

SAFER FUTURE COMMUNITIES

Empowering local voluntary & community partnerships

The impact of the Voluntary Sector on Crime and Community Safety

A report for the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner

This is a presentation of evidence of the impact of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in tackling crime, reducing reoffending and improving community safety in the Cleveland Force Area. We do this to show the sector's importance in reducing crime and to demonstrate its track record in delivering effective services through grants and contracts. There are two parts to the evidence: this summary of impact; and a detailed evidence base which is a review of independent evaluations and project case studies, presented as an appendix.

Background

Voluntary and community organisations have long been involved in work to tackle crime, reduce reoffending and improve community safety. There are well known organisations from Victim Support and Women's Aid that support victims of crime, to Addaction and CRI which help offenders turn away from a life of crime. But there are others, less well known that do important work: like NEPACS that run the prison visitor centres and carry out family support in prisons; and My Sisters Place that work with victims of domestic violence. There are also others on the periphery of such work that nonetheless provide an important community safety function, such as Credit Unions and Age UK. These engage with specific groups where crime and community safety are discussed and specific initiatives are introduced. These organisations also contribute much to Teesside in terms of inward investment and jobs. Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency found that during the financial year 2011/12, a sample of VCS agencies working in the Criminal Justice Sector created 98 full time equivalent jobs and led to inward investment of £1,228,138 in Middlesbrough alone.

The VCS is a thriving and varied sector, made up of a range organisations from small neighbourhood groups with little if any money and no staff, to multi million pound enterprises, but each play a part in making Cleveland a safer place to live. They have been important partners in Community Safety Partnerships, Probation Trusts and in the custodial estate. They have been an important ingredient to the mix of enforcement,

VOLUNTARY SECTOR service highlights:

91% reduction in reoffending

72% reduction in appearances before Magistrates

52% of domestic violence victims reporting a complete cessation of all types of abuse

(taken from the appendix, pages 3, 5, 15)

diversion and prevention activities which provide effective crime reduction initiatives.

The sector has specific qualities that make it unique and well placed to deliver community safety and tackle crime. These qualities include the ability to engage with the hardest to reach, being accessible, focused, trusted and committed. This is an important aspect about the sector; that they can access the most vulnerable people in society, vulnerable to being victims and perpetrators of crime, and who have no where else to turn for support.

Here, we present a summary of evidence of the impact of the VCS which has been independently verified through audit or evaluation or where impact has been demonstrated by case studies. The evidence is presented to demonstrate that the sector is commission-ready and able to demonstrate impact and outcomes. The services can be commissioned by project, unit (i.e. individual or family) and area. At the end of each section, we present examples of organisations that work in your area. These are not exhaustive but are meant as examples, further information can be found online on the Safer Future Communities Network directory or by contacting Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA).

Summary of impact

Alcohol and drug related crime

There are many ways in which voluntary sector organisations tackle the negative effects that alcohol and drug use have on individuals and communities. All of these support either the carer or user to abstain, control or manage the substance use. These services have led to reduced crime, improved community cohesion, significant cost savings and reduced pressure on local services. The initiatives are innovative, accessible and engaging, and have been shown to be effective on a number of levels, including:

- **Reducing harmful substance use:** there have been fewer admissions to hospital and fewer arrests made by the Police because the services result in people either stopping their substance use or reducing and engaging in less risky behaviour.
- **Positive effects on community cohesion:** the interventions improve the social fabric of local communities, through reducing public disorder and increasing the positive contributions that individuals can make – by stopping or reducing problem behaviour.
- **Reducing crime:** alcohol and drug use, particularly the former, are implicated in a number of crimes. By reducing substance use, people are less likely to engage in criminal behaviour. This is borne out by evaluations which indicate that because of the VCS services, people are involved in less crime.

Examples of organisations in Cleveland that address individual alcohol and drug use are:

Addaction	Albert Centre
CRI	Community Campus 87
Cyrenians	Lifeline

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is often the scourge of communities, increasing the fear of crime, leading to community instability and social breakdown. Types and definitions of anti-social behaviour vary widely and include harassment, noise, public disorder and neighbour disputes. There are also numerous approaches to tackle anti-social behaviour including mediation, youth diversion, surveillance and enforcement initiatives, with often a combination of all being most effective. The VCS has long been involved in tackling anti-social behaviour, working with both victims and perpetrators or those on the periphery, and both directly addressing problems or preventing them arising in the first place. The impacts of the sector include:

- **Supporting victims:** agencies such as Victim Support have provided outreach services to victims who are often too frightened to leave their homes; increasing their confidence, working with the Police and reducing the fear of crime.
- **Mediating between injured parties and perpetrators:** often anti-social behaviour originates in poor communication, a lack of understanding and sometimes fear of difference. The VCS have provided neutral mediation both to resolve crises and to prevent problems becoming entrenched.
- **Providing diversion activities:** organisations have shown themselves to be very responsive to situations which can flare up, such as congregating youths drinking alcohol. The VCS quickly develops relationships with those at-risk of offending, involving them in positive activities.

Examples of organisations providing such services include:

DISC	Prince's Trust
Groundwork North East	Victim Support
Nacro	YMCA

Supporting victims of crime

Crime has massive effects on individuals and communities, increasing the fear of crime, reducing community cohesion and reducing liveability. The VCS has considerable expertise in supporting the victims of crime which contribute to countering all these negative impacts. Services to support the victim also directly contributes to a reduction in repeat victimisation. The very nature of the sector means that organisations are considered accessible, empathetic, non judgemental and supporting of victims of crime. Indeed, victims will often access a charity over other professional services. There are services for victims of a range of crimes, which include:

- Domestic violence including honour-based violence and forced marriage
- Sexual assault and rape
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Hate crime
- Homicide
- General crime categories, such as Violence Against the Person and Burglary.

In relation to local agencies providing support to a range of victim types, the most well known is Victim Support. More specialist agencies include the National Victims' Association which provide

support to victims of homicide and others are listed in the following sections.

Violence against women and girls

This is an important sub-sector in victim support: services which include domestic, sexual and honour-based violence. The victims of such crimes require specialist support, which the voluntary sector is expert in providing. For example, many victims of domestic violence will not report crimes to the Police and want support for themselves rather than criminal action against the perpetrator. Support for victims of domestic and sexual violence is best provided through the independent women's voluntary sector and is done so in a way that cannot be replicated by statutory services.

Examples of organisations in Cleveland that provide support for victims include:

Barnardo's SECOS	SODA
EVA	My Sister's Place
Harbour	Women's Support Network and Jigsaw

Hate crime

An equally important sub sector is hate crime. This is one of the most pernicious of all crimes and includes racist, religious, disability, homophobic and transphobic hate crime and is one that mostly goes unreported. As a result it does not receive the policy and operational attention it deserves. VCS organisations are often the only organisations that provide support to victims, lobby on their behalf or provide training to agencies such as the Police to improve the response. Importantly, they are trusted by people in situations characterised by an absence of trust and fear.

There are VCS organisations across Cleveland working closely with communities experiencing hate crime. They are key to brokering engagement with the Police, as a key reason why hate crime is under reported is the lack of relationship with or confidence in the Police.

Examples of voluntary sector organisations working in Cleveland on issues of hate crime are:

Hart Gables	Vision Sense
Redcar and Cleveland	Regional Refugee Forum
Real Opportunity Centre	North East



Reducing reoffending/prisoner resettlement

Most interventions contribute to a reduction in reoffending in individuals – whether this is through therapeutic support, such as counselling or through helping someone stop their problem drinking. Where evaluation has looked into these areas, there has been evidence to suggest that this has been the case. However, there are some projects which have been set up by the sector with a specific remit to try and reduce reoffending and most of these have worked with people in prison. Projects in Cleveland have been shown to be effective in this area and have demonstrated impacts which include:

- **Reducing reoffending:** there is evidence to show that voluntary sector projects that offer wrap around support to people leaving custody have had quite remarkable impacts on reducing reoffending. Evaluations have shown that between 90 and 60 percent of ex-offenders using the projects have desisted from crime.
- **Engaging with those hardest to reach:** a key task of services is to build relationships with individuals who generally have antagonistic relations with agencies such as Police and Probation. The voluntary sector does this and works well at engaging offenders in constructive activities.
- **Improving lives:** evidence also shows that projects have helped ex-offenders turn their lives around, building self confidence, self esteem, employability and education levels. In other words, giving them the attention and support they need to become productive members of society.

Examples of organisations and projects that deliver reducing reoffending projects include:

Addaction	NEPACS
Nacro	A Way Out
Tees Valley Women's Centre	Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind

Breaking cycles of crime in families

Crime and anti-social behaviour often have their roots in difficult family situations: poor parenting, absence of boundaries, substance use and limited access to support can all greatly contribute to intergenerational cycles of crime. We have seen, since the Family Intervention Programmes of the previous administration, that often the most effective ways to stop crime is intervening in the lives of families, providing both support and challenge. And although most areas have their own Troubled Family programmes, there are likely to be instances when additional services need to be commissioned.

Family interventions by the voluntary sector have led to outcomes which include:

- **Breaking the cycle of intergenerational crime:** Police Officers often say that they see certain families who, if they do not receive help, will produce the criminals of the future. They have also mapped family relations and offenders and have produced criminal family trees. Intervention in families has been demonstrated to break this cycle.
- **Reducing domestic violence:** by working with families, victims have more control and understanding of violence and abuse and are thus more able to control, manage or leave situations.
- **Reducing risk to children:** this is a key outcome and evidence has shown that because of interventions children are safer and at lower risk of serious harm.

Agencies with a track record in this area include:

Action for Children	Addaction
Children North East	DISC

Youth crime

Young people can cause a disproportionate level of crime and anti-social behaviour and make a major contribution to the fear of crime in communities. The voluntary sector has long been involved with providing diversionary activities and engaging constructively with those responsible; preventing and diverting. The strength of the voluntary sector in this area is providing a credible and trustworthy service to young people, diverting them away from crime and anti-social behaviour. The outcomes that have been achieved include:

- **Engaging with the hardest to reach:** this is a consistent theme with the voluntary sector that organisations can meaningfully work with the 'hard cases', those that statutory services are often ready to abandon to custody. These

services are trusted by young people and thus can provide meaningful activities to divert them from crime and engage them in discussions about the implications of their actions.

- **Increasing self confidence and self esteem:** crime and low confidence and self esteem are often connected. Building these areas within individuals is important in helping young people avoid peer pressure and divert them from crime. The voluntary sector has demonstrated that this work helps young people feel better about themselves.
- **Improving the social fabric:** working with young people helps to make them feel included in local communities. Organisations working with young people often provide a brokering role between them and other community members, increasing understanding of both groups. This work helps young people ultimately feel part of their local community and therefore less likely to cause damage.

Organisations working with young people around crime and disorder include:

Doorways	Nacro
Safe in Tees Valley	Prince's Trust
Corner House Youth	YMCA

What next?

To find organisations working across Cleveland, look on the Safer Future Community Network directory, where you can search by area and theme.

www.vonne.org.uk/policy/criminaljustice/saferfuturecommunities/directory/

The directory can also be accessed through MVDA's website. If you would like to know more about the Safer Future Communities Network in Cleveland, contact Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency.

Web: www.mvda.info

Tel: 01642 249300

Email: general@mvdauk.org.uk

Safer Future Communities Networks have been developed in each Police Force Area to help the sector to engage with and influence the Police and Crime Commissioners. These networks have been funded by the Home Office through CLINKS (www.clinks.org).