

# **NCVO Live discussion on Police and Crime Commissioners**

## Highlights

---

[Read the full discussion](#)

## Opportunities and barriers to engagement

- Many voluntary sector organisations in the Criminal Justice Sector are very small, with little resource for much face to face engagement with PCCs and their offices.
- Many PCCs are providing small grants to enable organisations to engage with strategy or service development rather than direct delivery. However these funds need to be well advertised to be most effective.
- PCCs don't always have the structures in place to respond to the wide range of small organisations. Some methods to engage include market events and regular communications to stakeholders.
- Providing a checklist of what PCCs expect from applications have helped bring down some of the barriers.
- Relationship building that takes place around a strategic engagement can deliver benefits more quickly – your organisation will be more aware of relevant opportunities, and will be better known to decision makers.
- Infrastructure organisations have been instrumental in building relationships between PCCs and the VCS, for example providing briefings and using their networks to communicate information, and promoting opportunities for funding and engagement through local CVS meetings or AGM's.
- Having a dedicated VCSE lead in the OPCC and sitting on local Compact groups (or equivalent) ensures there is communication both ways. This has led to Avon and Somerset PCC's VCSE charter, their promise to the sector. West Yorkshire PCC's Third Sector Advisory Group's membership is regularly refreshed and led to a voluntary sector secondment to the OPCC.

## Evaluating the role of an elected commissioner

- It's inevitable in an elected post that elected officials will bring personal priorities, and existing areas of knowledge, to the table. But these should not negatively influence the feedback from consultation exercises, or from the evidenced need in a local area.
- The voice of the public can be channelled through the Commissioner by setting and reviewing priorities, ascertaining what change they want to see and then putting the funds and resources in place to do that, and holding those responsible for such change to account.
- You can measure your PCC's performance by looking at how far they have met the commitments made in their election manifestos and Police and Crime Plans.
- Re-election can be a good determination of the Commissioner's value – PCC elections are due in 18 months, so it's a good time to start thinking about how to influence your PCC.
- Initial findings from a recent Clinks' survey of the voluntary sector's experience of working with PCCs shows that overall engagement wasn't very good, and needs significant improvement (with some exceptions to the rule).
- The sector's engagement in informing the plan and wider PCC priorities seemed to be patchy, and in need of significant improvement. Good practice needs to be shared and replicated.

## Engagement with Police and Crime Panels

- Police and Crime Panels should provide a “challenging and support” role to the PCC – this is usually made up of Councillors, elected mayor (if there is one), local authority reps, and two independents. There is little evidence on Police and Crime Panel engagement with the voluntary sector.
- It is thought that very few independent seats are taken by a voluntary sector representative. This issue should be raised locally to run an election to get a voluntary sector representative supported by a local infrastructure organisation.

## Commissioning and procurement

- The voluntary sector should be involved in the “mapping and gapping” of local services and to bring service user voice into commissioning processes, as this can impact on how resources are allocated.
- A common fear from all commissioners is that engaging with service providers creates a possible conflict of interest between their role as a critical friends and their role as a potential service provider. This can be easily overcome with a set of clear procedures.
- Organisations should read their PCC commissioning and grants strategy, find out where their service fits, before applying for funding.
- Get yourself known – organisations should try to respond to consultations, and attend events of interest to get information and meet directly with commissioners and office staff.
- Some PCCs offer a range of funding opportunities from small grants to larger grants via a more competitive process to ensure they’re attracting providers of all sizes.

## Funding specialist services

- Being a small and highly specialist voluntary organisation causes difficulties in the procurement process. Commissioners are not often up to speed with specialist issues and how to help people. Clear and transparent structures are needed to allow people to raise these issues in a constructive way.
- PCCs are taking different approaches to funding specialist services. West Yorkshire PCC is offering a two-year contract for a special advice service, using an e-tendering website to advertise the opportunity.
- In Avon and Somerset, advocacy services are being commissioned based on vulnerabilities and groups, rather than for specific crime types. The specific lots are based on recommendations from an integrated victim care needs assessment and feedback from the commissioning intentions consultation process.
- Briefings from, and meetings with, specialist service agencies have helped identify gaps in provision and inform commissioning strategies.
- Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) which should be undertaken for every commissioning exercise. While not a legal requirement, it demonstrates that commissioners are taking account of the Equality Act.

## Commissioning preventative services

- It's difficult to fund early intervention when a lot of the funding available in criminal justice services is focused on tackling the people who are already in the system. PCCs may be able to push money into this area, but it will come at a cost to other funding pots.
- Some PCCs have been adopting integrated commissioning practices – working with other local commissioners, services and target groups for shared outcomes. This can help find some crossover, pooled funding and mutual benefit.
- Avon and Somerset PCC has 'Champions' for each priority area; one of which is the 'Youth Champion'. The Youth Champion's role is to work closely with statutory services, VCSE sector and crucially young people themselves to ensure good partnership-working and that the very best approach to working with young people is taken.

## Resource list from the discussion

- [Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Plan](#)
- [Avon and Somerset victim support](#)
- [Avon and Somerset PCC Commissioning and Grants Strategy](#)
- [Avon and Somerset PCC – Community Action Fund](#)
- [Clinks – Developing a Criminal Justice Network](#)
- [Clinks – Analysis of the Policing and Crime plans for 2013/14](#)
- [Clinks – Safer Future Communities project that engaged PCCs with the sector](#)
- [Clinks and NCVYS manifesto for young people](#)
- [Clinks – Light Lunch e-bulletin](#)
- [Clinks – Research on service user involvement in prisons and probation trusts](#)
- [Clinks – Service user involvement – a volunteering and mentoring guide](#)
- [Clinks – Influencing your PCC](#)
- [Clinks – The voluntary sector offer to PCCs](#)
- [Clinks – More than a provider: the role of the voluntary sector in the commissioning of offender services](#)
- [Clinks – 10 elements of great commissioning](#)
- [Compact Voice – Compact Awards Shortlist Awards nominations](#)
- [Compact Voice – case study on West Yorkshire PCC and Voluntary Action Leeds partnership-working](#)
- [Compact Voice – Briefing on The Compact and PCCs](#)
- [Frontline Consulting – Police and Crime Panels Conference report](#)