs to be considered;
- Support for capacity building projects is needed from NOMS centrally, and from ROMs and local commissioning bodies;
- Programmes such as Change Up can raise voluntary sector expectations and the implementation of future capacity building programmes needs to be aligned more directly to commissioning timeframes;
- There can be difficulties in sustaining contact when projects end;
- There is a need to increase the access of voluntary organisations to programmes such as Futurebuilders and Capacity builders.

These key learning points arising from the evaluation of the projects will be used by the NOMS Partnerships Unit, Voluntary and Community Sector Team to inform the development of the new NOMS Third Sector Action Plan, which will form part of an overarching Ministry of Justice Third Sector Strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF THE CRISP PROJECT

CRISP'S Aims

CLINKS, the national charity which supports voluntary organisations working with offenders and their families, set up the Regional Information and Skills Project (CRISP) in 2005, to make voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) aware of the opportunities now available for them to provide services to offenders, and to build their capacity to provide those services. CRISP's specific aims were to:

- Develop voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure so that the sector is better equipped and resourced to deliver high quality services to offenders and to work in partnership to deliver those services
- Support frontline VCOs in improving both capacity and service delivery to offenders
- Exploit the untapped potential that other mainstream VCS bodies may bring to working with offenders.

The project targeted two groups. The first was VCOs who either currently provided services for offenders, former offenders or their families, those VCOs who may provide services to offenders in the future, or those who help frontline VCOs to improve their capability to provide services. The second, subsidiary target group comprised the statutory and private organisations that manage adult offenders, i.e. NOMS, HMPS and Probation. The project targeted organisations operating in the three NOMS regions of the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the East Midlands.

CRISP's activities included: five Regional Information and Skills events; three sub-regional conferences; nine action learning sets and four "Volunteering with Offenders in the Community" training sessions, as well as distributing literature and running the e-bulletin.

Evaluation Aims and Methodology

The aim of the evaluation was to find out what participants believed CRISP achieved, especially;

- To identify positive outcomes where CRISP had acted as a catalyst for VCOs either to *create or to expand* services for offenders
- To measure to what extent Action Learning Sets tackled issues of cultural dissonance and acted as tools of knowledge management
- To find out whether the project could be replicated in other NOMS regions.

Data was collected through a quantitative survey to gain a wide range of views from participants, as well as a qualitative analysis of responses to two questions posed to various action learning sets. The survey examined the profile of the respondents and their working environments; their expectations of the project and its achievements; the potential for action learning to effect change in multi-agency relationships; and how the project was managed and whether it could be replicated elsewhere. 189 responses, from a target population of 710 were received; a response rate of 26.6%.

Members of the action learning sets were asked the following questions: "*As a result of being in the set what has changed for you? What have you done differently at work?*" and "*How could action learning best be used in future (repeat) CRISP projects, in other NOMS regions? What would assist it? What would hinder it?*" Data was collected from four action learning sets.

Key Findings

CRISP'S achievements – CRISP succeeded in creating a high level of awareness of the NOMS agenda in the voluntary and community sector, growing from 214 contacts at the end of 2005 to 1036 contacts by October 2006. The project reached its target audience, in particular engaging a wide range of mainstream and infrastructure VCOs as well as those already working with offenders. A very broad range of individuals from all sectors and at all organisational levels were seen to participate directly or through their staff in the project. The target regions did not however, respond equally to the project: the Yorkshire & Humberside Region, where voluntary sector/statutory sector links already existed, appeared more interested in the project.

The project evolved its activities rather than adhering to a set plan, using people who expressed interest collaboratively, and opportunities which were available. This resulted in large numbers of individuals being aware of the NOMS agenda with the potential to become involved, but it may not have created a consistent pattern of awareness, particularly in the large statutory sector organisations.

What participants most expected and valued – The project met expectations in terms of being a valuable source of information, provided in a variety of different and useful ways, as well as being a means of door-opening – providing introductions and opportunities for people from statutory, VCO and private organisations to meet each other and to explore a potentially common agenda.

Respondents assessed the e-bulletin *Light Lunch* as the most practically useful activity of all those the project provided. Conferences and the action learning sets were also viewed as useful.

CRISP as a catalyst for new services – Many participants did not report any substantial evidence yet of either new or a bigger range of services for offenders being developed. This is probably unsurprising at this early stage of development of relationships, consortia and funding bids. However, there was some evidence of useful progress being made, with new and expanded services in the process of being developed and funded as a result of CRISP, and estimated to become operational variously in six, twelve and twenty-four months.

Changing minds – The survey demonstrated some encouraging signs that individuals who had participated in the project's activities (other than action learning) now held different views as a result. This focussed around more positive beliefs that NOMS/HMPS valued and wanted to work with other statutory organisations and with VCOs, and that VCOs had a role to play in delivering the NOMS' agenda.

The impact of action learning – Some of the sets were well attended and had a useful mix of participants, who gelled well with each other and who could examine work issues in detail; others functioned less well, with variable attendance and commitment. Set members pointed to key impacts of participating: having time and space to express themselves; to examine and manage issues and their attendant emotions in more depth than they had done previously; having a new confidence and ability to take action; having a broader insight and understanding into the work context of other people; and being held to account for the action you said you would take.

Evidence from evaluation suggests that the tough questioning and holding to account of action learning in a close working group could operate well in this particular multi-agency setting, accelerating the process of developing mutual understanding and insight. However, this setting for learning may not work for all at particular times; and consequently may need careful managing to ensure set members are those best placed to take advantage of it.

Recommendations

Maintain momentum through practical assistance – To create real benefit and confidence that the agenda has permanence among VCOs, it is necessary to have a longer-term or permanent version of CRISP. Such an operation should be aimed at continuing to promote the NOMS agenda to VCOs and creating opportunities for networking and contact. However, a shift will be needed to providing practical help and support as individual VCOs and VCO consortia develop and manage contracts within the contestability framework. This might provide a remit, for example, of highlighting problematic issues, disseminating best practice, identifying useful training and supporting early champions.

Provide diverse offerings and opportunities; continue to consult – CRISP's approach was to provide specific activities aimed at creating opportunities to make contacts and networks. The voluntary and community sector, at whom this project was directed, is highly diverse, and needs the opportunity to engage in activities appropriate to a wide range of organisational scale and capacity, in different ways and to different extents. To continue to engage VCOs, it will be vital to continue the process of consulting and listening to their diverse requirements - at the same time as having a systematic approach to engaging the various statutory and private agencies that will be contracting for services.

Develop cross-sector networking – It will be important to develop new forums and methods of cross-sector networking, contact and door-opening, as the evidence from this research suggests that contacts made in this way are both helping to re-shape views that individuals hold about other elements in the contracting system, and to build confidence in VCOs that opportunities to provide services to offenders are real.

Maintain light lunch – *Light Lunch* was particularly appreciated by respondents and should be maintained as a hub for passing information swiftly between players in the sector.

Use action learning to target important cross-sector issues – Action learning should be used in a planned way to achieve particular objectives, for example, to solve particularly tricky or difficult cross-sector problems, with learning from these discussions being disseminated more widely. Future use of action learning should be focused on particular issues, with information being provided to set members and their managers about what action learning is. It will be important to decide how what is learnt is taken back and used in each participant's own organisation.

Adopting these recommendations will not only build on the work undertaken by CRISP in engaging and enthusing a broad variety of organisations and individuals in the NOMS agenda, but will also accelerate the ability of VCOs and VCO consortia to provide quality services for offenders and their families.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF THE NACRO MOVE PROJECT

Background

Nacro MOVE was commissioned by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Voluntary Sector Unit (VSU) in December 2004. It was part of a pilot programme of five schemes designed to test out approaches to building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in relation to new arrangements for the commissioning and delivery of services to offenders. MOVE was operational between July 2005 and December 2006. It worked with local VCS agencies to build capacity through: training, electronic mailings, postal mailings, conferences and seminars, advocacy and consortium development.

This Executive Summary reports the key findings and recommendations from the final evaluation of Nacro MOVE. The aims of the evaluation were to: assess the impact of the project; review the context in which MOVE operated and the effect on the scheme; and provide recommendations for future capacity building initiatives.

Research Methodology

The data for this research was collected through six semi-structured interviews conducted by telephone: two with staff from Nacro involved in the delivery and management of MOVE, and four with representatives from agencies that were beneficiaries of MOVE. The data was analysed based on: the themes of the interview schedule and a 'theories of change' approach which examined the inputs, processes, context and outcomes of MOVE.

The data presented is limited by the small number of interviews conducted with agency representatives, thus limiting the generalisability of the findings reported. In addition, it was not possible to assess the medium to long term impact of MOVE.

Findings

Inputs

- *Project staff* - Although there were changes in the levels of staff resources over the lifetime of MOVE this did not adversely affect the project.
- *Line management support* - Management changes during the lifetime of MOVE did not adversely affect the project as both managers developed effective working relationships with the project worker.
- *Host agency* - Nacro as the host agency for MOVE was an important factor in the success of the project providing: credibility with the local VCS; local and regional contacts; expert knowledge of working with offenders; training capability and capacity; access to regional and national NOMS networks; capability to provide management support.
- *Partner agencies* - MOVE levered in staff and other resources from partner agencies which enhanced the overall capacity building activity facilitated by the project.

Processes

MOVE employed four key processes in relation to delivering its outcomes including:

- *Promotion* - of MOVE and NOMS.
- *Advocacy* – advocating to Probation and Prison Services on behalf of VCS organisation for VCS agencies to have a more significant role in the delivery of services; and encouraging a wide

range of VCS organisations to become engaged with NOMS, in particular those who had not previously worked with offenders.

- *Needs assessment* – of VCS organisations in terms of their capacity building needs.
- *Delivery of interventions* – in response to the assessment of needs such as e-mailings, mailings, training, bi-lateral meetings, conferences, seminars, consortium development and VCS support toolkit.

Context

The impact of the operational, strategic and policy context on MOVE are detailed below:

- *Geographical remit* – MOVE may have missed out on opportunities to engage with key agencies such as the Office of the Regional Offender Manager and West Yorkshire Probation Service due to the mismatch between the operational boundaries of MOVE (Leeds City Council area) and key agencies which were sub regional or regional.
- *Restructuring of services* – Primary Care Trusts (PCTS) and Learning Skills Councils (LSC), key commissioning bodies of services for offenders were re-structuring during the life of MOVE and were not able to engage with the project.
- *Relationship between Commissioners of Services* It was reported that the non engagement of PCTs and the LSC with MOVE was also due to a perception that they had a commissioning role for some offender services and may have regarded MOVE and the ROM as duplicating their functions.
- *Re-allocation of resources* – VCS engagement in NOMS and MOVE benefited from the requirement on Probation and Prison Services to re-allocate a proportion of their resources to commission services from the VCS (and the private sector).
- *Pace of anticipated change* – The lack of anticipated change to the commissioning of services for offenders did not have a detrimental impact on the engagement of VCS agencies with MOVE during the lifetime of the project. However it may have a lasting impact on the morale of VCS agencies in terms of unfulfilled expectations.

Outcomes

Nacro MOVE delivered the following individual (first order) and agency and societal (second order) outcomes.

- *Staff development* – MOVE raised awareness of NOMS amongst staff from VCS and public agencies. For VCS agencies which had not previously worked with offenders the project provided opportunities to learn about how to work offenders.
- *Voice for the VCS* - The voluntary and community sector had the opportunity through the activities of MOVE to comment on and respond to the proposed changes to offender services and commissioning planned through NOMS.
- *Prepared the VCS for NOMS commissioning* – VCS agencies engaged with MOVE were prepared for NOMS commissioning. They had: acquired knowledge about the reducing re-offending pathways; matched their services to the pathways; and identified potential bidding collaborators.
- *Enhanced organisational capability* – The organisational capability of VCS agencies was enhanced by MOVE.
- *Enhancing the engagement between VCS and Probation and Prison Services* - Move enlarged the range of VCS agencies that Probation and Prison Services engaged with and improved the understanding between the VCS and public agencies.
- *Levering resources within public sector agencies for VCS engagement* - The engagement between VCS and public agencies facilitated by MOVE contributed to: the appointment of VCS liaison officers by West Yorkshire Probation; and the creation of a Prison and VCS forum at Leeds Prison.

- *Enhancing service provision* - The relationships that developed between agencies brought together by MOVE enabled providers to reassess their services and identify ways in which their own services could be enhanced with contributions from other agencies and vice versa.
- *Improving service take-up and cross referrals* – It was reported that service users had benefited from the development of links between VCS agencies brought together through MOVE.
- *Growing a culture of collaboration* – MOVE contributed to fostering a culture of collaboration between VCS agencies and between VCS and public sector agencies. However there were concerns that following the end of MOVE this culture of collaboration may not be sustained.
- *Overcoming cultural changes* - Through advocacy and relationship brokering MOVE appeared to have contributed to changing the culture of the Probation Service. Where Probation had previously had reservations about the delivery capacity of small VCS agencies, during the operational period of MOVE, the Service commissioned services from two small VCS agencies.
- *Strategic impact* – While the impact of MOVE was limited by its geographical remit, it was acknowledged that the project had advanced the ROM agenda around VCS engagement in Leeds and had assisted in addressing the cultural dissonance that existed between the VCS, public and private sectors.
- *Consortium* – MOVE facilitated the development of a Consortium of Leeds based VCS agencies to work together to develop and deliver services within the NOMS reducing re-offending pathways. While a draft constitution was developed, MOVE had insufficient resources to facilitate the development of protocols to enable Consortium members to decide who and how to bid for potential offender service contracts. Following the close of MOVE it was unclear how the Consortium was going to be sustained without such a dedicated resource.

The MOVE project did not have the capacity to provide the levels of support in relation to bid writing that agencies required and did not have sufficient capacity to provide the levels of training that agencies needed in particular in relation to commissioning of services.

Recommendations

- Commissioners should ensure that within the bidding specification and/or guidance to potential bidders for capacity building projects, adequate provision is made for administrative support to assist in the delivery of the project activities.
- Commissioners should issue guidance to the host agencies of short term projects to ensure that they plan for and schedule higher levels of management support during the commencement and early phases of projects, the time when this support is most needed.
- Commissioners should develop guidance for projects on how to track the contribution of partner agencies in order to assess the full costs of project delivery.
- Commissioners should ensure that commissioning processes adequately test the suitability of agencies to act as hosts for infrastructure support projects. Tests should be based on the following criteria: credibility within the specialist field; the extent of local and regional knowledge and contacts; expert knowledge of the specialist area; links with strategic networks; and project management capability.
- Capacity building projects such as MOVE need to carry out regular cycles of: promotion and advocacy; needs assessment; and delivery of services as part of a marketing and intervention strategy to:
 - Ensure that they meet the changing and growing needs of agencies;
 - Promote the importance of capacity building as an important part of the activities of VCS agencies;
 - Grow and widen the network of agencies that the project engages with;
 - Ensure 'repeat engagement' from agencies.
- In order to make best use of limited resources, capacity building projects need to ensure that they design interventions which deliver multiple value.
- Commissioners and service providers need to assess the benefits of localised delivery of capacity building initiatives against the requirement for projects to be able to engage at a

strategic level with key public agencies, which may have a larger geographical remit. One way to address this would be to ensure that local projects have a trusted conduit to represent their views and comments at a sub-regional and regional level.

- It is recognised that during the operational period of the NOMS Change Up programme the NOMS VSU team had limited staff capacity. However, for future capacity building initiatives of this type, there is a need for there to be a dedicated staff resource within the commissioning body that has sufficient seniority and time to engage across other relevant Government Departments to: advocate for the programme and encourage regional, sub-regional and local working.
- Had the anticipated commencement of commissioning by the ROM from April 2006 occurred, this would have time aligned itself with the capacity building activity that MOVE was engaged in and may have fulfilled the expectations of VCS agencies. To avoid the reported disillusionment within the VCS about NOMS commissioning, the implementation of future capacity building programmes need to be more accurately timetabled and planned alongside commissioning timeframes.
- The experience of MOVE suggests that the resourcing of capacity building projects need to encompass three categories of expenditure detailed in Table A below. Having ring fenced resources to fund ‘capacity building service pilots’ addresses the fundamental issue that besets capacity building projects – whether this is capacity building for the sake of capacity building or capacity building for a purpose. This issue is particularly critical for micro and small⁵ VCS organisations which often do not have the capacity to engage in taking up capacity building opportunities. The funding of service pilots has been adopted for Step Change in Yorkshire Humberside where some funding has been allocated (as an integral part of the programme) for agencies to bid together to deliver some limited service provision.
- The experience of MOVE demonstrates that capacity building projects have limited capacity and resources to meet the needs of its users. In order to enable such projects to: target their resources effectively; deliver value for money outcomes; and meet the range of needs; projects need to incorporate effective capacity planning as part of the delivery planning process. This should involve:
 - Assessing the staffing resources required to deliver each activity
 - Assessing the staffing resources required to deliver tasks within the activity
 - Timetabling tasks to ensure consistency in the demand for staff resources to avoid demand peaks.

Table A: Resourcing capacity building activity

Core project	Service pilots	Contingency infrastructure
This provides for the costs of staff resources and capacity building interventions such as: training and events	To provide funding for new service delivery or more effective service delivery linked to the capacity building activity. This is needed in order to incentivise micro and small organisations to engage in capacity building.	To resource the development of infrastructure gaps that may arise through the capacity building interventions. For e.g. the development of local consortia.

⁵ Moving on – Interim evaluation of Nacro MOVE April 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF THE STEP UP PROJECT

Introduction

The *Step Up* project was commissioned by the Voluntary Sector Unit of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) as part of the national ChangeUp initiative. The aim of the Step Up project was to increase the involvement of voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) working in the West Midlands in the procurement and delivery of community sentences and the post custody supervision of offenders. An innovative mechanism for this process was developed by Crime Concern: a Social Franchise model of service delivery to broker quality assured services to offenders through alliances of service-providing VCOs.

Methodology

The objectives of the evaluation of the Step Up project were:

- To provide qualitative and quantitative evidence of the efficacy or otherwise of the Step Up project and its constituent parts;
- To inform further development of the project within Crime Concern or similar external enterprises nationally; and
- To provide an ongoing and objective view of the operations of the project to stakeholders.

The evaluation methods included:

- Analysis of reports and activity data provided by Crime Concern;
- Semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews with representatives from VCOs who had attended the launch of Step Up and those who had engaged further in the project;
- Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with members of the Step Up team; and
- Semi-structured telephone interviews with the Regional Offender Manager (ROM) and representatives from two Probation areas in the West Midlands.

As this evaluation used primarily qualitative methods of data collection and analysis our findings are illustrative rather than representative.

Findings

The Step Up launch conference

The regional conference held in January 2006 was attended by 46 delegates from 30 VCOs and 18 representatives from national and local public sector organisations. Generally, delegates were positive about the conference: it was well-organised and the presentations were described as being of a high quality. The presenters communicated the aims of the social franchise model clearly and networking was considered to be a particular benefit.

Reasons for not engaging further with Step Up

One of the main reasons quoted by study participants for not engaging further with Step Up was that they received no further communication from the Crime Concern project team, which some

participants attributed to the restructuring of Crime Concern at the time the Step Up project was being piloted. Further reasons for not continuing to engage with the project included:

- Staff had been delegated by someone else to attend the conference and there was no subsequent follow-up by the organisation;
- Concerns over lack of time and/or capacity to continue the process without additional funding;
- Doubts over whether the social franchise model was appropriate or viable for their organisation.

Reasons for wanting to engage with the Step Up project and views on the social franchise model

Most of the six VCOs which had attended the launch conference and which had engaged further with Step Up were enthusiastic about the social franchise model. The model was seen to offer capacity for forming a consortium to bid collectively for contracts. The potential to raise the profile of smaller VCOs and opportunities to improve practice and learn from one another was an important benefit to those who continued to engage with the process.

Some participants saw Step Up as a capacity building model through which VCOs would be brought up to a certain common standard of service delivery but were concerned about retaining their individual focus and independence should they decide to participate in a Step Up consortium.

Capacity building support provided

After the launch conference, capacity building activities undertaken by Crime Concern included seminars, bespoke consultancy and the follow up of individual organisational assessments undertaken by Crime Concern of those organisations who had expressed an interest in continued participation in the project. Seminars were held on developments in criminal justice and the agencies involved; and on volunteering across the criminal justice system. These seminars were well-received by most participants.

The seminars gave the opportunity for further networking and enabled organisations to keep up to date with changes and to appraise their own ability to take advantage of future commissioning opportunities. Some organisations which had not previously engaged with NOMS were able to make contact with NOMS through these events. A few organisations were less positive about the capacity building support provided, mainly because their expectations of taking part in full commissioning as originally anticipated did not come to fruition.

Views on the management and delivery of the project

The regional presence of Crime Concern was appreciated by many participants who were able to develop good relationships with the two individuals responsible for Step Up in the West Midlands. Staffing reorganisations within Crime Concern and the resignation of a member of staff led to the loss of the two regional members of the project team. Although the national team continued to oversee the delivery of Step Up, some study participants reported a lack of continuity in the project which they perceived as being due to staff changes and which affected their ability or willingness to participate.

Development of pilot projects

The Step Up team was not able to test a social franchise model in practice, primarily because full regional commissioning of services through NOMS did not take place during the life of the project. Members of the team did explore the development of two pilot projects:

- A project offering unpaid work opportunities for offenders; and
- A project offering mentoring services to offenders.

The project offering unpaid work opportunities did not progress because the anticipated commissioning opportunities did not emerge during the life of the Step Up project. The piloting of mentoring services was not pursued because of the relatively high costs of support required for VCOs delivering the service (which would have been to high risk offenders) and because the timescale of the project would have exceeded the duration of the Step Up project.

Benefits of the Step Up project

Despite the lack of commissioning and contracting opportunities to pilot the social franchise model, a number of study participants reported benefits they had derived from participating in the project. In summary, the main benefits for VCOs were:

- Engaging with NOMS;
- Networking amongst VCOs providing services in the offender management field;
- Better understanding of the policy agenda regarding offender management and the work of the statutory sector;
- Starting to prepare their organisation for delivery of offender management services; and
- Beginning to form a business consortium to offer services directly to NOMS.

Crime Concern experienced benefits in terms of:

- Testing receptiveness of public agencies and VCOs to the social franchise model;
- Identifying potential partners with whom the social franchise model could be taken to the stage of implementation;
- Engaging with the four Probation areas in the region; and
- Engaging with the Regional Offender Manager.

Challenges encountered

While there were concrete benefits for some of the participating VCOs and also Crime Concern, the Step Up project encountered a number of challenges that had an impact on the extent to which the original project aims could be realised. These challenges relate to three main issues:

- Conceptualisation of the social franchise model: there was some confusion amongst participants about what the model entails and how it differs from other models of collaboration found in the VCS. For some organisations, a business model such as social franchising was also seen as counter-cultural to the VCS and thus not viable;
- Project organisation: there were different perspectives on the need for a project manager based within the region, or a national infrastructure with staff having knowledge of the regional context; and
- Practical implications of the social franchise model: a longer time frame would be required to test out the practical feasibility of the model and to establish the kind of working relationships, capacity building needs, communication mechanisms and common rules required to implement a franchise agreement.

Future opportunities for project development

A series of workshops and meetings since November 2006 have resulted in renewed interest in collaboration amongst VCOs providing offender management services: 10 organisations are currently involved in discussions to develop a consortium bid to work with Probation Areas in the West Midlands region. The consortium is looking to span as many of the 7 NOMS pathways as possible. However, this study suggests that further clarity and discussion is required regarding potential scenarios for the future development of this approach; and that the practical and legal implications for VCOs who participate in the proposed franchise arrangement require further exploration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF THE PiRR PROJECT

Background

This report evaluates the pilot phase of Partners in Reducing Re-Offending (PiRR), a pan-London project run by the development agency Revolving Doors, aimed at building effective partnerships between voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to help reduce levels of re-offending.

The evaluation captures and measures PiRR's delivery against the project's original aims and objectives. In addition, the evaluation sets out strategic and operational findings in relation to each of the objectives. These findings should assist policy formulation in the future, but are also intended for organisations developing or facilitating similar capacity- and partnership-building projects across all areas of public service delivery and commissioners of public services who are committed to engaging the VCS.

Methodology

To evaluate the pilot, the research used feedback from all events and training days organised by PiRR, feedback from PiRR's steering groups and from the PiRR team, as well as analysis of all minutes and correspondence collected during the course of the project.

The small scale nature of the research and the poor response rates to the feedback forms, as well as a lack of information about the representativeness of the data collected limits the generalisability of the findings reported.

Key Findings

Strengths

- *Communication*: the internal communication strategy of PiRR was one of its most significant achievements. The use of a continually updated website and regular newsletter gave participants the confidence that they were part of something tangible. All meetings and meetings notes were published on the website, and all Consortia Building Groups and statutory organisations were able to publicise relevant news. This regular 'drip drip' of information meant that even the smallest charities were kept in the loop at a very uncertain time, and at the very least 'knew that they weren't missing anything'.
- *Recognition*: to have sufficient impact across a large number of organisations, it was vital that the project should have a high profile, with strong 'brand recognition', and good visibility across a number of sectors. The full backing of the ROM, who recommended all charities to engage with PiRR, was vital in achieving this. PiRR also engaged in a sustained media strategy, ensured that the aims of the project were communicated through multiple networks, and achieved membership of a number of boards and groups.
- *Commissioner Confidence*: the brokering and communication role between the VCS and the ROM depended on a strong relationship being established with the ROM and his team. PiRR's staff invested considerable resources in building open and constructive working relationships across the ROM's team. This allowed the ROM's team to understand that the project was working in their interests.
- *Reach*: a key objective of PiRR was to extend its reach beyond the 'usual suspects'. This was achieved through the project's profile, as well as through assertive targeting of organisations and through an open door policy. This approach achieved the engagement of a broad range of VCS organisations and achieved particular success in engaging specialist BME organisations. The project's success in securing three years of funding for the BME Reducing Re-offending

Network demonstrated PiRR's commitment to ensuring an investment in some of the smallest and most financially fragile organisations.

- *Attracting Wider Capacity Building Resources:* rather than duplicating existing capacity building resources, PiRR successfully worked in partnership with a range of existing initiatives and infrastructure bodies, resulting in joint training and shared resources. This maximised the opportunities available to organisations engaging with PiRR and strengthened the project's ability to meet the needs of the sector.
- *Governance:* a key strength of the PiRR process was the dialogue generated in the multi-agency Steering Group. This allowed the VCS to understand the read across between the issues arising in different parts of the sector, to demonstrate that it was leading its own process of partnership building, and thus present a more cohesive face to statutory commissioners.
- *Single Point of Dialogue:* the often complex discussions between statutory commissioners and the VCS were greatly simplified by the creation of a single point of dialogue, where the wider VCS could channel a number of common messages through one mouthpiece.
- *Safe Space:* the implications of NOMS are potentially very challenging to a number of VCS organisations, particularly smaller ones. PiRR provided a safe space in which the objectives of NOMS could be openly critiqued and the potential challenges facing the VCS discussed.
- *Building relationships:* for many charities, the project provided an opportunity to network and build relationships that might not have been possible otherwise.
- *Proactive Engagement of VCS in Shaping Commissioning Requirements:* one of the key processes that had the greatest potential for the future is the proactive engagement that PiRR organisations undertook in attempting to shape the commissioning intelligence of the ROM's team. The team responded very positively to the models produced by the VCS to enhance its pathway commissioning.

Weaknesses

- *Engaging Some Smaller Charities:* some smaller charities commented that they lacked the resources to capacity build. They needed a very clear pay-off for this investment (namely financial), and there was nothing so tangible on offer.
- *Engaging Some Major Charities:* seeking the involvement of smaller organisations can be at the cost of engaging larger charities. This can limit the apparent value of some of the partnerships being formed, as key players are perceived to be missing. While PiRR successfully fulfilled its brief to provide capacity- and partnership-building support to smaller and medium-sized VCS organisations, some of the consortia building group were significantly strengthened by the involvement of some larger organisations, providing infrastructure and corporate expertise. The project clearly did not find a sufficiently strong incentive for some major charities, most notably NACRO, Crime Concern and SOVA, to engage. Some larger charities even commented that they did not need to engage in partnership working with smaller organisations.
- *Timing:* the full potential of PiRR was hard to establish, as the NOMS commissioning process did not materialise as a driver for activity. The consortia-building process and tools developed by PiRR were not fully tested and the VCS was not really provided with the opportunity to pilot a consortia-building process. Future equivalent projects should be established only when there is an explicit commissioning commitment from the outset.
- *Resources:* PiRR's communications brief imposed a considerable administrative burden on PiRR's staff. In addition, the project did not have adequate resources to invest in the specialist user-involvement expertise required to develop this aspect of the project's objectives.
- *Neutrality:* because the host organisation, Revolving Doors Agency, was perceived as a service provider by many charities, and therefore as a potential competitor, it was not viewed initially as a neutral vehicle for such work. This created some initial distrust, which proved very unhelpful.
- *Cross Thematic Working:* the project struggled to create a structure that could bring organisations together to discuss the relationships between immediately equivalent or related organisations working in the same area, and that could create synergies between different areas

and themes. A possible gap was a structure that could bring organisations together to look at particular points in the system.

Key learning

Organisations need a return on their investment: capacity and partnership-building must be focused on immediate, clear and achievable targets in order to justify the investment of time and resources required. This is particularly important for smaller VCS organisations, for which resources are particularly precious. Failing to provide the return for their investment not only threatens the financial stability of the organisations, but damages relationships between provider organisations and service commissioners. For example, Shelter chaired the Housing CBG; Richmond Fellowship and Rethink regularly attended the Mental Health CBG; Turning Point was an associate member of the PiRR Steering Group.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF THE SEED4BME PROJECT

Background

The National Body of Black Prisoner Support Groups (NBBPSG) received funding in 2005 from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Voluntary Sector Unit (VSU) to deliver the SEED4BME project. The project aimed to create a model of good practice for supporting and capacity building those organisations working with or wishing to work with BME offenders, focusing specifically on two regions: the North West and the South West.

The SEED4BME project delivered a range of activities aimed at increasing knowledge, improving skills, exploring funding opportunities, networking, strengthening management systems and strategic planning, and providing VCOs working with BME offenders with the skills needed to work within a commissioning framework. The project also aimed to deliver two written documents that would aid both the capacity of the voluntary sector to interact with the statutory sector and the statutory sector to interact with the voluntary sector.

Methodology

Data for this evaluation was collected through:

- A review of documentation relating to capacity building and the project
- A phone-based targeted survey with ten statutory sector agencies and forty VCOs who had had contact with the SEED4BME project
- Eight face to face interviews with the SEED4BME steering group members
- Analysis of seven case studies using an in depth questionnaire.

Participants for the surveys were identified through random sampling to present a more accurate assessment of the project's outcomes.

The lack of information about the demographic characteristics of participants and the small scale nature of this research means that the generalisability of the findings is limited.

Findings

Evidence collected through the evaluation suggests that in the key regions of the North West and the South West the National Body has, through the SEED4BME project, been successful at facilitating networking. It has been particularly successful at allowing members of the VCS who work to support BME prisoners to network with each other as well as creating links between the statutory sector and the VCS. This is especially notable in the South West where the project established a ROM Commissioning Advisory Group for BME offenders that continues to operate after the conclusion of the SEED project.

The project also made progress on improving the capacity building of VCS organisations through sharing ideals of good practice. This is particularly notable with regard to the forums and the workshops that the National Body delivered, with many participants surveyed indicating that they had learned valuable lessons about good practice. However, only 40% reported that their 'contestability' had been raised by the forums and workshops, although evidence from the qualitative data suggests that the VCS organisations were generally distrustful of the statutory sector's financial deployment systems, reducing the extent to which they felt prepared for commissioning and contestability.

The evaluation also revealed that there was a wide spread desire for the National Body to produce a good practice guide aimed at providing an effective approach to building capacity of the VCS, with many of those participating, both from VCS organisations and the statutory sector, indicating that such a document would act as a valuable reference. This document may be something that the National Body might consider developing after the conclusion of the SEED project.

During the project the National Body began to develop a Mapping Report which identified specific organisations that provided support for BME offenders as well as highlighting barriers to working with the probation and prison service. Demand for the document was also very high among participants.

The work of NBBPSG was also widely appreciated, with some respondents reporting that the organisation should be more involved in key events on a national rather than regional level. In addition, in the South West region, respondents also indicated that the work of NBBPSG, in relation to the SEED4BME project, had acted as a springboard for the establishment of a BME commissioning reference group.

Despite the achievements of the project, some issues with its delivery were also identified, with many of these originating from tensions arising between the overall ambitions of the National Body, as expressed through the Steering Group, and the input of the funders in guiding the objectives of the project. In particular, the choice of the South West and the North West, two geographically and demographically distinct regions raised practical and strategic problems for the small number of staff involved in delivering the project. A choice of two adjacent regions or a different staffing system with two regional-coordinators would probably have been more desirable.

The second issue that arose regards the tension between the National Body's background of work with visible minorities and the project's aims to incorporate non-visible minorities. In the North West the project was successful at engaging with the Irish community. However, it remains unclear as to how this fits with the long-term ambitions of the National Body. Funders need to consider carefully the wisdom of blurring the categories of race and ethnicity and the National Body should consider what type of service it sees itself offering in the future and how it intends to achieve this.

Finally it is important to mention that the project has capacity built the National Body, forging an identity of its own, separate from its sister organisations, becoming known as a key provider of support to the VCS in the two regions and beyond. This raised awareness of the National Body seems to be on the cusp of a major breakthrough and the SEED project has placed the National Body in a good position to move forward in a number of directions after the project's conclusion.