



Cass Business School
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Funders in Collaboration:

A review of the Corston Independent Funders' Coalition (CIFC)



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Intellectual leadership: developing talent, enhancing performance



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Executive Summary

The Corston Independent Funders' Coalition (CIFC) is a unique collaboration of grant-making trusts and foundations; 'unique' firstly because of the unusually large number of trusts and foundations involved, and secondly because although trusts and foundations are increasingly working together for grant-making purposes, it is rare (at least in the UK) for them to engage in 'funder advocacy', that is, bringing their joint influence to bear on an area of social change in which they consider themselves to be key stakeholders.

The CIFC was established to press for the full implementation of the recommendations of the 2007 Corston Report, an independent review of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system, commissioned by the Home Office and led by Baroness Jean Corston. The story of the CIFC begins in 2008 with an open letter, signed by 33 trustees and officers from 23 grant-making trusts and foundations, to Jack Straw MP, the then Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, pressing him to make progress on the Corston Report recommendations and offering support. The subsequent collaboration between 22 trusts and foundations involved employing an Advocate to represent their combined voice in applying pressure for reform.

The CIFC commissioned an external evaluation for two distinct purposes:

- To evaluate the success of the CIFC's collaborative model – documenting its processes and procedures and identifying key lessons for future funder collaboration (process evaluation)
- To measure the extent to which the Corston agenda had achieved greater political support and funding which are embedded and sustainable as a result of the activities of the CIFC (impact evaluation).

The evaluation covered a period of three years between June 2008 and May 2011 and involved scrutiny of a wide range of CIFC documents, a literature search, semi-structured interviews and two online surveys. The 'impact evaluation' was modified at an early stage to produce a rather less ambitious assessment of performance against the CIFC's March 2010 strategic plan.

The key findings are, in summary:

- Through funder advocacy and collaboration across boundaries the CIFC achieved outcomes that individual trusts and foundations could not have achieved alone
- It is not possible to draw conclusions about the impact the CIFC (or any other single agency) has had on the women's prison population, but the CIFC's contribution was helpful and timely and identified pathways for future progress
- The CIFC's strategic plan to achieve a reduction in the number of women in prison was ambitious, given the available time and resources, and little progress has yet been made in one of the three strategic priority areas
- The CIFC has demonstrated the role of funder advocacy and the potential of funder-Government collaboration
- Although there are increasing numbers of funder collaborations, there are features of the CIFC which make it a unique and interesting model

- CIFIC members found the collaborative experience to be interesting and rewarding, despite some early frustrations.

Lessons from the CIFIC experience are identified under the following headings:

- Funder collaboration is challenging and should not be undertaken lightly
- Successful collaborations share certain characteristics
- Funder collaboration for advocacy purposes has its own distinct drivers, challenges and success factors
- Partnership with Government exposes some fundamental tensions and requires careful handling.

The report elaborates on all these themes, providing a case study of a unique collaboration between funders.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Corston Report

The Corston Independent Funders' Coalition (CIFC) is a group of grant-making trusts and foundations that came together to secure political commitment for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Corston Report 2007, which was a review of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system, commissioned by the Home Office following the tragic series of six deaths at Styal Prison in 2002 and 2003.

The numbers of women being held in custody had risen by 60% over a decade¹ with most serving very short sentences of six months or less² and rising numbers being held on remand, pending trial, for an average of four to six weeks. Sixty per cent of women held on remand do not go on to receive a custodial sentence³. Women offenders experience high rates of mental health disorders, victimisation, abuse and substance misuse, and have low skills and rates of employment.⁴ Though comprising just 5% of the prison population, women committed around 46% of self harm incidents in 2007⁵. An estimated 18,000 children are separated from their mothers by imprisonment each year; of these, only 9% remain in their own home to be cared for by their fathers while their mother is in custody.⁶

In her introduction to the report, Baroness Corston wrote:

“... I was dismayed to see so many women frequently sentenced for short periods of time for very minor offences, causing chaos and disruption to their lives and families, without any realistic chance of addressing the causes of their criminality... I have concluded that the nature of women’s custody in many of our prisons needs to be radically rethought.”⁷

The Corston Report offered a blueprint for an urgent and completely new approach to women’s offending with 43 recommendations, varying in scale and impact, the key ones being:

- The creation of an inter-departmental ministerial group for women who offend or are at risk of offending
- The creation of a commission for women who offend or are at risk of offending
- The extension of a network of women’s community centres, some with residential provision
- Smaller local custodial units being created (over time) to replace prisons.

1 NOMS, Prison Population and Accommodation Briefing, for 12 June 2009, quoted in Bromley Briefings, Prison Reform Trust, November 2009 (p23).

2 Ministry of Justice (2009) Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2008, London: TSO quoted in Bromley Briefings, Prison Reform Trust, November 2009 (p23).

3 Department of Health (2009) The Bradley Report, London: DoH, quoted in p23 Bromley Briefings, PRT, November 2009.

4 Social Exclusion Task Force (May 2009) Short Study on Women Offenders p.11.

5 Ministry of Justice (2009), Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System, London: MoJ, quoted in p24 Bromley Briefings, PRT, November 2009.

6 Corston J. (2007) The Corston Report, p20, London: Home Office.

7 *ibid*, page (i).

1.2 Trust and Foundation Membership of the CIFIC

Antigone
 Appletree Fund
 The Bromley Trust
 Barrow Cadbury Trust
 City Bridge Trust
 The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund
 J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
 Edwina Grosvenor
 Paul Hamlyn Foundation
 Allen Lane Foundation
 LankellyChase Foundation
 The McGrath Charitable Trust
 The Monument Trust
 The Nationwide Foundation
 Northern Rock Foundation
 The Oak Foundation
 The Pilgrim Trust
 The Rank Foundation
 Rosa
 Swan Mountain Trust
 Wakefield and Tetley Trust
 The Wates Foundation

1.3 The Evaluation Approach

The evaluation was commissioned by the CIFIC for the following purposes:

- To evaluate the collaborative model, to document its processes and procedures and identify key lessons for future funder collaboration (process evaluation)
- To measure the extent to which the Corston agenda has achieved greater political support and funding and is embedded and sustainable, as a result of the activities of the CIFIC (impact evaluation).

Given the limited resources devoted to the evaluation it was not possible to conduct an in-depth assessment of the public policy context or of the advocacy process. In addition, assessment against some of CIFIC's specified indicators of success was hampered by a lack of baseline information and evidence. The 'impact evaluation' was therefore modified, with the agreement of the CIFIC, to produce a rather less ambitious assessment of performance against the CIFIC's March 2010 strategic plan which resulted in an uneven focus on the two evaluation objectives, the stronger focus being on the 'process evaluation'.

Given the above context, research for the evaluation was biased towards the processes and achievements of the funder collaboration and advocacy rather than on informing the debate on public policy on prisons and female prisoners. The following activities were carried out:

- A wide range of CIFIC documents, minutes, emails and correspondence, were scrutinised and organised into chronological order; while looking for apparent themes, and extracting the key points

- Semi-structured interviews were held with 28 key stakeholders, including 14 CIFIC members (chosen to cover ‘inner circle’ members with specific responsibilities and ‘outer circle’ members with no additional responsibilities), three non-member trust officers, six voluntary sector stakeholders, two civil servants, a minister and two CIFIC staff members. The timing of the CIFIC’s programme was extended twice, which meant that some interviews were carried out too early in the process and had to be revisited. The views of interviewees are presented anonymously
- Two online surveys sought the views of those CIFIC members who had not previously been interviewed (four of eight returned) and of voluntary organisation representatives who attended a CIFIC briefing (seven of 16 returned)
- A literature search was conducted to find materials on collaboration and funder advocacy that would be topical, relevant and meaningful to UK trusts and foundations. Much of the apposite literature was from the US but, where possible, literature from the UK was used
- Some limited desk research was conducted to supplement the public policy context provided by interviewees.

1.4 Purpose and Structure of this Report

The CIFIC wanted this report to be of use to:

- The CIFIC members, collectively and individually
- Other grant-making trusts and foundations
- Voluntary organisations in the criminal justice field
- Researchers and academics with an interest in funder collaboration.

[Chapter 2](#) presents the story of the CIFIC: a case study, not simply of funder collaboration, but of funders engaged in advocacy and working across boundaries to achieve their goals.

[Chapter 3](#) provides an overview, using the perspectives of other work on funder collaboration to comment on the processes outlined in Chapter 2.

[Chapter 4](#) presents the key findings.

[Chapter 5](#) suggests the key lessons for future funder advocacy and collaboration.

[Chapter 6](#) provides some concluding remarks.

2 The Story of the CIFIC

2.1 Key Milestones

2008 Events leading to the formation of the CIFIC

June	Funders send an open letter to the Minister
July	The Minister invites the funders to a meeting
August	Funders meet with the Criminal Justice Women's Strategy Unit Funders meet to consider progress and next steps
November	CIFIC Steering Committee established

2009 Setting-up period

January	Minister commits £15.6 million to the Corston agenda. CIFIC decides to employ an Advocate to take the work forward.
February	CIFIC begins work on a Memorandum of Understanding between Members
March	CIFIC holds breakfast briefing for wider voluntary sector
May	Minister announces that CIFIC will match the £15.6m fund and is firmly rebutted. First meeting of CIFIC Management Group
June	CIFIC members agree and sign the Memorandum of Understanding.
July	CIFIC strategy meeting to clarify CIFIC role and set priorities
September	The Advocate starts work
October	MoJ/CIFIC match-funding proposal

2010 Advocacy and joint funding period

January	The joint MoJ/CIFIC Women's Diversionary Fund (WDF) is established to develop and sustain a network of community alternatives to prison
February	Advocate meets Shadow Prisons Minister
March	The CIFIC agrees the Advocate's strategic plan
May	General election and change of Government
July	CIFIC hosts a conference with the MoJ and the voluntary sector
September	CIFIC shortlisted for Third Sector Excellence Award
October	Final WDF allocations are made
December	Publication of Government Green Paper 'Breaking the Cycle' CIFIC agrees to contribute to a bridging fund to sustain community projects until local commissioning can take over and Advocate lobbies for match-funding from MoJ and NOMS

2011 Leaving a legacy

February	CIFC responds to the Green Paper ‘Breaking the Cycle’.
March	NOMS guarantees that from 2012/13 services with a proven track record of tackling offending behaviour will be commissioned for ongoing work
May	MoJ and CIFC announce a joint £3.2 million bridging fund to sustain 26 local projects until local commissioning begins Advocate’s employment contract comes to an end and the CIFC discusses its future

2.2 Events Leading to the Funder Coalition

2.2.1 The open letter

The Corston Report 2007 was widely welcomed by key stakeholders across all sectors. The Government response (December 2007), though accepting many of the recommendations, was regarded as: *“disappointingly insubstantial”*⁸.

In June 2008, concerned about the possibility that their grant-making investments in this field of interest were being applied to a failing system and that the Corston agenda was being quietly shelved, the Bromley Trust and a small group of like-minded trusts and foundations decided to push for progress by writing an open letter to Jack Straw MP, the then Secretary of State for Justice. Considerable time and effort was invested in bringing other signatories on board, a process which generated *“hundreds”* of emails and phone calls. Not all of the trusts and foundations approached felt able to respond positively, even if their officers were sympathetic to the cause; some were unable to get the agreement of their boards in time, while a few boards regarded the idea of an open letter as a political act at odds with their practice and culture. On 18 June the letter, bearing 33 signatories from 23 trusts and foundations (19 trustees and 14 officers) was published in the *Guardian Online*.

By pressing the Secretary of State to make progress on the recommendations of the Corston Report and offering to support this *“strategic and principled development”*⁹, the signatories brought a new and independent voice to bear on an important social issue in which they regarded themselves as legitimate stakeholders.

2.2.2 Government response to the open letter

Coincidentally, within a week, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) published a statement of progress on the Corston recommendations; progress which was deemed, by a major campaigning charity, to be *“painfully slow”* and *“piecemeal”*¹⁰.

The matter might have rested there if Junior Minister Maria Eagle MP¹¹ had not immediately invited the funders to a meeting at which she emphasised her commitment to the Corston recommendations but said no new money was available.



The Corston reforms aren’t the kind of change you can just throw money at – culture change and policy change is vital.”

Maria Eagle MP

⁸ See www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/jun/28/prisonsandprobation.gender.

⁹ See the text of the open letter at Appendix 1.

¹⁰ See footnote 8.

¹¹ Until the change of Government in 2010, Maria Eagle MP was the Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice and the Equalities Office. Following the Corston Report she was appointed as the Ministerial Champion for Women and Criminal Justice.

That first meeting with the minister led to a second with the Criminal Justice Women's Strategy Unit (CJWSU), a cross-departmental group established to drive the Corston agenda forward. The CJWSU's main priority was to establish a network of 'one stop shop' women's diversionary centres across England and Wales to provide ongoing support and case management services for women offenders or women on the verge of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. It was envisaged that these centres would not only reduce the numbers of women ending up in custody but would also be used, as community alternatives to custody, by those responsible for sentencing.

With no new resources to commit, the CJWSU aimed to encourage relationships between existing women's centres and local statutory commissioners in order to make the case that diversionary provision was a cost-effective option. The CJWSU also had a responsibility to ensure that emerging policies across Government were building on the Corston agenda. There was a discussion about how the trusts and foundations might help to drive the agenda forward from their independent position, for example by contacting other Government departments to ask what commitments they were making to the Corston agenda and/or by commissioning independent research to evaluate the effectiveness of the women's centres. The CJWSU told the funders that their open letter would be useful in helping to make the business case to the MoJ¹². These meetings heralded the beginning of collaboration between independent funders and Government.

2.2.3 Next steps

Nearly three weeks later, in August 2008, the trusts and foundations met to discuss whether, having gone this far, there was merit in going further. They had been funding work in the criminal justice sector for many years but, following the Corston Report, recognised the futility of continuing to invest in a system that needed fundamental reform. They wanted to influence policy, to secure an ongoing commitment to the Corston reforms, and to use their overview to identify gaps and fund strategically.

It soon became clear that this would not be possible without funding a post to undertake ongoing advocacy work. Initially it was assumed that the post would be based with one of the leading voluntary sector campaigning organisations in the criminal justice field, but it was later agreed that the funders would be best served if the post "*remained in our own sector rather than be based with agencies whose voices are commonly heard...*"¹³ Those who were interested in continuing to work together were asked to seek 'in principle' agreement from their trustees to contribute to the cost of this post and the future work.

2.3 Setting Up

2.3.1 Emerging structures

In November 2008, the funders elected officers to a Steering Committee which began the task of defining the structure, governance, officers, roles, responsibilities and financial arrangements of a time-limited and non-incorporated Corston Independent Funders' Coalition. The resulting 'Memorandum of Understanding between Members' described the aims of the CIFIC as:

¹² All this information is taken from notes of CIFIC meetings on 31 July and 7 August 2008.

¹³ Email to funders, 28 August 2009, from the director of a CIFIC member foundation.

- To give a single voice to the concerns of independent funders in relation to the treatment of vulnerable women offenders as identified in the Corston Report
- To keep the Corston recommendations in the public eye
- To work together and with Government (at central and regional levels) to implement its conclusions.

The proposed structure consisted of three tiers:

- A management group composed of at least five elected members
- An employed ‘Advocate’ to be accountable to the management group
- The wider membership to whom the management group would be accountable.

Management arrangements for the Advocate were to be:

- A ‘host agency’ to provide line management (although not necessarily the Advocate’s place of work)
- An ‘Advocate Liaison’ to support the host agency and give additional support and guidance for the Advocate
- An expert panel to provide the Advocate with professional guidance.

2.3.2 Membership contributions

Membership of the CIFIC comprised of funders who were contributing to the cost of the ongoing work and the Advocate. With a diverse group of funders to accommodate, this became a flexible arrangement with an unspecified level of contribution enabling members to contribute according to their individual means and wishes. Although at this stage a few potential members dropped out, by August 2009 19 trusts and foundations had together committed £134,100 towards a projected 18-month budget of £177,500, with two new recruits likely to contribute later and some members delaying their second-year payment. By March 2011, with the Advocate’s contract having been extended by two months and additional areas of expenditure having become necessary, income and expenditure had exceeded £250,000 with 22 member contributions ranging from £500 to £50,000.

2.3.3 Process issues

The setting-up period demanded a substantial investment of time and effort from the funders and it was inevitable that commitment would be uneven in a group of 22, so the elected CIFIC officers bore the brunt of the workload with one estimating that she had devoted about 240 hours in a year to various CIFIC activities – equivalent to about six weeks’ full-time work.

Early meetings were dominated by inward-facing matters such as the memorandum of understanding, recruitment arrangements and budgets, with all decisions having to be approved by 22 boards of trustees. There were lengthy negotiations about which member organisation would act as the main line manager for the Advocate, with some boards fearful of the potential time commitment, and others raising technical issues such as legal liabilities and insurance cover. One member’s comment reflected the views of a number of others: *“The forming of the CIFIC was marked by a series of frustrating and inconclusive meetings – the obstacles were their boards, agreements about the money, and the manner of collaboration.”*

“

With the CIFIC it was about government leverage so a critical mass of foundations was needed to speak with one voice... . All the foundations needed to co-own the process – playing back-up to a lead funder would not have worked.”

CIFIC member

The democratic processes were seen by some to be overly burdensome: *“We went through a heavy period of bureaucracy in an attempt to be democratic and include even the smallest contributor.”* But others saw democracy as vital in order to establish trust between members and to reassure trust and foundation boards that the CIFIC’s view would adequately reflect the values and views of individual participants. Some viewed the democratic process as a means of preventing the larger and more vocal players from taking over: *“One [meeting] was particularly tortuous – nothing was very clear and everyone seemed a bit tense – there was a battle of wills going on.”*

2.4 Strategy Development and Implementation

2.4.1 The pre-strategy context

In early 2009, Maria Eagle informed the CIFIC that she had managed to secure £15.6 million to develop a national network of women’s centres and she asked if the CIFIC would be prepared to advise the distribution panel. The MoJ had already invited a known grants officer with relevant experience to do this, apparently thinking (wrongly) that she was a CIFIC member and the CIFIC nominated another person, later to be joined by a second CIFIC member in order to offset some of the workload. These funders brought new skills and perspectives to the Government grant-making process: *“We needed them: they were much sharper and tougher than we could ever be; they spotted things that we weren’t spotting and consistently asked all the right questions.”* (MoJ)

In October, as the likelihood of an under-spend became clear, one of the CIFIC members raised the possibility of transferring it to the funders for onward allocation. This led to the formation of the Women’s Diversionary Fund, a joint MoJ/CIFIC fund to further develop the network of women’s centres (see 2.5).

2.4.2 Role tensions and early priorities

Meanwhile, a first strategy meeting (July 2009) sought to clarify the CIFIC’s role and set some goals and priorities. The notes of that meeting reflect some of the tensions inherent in funders operating on the boundaries between Government and the wider voluntary sector:

“CIFIC needs to remain aware of the proper realm for its work and not to stray into carrying out the government’s work for it, thus relieving it of spending taxpayers’ money. Secondly it needs to guard against doing the work of the NGOs it supports. CIFIC is not a campaign. It needs to continue to ask itself: is this appropriate for us to do or to support?”¹⁴

The CIFIC’s goal was agreed as *“a reduction of the number of women in prison”*. Initial priorities were established for the Advocate’s first four months in post, which were to start in September 2009. These included induction, information gathering, mapping the grants made by funders to support women in the criminal justice system, establishing a web presence and drawing together a ‘road map’. It was noted that the Advocate, who had been appointed but had not yet taken up the post, had requested some admin support and last-minute arrangements made some limited support available from a member of staff in the host agency.

¹⁴ Notes of the CIFIC strategy day, July 2009.

2.4.3 The strategic plan

Within weeks of taking up her post the Advocate found herself unexpectedly and heavily involved in negotiations within CIFIC, and between CIFIC and the MoJ, on joint funding proposals (see 2.5) which had not been a part of any previous thinking but which clearly influenced the final strategic plan¹⁵ which was approved by CIFIC members in March 2010.

The CIFIC's goal of reducing the number of women in custody was to be based on a key recommendation of the Corston Report, namely that community solutions for non-violent women offenders should be the norm. The Advocate used a theory of change to identify the pre-conditions, assumptions, pathways and interventions necessary for success. The following table summarises these as the plan's aims, assumptions and main strategic priorities.

Aims	Assumptions	Strategic priorities
1. Policy-makers explicitly support and can defend alternatives to custody for non-violent, low-level women offenders.	That the overall number of women in custody is amenable to change.	To achieve real political commitment to diversionary, preventative and rehabilitative community responses to women's offending.
2. Women are not sent to prison by the courts (for conviction and on remand).	There is an appropriate way to reach and influence sentencers.	To ensure 'that women are consistently diverted from custody into community provision'.
3. Community provision exists for women at all stages of engagement with the criminal justice system.	Community provision cuts offending in the medium and long term.	To have a 'well funded sustainable network of women's community provision'.

2.4.4 Implementation

As the strategic plan was being finalised, the prospect of a general election meant that the key activity became ensuring that the women's agenda in the criminal justice system was not lost amid the changes brought about by a new Government and the public sector spending squeeze.

It is difficult to do justice to the range and depth of the work carried out to achieve political commitment to the Corston agenda. To this end the Advocate engaged with many dozens of key people at national, regional and local levels. She secured an early meeting with the newly appointed Prisons' Minister, Crispin Blunt MP, and briefed civil servants at national and regional levels across Government departments, maintaining close contact with the relevant senior officials in the MoJ. She worked with supportive parliamentarians to place questions in the House of Commons and encouraged the women's centres to build relationships with their own local policy-makers and politicians.



The coalition's role is to use all the resources at our disposal – our convening power, our intellectual assets and experience, our relationships, and yes, our funding – to galvanise the change that is required... .”

The Advocate

¹⁵ Final CIFIC strategy, March 2010.

“What are the Minister’s views on short sentences for women? Does he agree that community sentences may be more effective in reducing the rate of re offending by women?” Helen Grant MP (Maidstone and The Weald, Conservative)

“We support the conclusions of the Corston Report, we are conducting an analysis of the effectiveness of different sentences as part of the current sentencing review, we are committed to reducing the number of women in prison, and a network of women-only community provision is being developed to support robust community sentences.” Crispin Blunt MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Prisons and Probation), Justice; Reigate, Conservative)¹⁶.

In addition, the Advocate attended all meetings of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System and was a member of the Women’s Justice Taskforce.¹⁷ She drafted CIFIC’s response to the December 2010 Green Paper ‘Breaking the Cycle’, providing what the Minister called *“an interesting and thought provoking response”*¹⁸ on women in the criminal justice system. She also took part in a series of events and meetings to get key messages across to other agencies, declaring: *“My role is to prod, spur, convene and remind; if women aren’t mentioned in any reference to criminal justice I will ask why.”*

Implementation of the second aim (to ensure that women are consistently diverted from custody into community provision by ‘reaching and influencing the sentencers’) is less well documented. The Advocate reported that she had written articles for sector magazines, liaised with the Magistrates’ Association and responded to the Sentencing Guidelines Council’s consultation on sentencing for assault, emphasising the impact of custodial sentences on dependents, but finally concluded that little progress had been made and that the aim was unachievable¹⁹.

Meanwhile, the third part of the strategic plan, to have a well-funded sustainable network of women’s community provision, was being delivered by the Women’s Diversionary Fund (see 2.5 below).

2.5 The Women’s Diversionary Fund (WDF)

2.5.1 Match-funding proposals

In October 2009, it became clear that there would be an under-spend of at least £1 million from the £15.6 million fund secured by Maria Eagle MP, and that this was in danger of being clawed back by the Treasury. A suggestion that the under-spend might be transferred to the CIFIC for onward allocation was eventually agreed by the MoJ but only on condition that the funders agreed to commit match-funding. This match-funding proposal took the funders by surprise; the CIFIC had been set up for advocacy purposes and, although the possibility of funding hadn’t been ruled out, it had been considered only in terms of a *“CIFIC basket fund for those funders who are comfortable funding in this way”*.²⁰

¹⁶ Extract from Hansard, 20 July 2010, see www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2010-07-20c.163.5.

¹⁷ This was a high-level, independent task force established by the Prison Reform Trust and funded by the Bromley Trust to ‘make sure that vulnerable women in the criminal justice system are a priority for government, and to map out the means by which Ministers, officials and local government can build on the Corston blueprint for reform in changed economic and political times’.

¹⁸ Letter, 13 May 2011, from Crispin Blunt MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice.

¹⁹ This quote and the one in the paragraph above are from the Advocate’s report to the CIFIC (April 2011) at the end of her contract.

²⁰ Notes of a CIFIC Strategy Meeting, July 2009.

There were clear differences of opinion among CIFIC members; some regarded this as an opportunity to prevent a £1 million loss to the women's centres, while others saw it as a diversion from the CIFIC's advocacy role or as relieving the Government of its responsibilities, or both. The CIFIC settled matters by being flexible and agreeing that only those members who wished to contribute should do so. Nearly two-thirds of CIFIC members declined. It took some time to secure the funding commitments, but the required sum was eventually achieved with contributions from eight CIFIC members.²¹

2.5.2 Negotiations

The detailed terms of match-funding took some months to negotiate. There were:

- Fears about the risk to the CIFIC's independence
- Discussions about the purpose of the fund, how best to manage it and how decision-making would work
- Concerns about how to allocate the funding sensibly in the short timescale imposed by Treasury rules
- Differences between the MoJ and CIFIC approach to strategy and public statements.

Timescales were short because of Treasury requirements that the MoJ funding had to be distributed and spent by the end of the Government's financial year, which was only months away. Further negotiations achieved some concessions, extending this timescale by a further three months and ensuring that the deadline affected only the funders and not the organisations they were funding.

2.5.3 Governance and administration

The Fund was managed by the CIFIC under the conditions of a grant agreement between the Secretary of State and a CIFIC member organisation which acted as banker and managed the payment of grants. That member also took on the task of requesting, collecting and commenting upon the quarterly statistical reports required from grantees. The CIFIC established an experienced working group (which included two civil servants), to draw up the assessment criteria, the monitoring and evaluation requirements and the overall process for approval by the Grants Committee, the final decision-making body. The Grants Committee comprised a representative from each of the eight contributing organisations and three representatives from the MoJ. It was serviced by a Grants Manager who was seconded from a member organisation. It was agreed that up to 4% of total funds could be used to offset administrative costs.

2.5.4 Developing and sustaining the network of women's centres

At the end of January 2010, the Women's Diversionary Fund (WDF) was launched to support the capacity and sustainability of women's community provision – building on the Corston principle that community solutions for non-violent women offenders should be the norm. This was a strategic programme designed to create the conditions for sustainability and fill identified gaps. There was no time to run an open programme, so applications were by invitation only; 47 organisations were invited to apply and 24 grants were awarded:

- Fourteen grants for service delivery usually in geographical areas of under-provision

²¹ The contributing organisations are listed in Appendix 2.

- Eight grants for building the organisational capacity of key delivery organisations
- Two grants for building sector capacity: one to Women’s Breakout²², a new infrastructure organisation to provide ongoing support and guidance to the growing network of women’s centres, and the other to Homeless Link²³ for the purpose of creating an online directory of women’s centres.

The WDF added value to the grants by organising training for staff of funded organisations on finance and commissioning²⁴ and social return on investment (SROI)²⁵. The Grants Manager and the Advocate also provided informal mentoring and support to the women’s centres, and the Advocate gave intensive support to the development of Women’s Breakout.

“

Once we had agreed a process of working together, it truly felt like a collaborative and cooperative venture... once we’d made the commitment it rolled.”

Civil servant

2.5.5 Relationship-building through the WDF

After some early tensions during the setting-up period, the WDF provided the ideal vehicle for civil servants and funders to get to know each other, to develop respect for each other’s field of knowledge and to build mutual trust. *“Once we had agreed a process of working together, it truly felt like a collaborative and cooperative venture; a very constructive process – once we’d made the commitment it rolled.”* (civil servant) Both parties found it an especially positive experience, benefiting in terms of their differing expertise and a cross-fertilisation of ideas and enjoying the added stimulation of working with different viewpoints and perspectives. The parties brought different but complementary things to the table: *“They [the civil servants] had a more realistic political understanding of the issues and we [the grant makers] were better at due diligence in grant-making.”* (funder)

“There was enough good will on both sides to make it happen. We ended up working collaboratively on shared goals; we were very task focused with no-one trying to take the glory.” (civil servant)

2.5.6 Facing an uncertain future

By October 2010, when WDF funding was completed, the number of women’s centres had increased to nearly 50 but there were concerns that many were still financially insecure and faced an uncertain future. Although the MoJ, through the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), had been active in encouraging regional and local commissioners to champion and embed the new approach of diverting women from custody²⁶, the structural changes and cuts in public expenditure made this unlikely to happen before 2012. At the beginning of 2011 it became clear that 44 of the ‘one stop shop’ women’s centres and other community projects had no secure funding from March onwards²⁷. The outlook seemed bleak and the MoJ and WDF faced the possibility that the network of women’s centres that had been developed through their funding programmes might wither on the vine.

2.5.7 WDF2 – a rescue package

The Advocate had been raising the issue of the vulnerability of women’s centres with ministers at every opportunity, but the urgency of the situation struck home as WDF funding came to an end and local commissioning had not begun.

22 Women’s Breakout was launched in February 2011. See www.womensbreakout.org.uk.

23 An online *Community Provision for Women Offenders Directory*, which will eventually be available on the Women’s Breakout website.

24 By Cass Business School.

25 By the New Economics Foundation.

26 Letter, 30 June 2010, to Probation Trust Chief Executives and Directors of Offender Management from CEO of NOMS, Michael Spurr.

27 The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System, January 2011.

In December 2010, the CIFIC agreed to ‘dangle the possibility’ of funds to supplement a programme of intervention for the year 2011/12 and, through the Advocate, succeeded in securing a one-off £3.2 million joint funding deal with the MoJ/NOMS, plus a commitment from NOMS to continue funding projects with a proven track record from 2010/13 onwards²⁸. The funding deal enabled the MoJ/NOMS, the CIFIC and four non-member trusts to ‘rescue’ a number of financially vulnerable women’s centres, with the funders contributing £1.6 million²⁹.

A Memorandum of Understanding established the purpose, resourcing, allocation arrangements and timeline for the Fund, which became known as WDF2. Some of the funding was pooled and some was allocated directly from funders to particular projects. All the contributors sent representatives to the grants meeting and the best way forward for each project was discussed as a team: “The whole thing was incredibly complicated and only succeeded because of the immense amount of goodwill on all sides.” A ‘co-ordination group’ consisting of two representatives from each of the partners (MoJ, NOMS and CIFIC) communicated with external stakeholders, liaised between the partners, co-ordinated the monitoring and reporting systems and sought to resolve difficulties.

WDF2 acted relatively swiftly, given the complexity of the arrangements, and funds were disbursed by April 2011 providing bridging finance for 26 women’s centres to ensure their survival until March 2012 when local commissioning is due to take place.



The impact of the independent funders’ contribution to this agenda cannot be understated. In particular the achievement of the Women’s Diversionary Fund... . It is clear that such a strong commitment from the members of The Corston Independent Funders Coalition has made a real difference to the lives of many vulnerable women in the criminal justice system.”

Letter to members of the CIFIC
from Crispin Blunt MP,
13 May 2011

²⁸ Press release, May 2011, Ministry of Justice.

²⁹ Funders of WDF2 are listed in Appendix 2.

3 Overview

3.1 Collaboration between Funders

3.1.1 Models of collaboration

Collaboration is a fairly loose term covering a spectrum of arrangements from informal alliance to full merger³⁰, a ‘contract-based alliance’ best describing the CIFIC model. Collaboration between trusts and foundations has been found to exist on dimensions which include: informal/formal; short-term/long-term; few partners/many partners; joint funding/complementary funding; and others³¹. However, these models are largely focused on collaborative grant-making, whereas (in the UK at least) the uniqueness of the CIFIC, in addition to its size (22 funders), is that the funders came together, not for grant-making, but to engage in policy advocacy. This is not to imply that UK trusts and foundations do not engage in advocacy, but generally they do so indirectly – either by funding campaigning in grant-seeking voluntary organisations or by commissioning research on topical social policy issues, such as the report commissioned by the City Bridge Trust on the use of knives and other weapons by young people³².

3.1.2 A unique opportunity

Collaborations are said to begin with a supportive climate, a credible champion and proper timing³³.

Widespread support for the Corston Report recommendations among trusts and foundations, the wider voluntary sector involved in criminal justice issues and in Government where a group of influential politicians had a strong interest in the issue, provided the supportive climate for the CIFIC collaboration.

The credible champions for collaboration were a small group of trust officers with a long-term interest in criminal justice issues, good reputations and good connections within the criminal justice system as well as with other trusts and foundations and the wider voluntary sector.

The timing was crucial since there is little chance of attracting a satisfactory Government response unless an issue is high on its list of current priorities. Intelligence from a key player in a leading voluntary organisation gave the key to the CIFIC’s timing – the Government was about to issue a statement on its progress with reform and to announce the establishment of a cross-departmental group to drive the agenda forward. It was also fortunate that Maria Eagle MP had become a “*tireless champion of change*” within Government and, with a background in the voluntary sector, was prepared to engage with the funders. All these things came together to create a unique opportunity. The funders were said to be “*riding a wave*”, but that wave gave their initiative support and legitimacy.

3.1.3 Messiness and ambiguity

Getting people on board is one thing; making decisions about how to proceed is quite another. Here was a group of people who came from the same operational field and had shared interests and values, but who had never worked together as a team



“That letter was a good way – the perfect hook – to get others involved and it didn’t require much effort of anyone except the leader. Foundations have significant soft power – big names, money, independence and authority.”

Member of the WDF working group

³⁰ Cairns et al, 2011.

³¹ For example: Leat 2009, The Philanthropic Initiative 2010.

³² Lemos and Crane 2004.

³³ Buhl 2007.

and had different ways of doing things. With their own organisations to run and a consensus to be achieved by referring back and seeking approval from their own governing bodies, the setting-up period was sometimes experienced as ‘messy and ambiguous’³⁴.

The CIFIC’s advocacy role was the main source of ambiguity, requiring some tricky navigation. The CIFIC wanted to press the Government for action and influence but it did not want to be associated in any way with campaigning, not simply because some trustees were (perhaps overly) cautious about breaching Charity Commission guidelines on campaigning, but also because the funders were wary of usurping the roles of other third sector campaigning organisations. The CIFIC’s desired approach included collaboration with partners in the voluntary sector and Government but not being ‘captured’ by them or ‘straying over boundaries’. The CIFIC wanted to work with the voluntary sector but also to use its own distinctive voice; it wanted to work with Government but not to stray into fulfilling its responsibilities.

Such ambiguities generated much internal debate and occasionally some tension. Language became a significant tool in creating a legitimate space for the CIFIC with very conscious use of terms such as ‘advocacy’ rather than ‘lobbying’; ‘influencing’ rather than ‘campaigning’; and ‘key stakeholders’ or ‘partners’ rather than ‘pressure group’.

3.1.4 Keeping partners on board

The culture of the CIFIC was essentially democratic, participative and inclusive, but with a large number of members there became, of necessity, some differentiation of roles – with an inner circle (the management group) reporting to an outer circle (the wider membership). This arrangement carries a risk that a power imbalance could be created, with the inner circle becoming informed and active and the outer circle becoming relatively uninformed and passive. Early meetings of the CIFIC were well attended but once a management group was in place full meetings of the CIFIC rarely attracted more than half the membership. Most ‘outer circle’ members were satisfied with this arrangement, pointing out that they had elected officers and trusted them to “*get on with things*” as well as being “*as informed as I want to be*”. A few members mentioned that information was “*spasmodic*” and “*not always timely*”, especially as email lists were not always kept up to date and “*information kept being sent to the wrong person in my organisation*” which indicates some insufficiency in administrative resources.

Collaboration is challenging and requires a continuous process of nurturing to keep the partners on board, a significant element of which is building trust³⁵. Trust between members of the CIFIC began with the collegiality and shared values of the participating trust officers, was enhanced by a consensus around externally articulated goals and was cemented in a negotiated contract. Furthermore, the CIFIC behaved flexibly in order to keep the coalition intact at perceived ‘break points’ where ongoing support may have been at risk – for example, when determining levels of financial contribution to the ongoing work; in giving members choice over becoming involved with the WDF (with only one-third of members contributing) and sometimes making it clear, in non-mandated meetings with Government, that “*the funders were at the meeting as individuals not as representatives of the Coalition.*”³⁶



The CIFIC’s desired approach included collaboration with partners in the voluntary sector and government but not being ‘captured’ by them or ‘straying over boundaries’.”

Author

³⁴ A not untypical experience according to Grantcraft, 2009.

³⁵ Vangen and Huxham, 2003.

³⁶ Note of a meeting with the Women’s Strategy team and Cabinet Office, 21 October 2009.

“

The CIFIC is outstanding as a model; it took an objective set of recommendations and used them as an agenda – hence it had an external framework and there wasn't a constant questioning of the mission.”

CIFIC member

3.1.5 Member perspectives

Despite the challenges involved the CIFIC brought a large group of funders together and kept them together for three years³⁷. Some members pointed to the value of an externally framed advocacy goal which avoided “*constant questioning of the mission*”. All those who were interviewed felt they had benefited enormously by working together on something interesting, by getting to know one another better, by exercising their collective voice and by pooling their experience: “*We don't cohere very well as a sector and I found the sharing immensely valuable.*”

Involvement was an important learning experience for some: “*I've seen this very collaborative way of working and I've taken back the analytical skills and relationships into my daily working.*”

Collaboration enabled the funders to punch above their weight on an interesting, topical and important issue: “*It gave us a sense of meaning and purpose.*”

Furthermore, collaboration enabled some funders to venture out of their grant-making comfort zone for the first time, by providing a safe way of exploring new territory and better understanding the policy process. “*We've never done anything like this before and now I would do it again.*”³⁸

3.2 Funder Advocacy

3.2.1 Theory and practice

Funder advocacy is, at least in the UK, a relatively rare phenomenon and there is very little theoretical or practical guidance to shed light on the effectiveness of independent trusts and foundations as advocates. However, some commentators have encouraged trusts and foundations to consider how they might go beyond grant-making to making a longer term impact for the wider public benefit³⁹. This involves, according to Leat 2007, appreciating the role of Government, identifying new roles that cannot be played by other sectors and promoting change that goes beyond their immediate grantees. Later she develops her case for funders to work collaboratively and across boundaries⁴⁰. There is a growing amount of literature calling for funders to be more strategic; for example, to develop an adequate theory of change⁴¹ and to have clearly defined goals with strategies based on sound evidence and feedback to keep the strategy on course⁴².

3.2.2 The advocacy drivers

The CIFIC arose out of concerns among grant-making trusts and foundations that their investments were being applied to a criminal justice system that was failing vulnerable women. With a broad consensus for the recommendations of the Corston Report, a few trust officers took the initiative to solicit support for change. Numbers are important in advocacy and the initial champions worked hard and successfully to gather wide-ranging support among trusts and foundations for the open letter. In the move to a wider programme of advocacy, the CIFIC was conscious of the dangers of treading on the toes of the wider voluntary sector which campaigns on criminal justice issues and carefully considered its role between voluntary sector

³⁷ The CIFIC is currently discussing its future but seems unlikely to continue with all its current members.

³⁸ All quotes from interviews with CIFIC members.

³⁹ For example Leat 2007, Kramer 2009.

⁴⁰ Leat 2009.

⁴¹ Anheier and Leat 2006.

⁴² Brest and Harvey 2008.

organisations and Government (see 2.4.2). This case study, together with Leat's observations (see 3.2.1) indicates that some of the drivers for funder advocacy are:

- A public policy issue that impacts upon a field of funder interest and investment
- A broad consensus for specified changes
- A champion or champions to take the initiative
- The identification of a role that can't be played by other sectors.

3.2.3 The advocacy role

The appointment of an advocate was an unusual and bold move for a group of funders, sending out a strong signal about its intentions and approach. The Advocate was to be CIFIC's voice to the Government but this decision was not without its reputational risks both for the collective and the individual funders. Management of these risks requires either absolute trust or a strong management framework and the CIFIC's initial rather loose and democratic approach to management (later tightened up) wasn't always sufficient to ensure that the voice of the Advocate was its voice, or that the priorities of the Advocate were its priorities.

The advocacy role is highly opportunistic and doesn't fit easily with pre-determined themes and priorities. Some of the CIFIC's original plans (to have an expert panel, for example, and to map trust and foundation funding) fell by the wayside and yet, with her greater influencing experience and her full-time involvement, the Advocate's role appeared, perhaps inevitably, to evolve over time from being the voice of the coalition to being its advisor, with all the contradictions that this implies.

But the role was crucial for a number of reasons:

- The Advocate, unlike the funders, was able to give the issues consistent and dedicated attention over a period of 18 months
- The Advocate's background was such that she was able to relate to politicians and bridge the cultural gap between funders and civil servants and, of course, it is easier for Government to communicate with one person rather than a collective
- The Advocate developed a credible theory of change.

3.2.4 Monitoring progress

Since the advocacy role depends upon initiative and opportunism it becomes even more important to closely monitor progress against a wider plan. The plan depended upon progress in three main priority areas:

1. To achieve real political commitment to diversionary community responses to women's offending
2. To ensure that women are consistently diverted from custody into community provision
3. To have a well-funded sustainable network of women's community provision.

While there is evidence of good progress in the first and third of these priority areas, both of which were well documented and monitored, little progress was made with the second. According to the plan, ensuring that women are consistently diverted from custody depended upon 'reaching and influencing the sentencers', which the Advocate finally concluded was unachievable except by intervention from the top of the criminal justice system.



Although it was a big deal for us both a level of trust developed. It was an exciting partnership with each of us offering advice and pushing the other."

Civil servant

Yet there is a considerable amount of successful work already being done to influence sentencers, such as the 11 liaison and diversion services run by the national charity Together⁴³, which has forensic practitioners working full-time in the courts to assess the women coming into court, thereby reducing the need for remand into prison for psychiatric reports.

Given that this important work was well known to the CIFIC (the WDF and some individual funders had provided grants for it), the Advocate's conclusions are surprising, as is the lack of evidence that this priority area was ever conceptualised, discussed or monitored by the management group, the WDF or the wider CIFIC. It is difficult to know what to make of this. Lack of progress indicates a weakness either in the strategy as originally conceived, or in its planning and implementation, or simply in the fact that this particular objective requires a much longer time and resource commitment than the CIFIC had at its disposal.

3.3 Relationship with Government

3.3.1 Nature of the relationship

The funders' open letter was said to have been "*helpful and timely*" by civil servants and it has been suggested that the Minister was able to use the letter as a "*peg to hang her mission on*" but this is impossible to verify. There is little doubt that she was keen to work in partnership with the funders because she was attracted by the possibility of trust funds, although she later viewed them as "*critical friends and allies*".

In many ways the CIFIC was knocking at an open door but, with different cultures, agendas, time scales, constraints and accountabilities, early relationships with Government were sometimes awkward and open to misunderstandings. For example, in an announcement about the £15.6 million MoJ fund, Maria Eagle claimed that the CIFIC had agreed to match that sum, a claim that was quickly and firmly refuted in writing. There were occasions when each party felt the other was being frustratingly slow and bureaucratic; as one civil servant commented: "*It took them quite a while to employ an advocate and progress things; but we probably drove them mad because our world is one of briefing ministers and we kept coming back to change this word, change that emphasis.*"

The appointment of the Advocate was one important factor in smoothing the relationship between funders and Government; not just because it is easier to communicate with one person rather than with a collective, but also because the Advocate had political experience and skills and so the 'chemistry' was right: "*The role of the Advocate was enormously important; someone to meet people, to convene meetings, to press the right buttons and to see what needed to be done.*" Another important factor in relationship building between the civil servants and the CIFIC was working jointly on the Women's Diversionary Fund which became a partnership based on trust and mutual respect: "*A level of trust developed and although it was a big deal for us both it was an exciting partnership with them offering us advice and both sides pushing things along.*"⁴⁴

⁴³ Together is a national mental health charity providing support to people with mental health issues.

⁴⁴ All quotes in 3.3.1 come from interviews with two civil servants.

3.3.2 Joint funding issues

There is a fundamental tension in the relationship between trusts/foundations and Government, which is that Government interest in funders is primarily to do with their money whereas (in the UK at least) trusts and foundations are keen to avoid the substitution of Government funds.

The Minister was disappointed that the CIFIC did not match the MoJ's £15.6 million fund to expand the network of women's centres, but the CIFIC did not want to be used simply as a 'cash cow'. The funders were prepared to help but they had not, at that stage, considered match-funding – especially at that level and from the limited budgets of small- to middle-ranging trusts and foundations with their own defined priorities, formal procedures and lines of accountability. Later, however, when it seemed likely that an under-spend was to be clawed back by the Treasury, the CIFIC cautiously grasped an unplanned opportunity, with some members seeing this as leveraging money that would otherwise have been lost to the sector but with others wondering whether the leverage was actually working the other way.

One of the risks of joint funding with Government is accountability to the Treasury and the pressure to spend funds quickly in order to prevent 'claw back' at the end of the financial year – a practice that can lead to hasty decisions and unrealistic expectations of grantees. Members of the WDF Grants Committee (civil servants and independent funders alike) commented on the disappointing quality of grant applications – which is normally considered to be symptomatic of poor management and administration practices. However, one grant beneficiary suggested that the MoJ's previous large one-year grants had been partly responsible: *"Projects were slow to set up and then had only a very short delivery time... so the back room stuff didn't get enough attention."* There was pressure on the WDF to meet political deadlines and although there is no evidence that this affected their grant-making decisions, some CIFIC contributors wondered in retrospect whether, with more time, they might have done things differently.

The funders had hoped that the MoJ would simply transfer the under-spend to the CIFIC funders for onward allocation, so the MoJ's match-funding proposal was received with some ambivalence. The CIFIC was anxious not to have its hand forced and resolved matters by allowing its members to make their own individual decisions and by conducting protracted negotiations to ensure that joint funding did not compromise members' independence.

The CIFIC felt there were some important principles at stake, but it has been suggested that if funders focused attention on the problem or issue instead, then joint working within and across sectors would be the obvious approach. For funders, so the argument goes, working with Government can bring: *"influence over policy, agendas and practice, little pots of money/under-spending, legitimacy and endorsement, reach and scale, and sustainability for initiatives after foundation funding ends"*. And for Government, working with funders can bring: *"access to risk capital, grant making expertise and infrastructure, specialist knowledge, a route to 'working under the radar', and a partner able to 'try and try again'"*⁴⁵. The Women's Diversionary Fund demonstrated how this symbiotic relationship can work in practice.

⁴⁵ Leat 2009.

3.3.3 Money well spent?

The outcomes of the Women’s Diversionary Fund (WDF) grant-making were not within the remit of this evaluation so it is not possible to provide a direct answer to the above question. But it is interesting to reflect upon the contribution of the WDF to the CIFIC’s agenda, especially since some members were of the view that grant-making became a diversion from the advocacy role and “*took over from time to time*”.

The CIFIC’s strategic priorities very closely matched those of the MoJ: to develop a sustainable network of women’s centres as alternatives to custody for female offenders with low-level crimes. The MoJ had invested approximately £25 million to this end over the previous five years and this sum, together with £5 million distributed by the WDF, represented a reasonable investment in a newly emerging field of diversionary provision. But was it money well spent? Can women’s centres provide viable alternatives to custody if ‘viable’ is to mean that they are successful in terms of enabling women to make reparations for an offence and tackle the reasons behind their offending?

“

The women’s centres need to be professionalised damn fast – politically speaking, everything will get pushed down to local level and diversionary projects will have to prove they are cost-effective and have good outcomes.”

Member of WDF working group

There have been some small scale studies that have indicated promising results, although in an action research report on the Together Women project operating at five centres in the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Regions, the authors concluded that issues remained about “*making the model of change explicit, securing wider service user engagement, persuading local courts to use these alternatives in place of custody, and recording and measuring change*”⁴⁶. There has been no comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of various models of intervention (although the CIFIC has now brokered a project to evaluate six women’s centres which will be available in 2012) so that WDF grant-making was, to a certain extent, a ‘shot in the dark’.

The case for diversionary provision has been more strongly made by the economic argument. One analysis⁴⁷ suggests that the majority of community sentences provide similar or better value for money and effectiveness than do short-term prison sentences. This was corroborated by research⁴⁸ which found that for every pound invested in support-focused alternatives to prison, £14 worth of social value is generated to women and their children, victims and society over ten years.

However, without the WDF there would have been no initial £2 million to sustain projects coming to the end of previous MoJ funding or to develop services where there were important gaps. And there would have been no £3 million rescue package for women’s centres, many of which would have run out of funding and folded long before local commissioning begins in April 2012. Funds were employed jointly and strategically in a way that could not have been achieved by the independent funders or the Government working separately. The question of whether that was money well spent will be better answered by examining the state and status of the network of women’s centres in a few years’ time.

⁴⁶ Hedderman et al 2008.

⁴⁷ Matrix Knowledge Group 2007.

⁴⁸ New Economics Foundation 2008.

3.4 Relationship with the Wider Voluntary Sector

3.4.1 Voluntary organisations and criminal justice

The criminal justice domain is well populated with voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes; some national and some local, some multi-purpose and some single issue; some focused on policy and campaigning, and others on service delivery. The two major national campaigning charities are the Prison Reform Trust and the Howard League for Penal Reform that services the All-Party Parliamentary Group on women in the penal system. There are also a large number of other national think tanks, campaigning and service organisations including NACRO, the Griffins Society, Clinks, Make Justice Work, Women in Prison, and the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, whose partnership with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation led to the major Rethinking Crime and Punishment project⁴⁹.

On the ground, services for women in contact with the criminal justice system are delivered mainly by the statutory sector – through prisons and probation – and by local voluntary organisations, including a number of women’s ‘one stop shop’ diversionary projects and an even wider range of charities and community groups working with vulnerable women.

3.4.2 The contributions of trusts and foundations

Trusts and foundations have a long history of support for all these organisations, contributing an estimated £34 million in the past year⁵⁰ to the criminal justice field alone. Recent examples include:

- The Tudor Trust/LankellyChase Foundation’s three-year, £2.7 million, partnership funding programme on criminal justice issues in the south west of England
- The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation’s substantial £4 million programme of work on alternatives to prison
- The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund’s award of £1.5 million over five years to the Prison Reform Trust to reduce the numbers of children and young people sent to custody.

This level of investment over many years gives the funders a unique perspective and more than justifies their interest in reform. But although the CIFIC felt that its independence, money and clout would bring a new and distinctive voice to the table, it did not want to undermine the role of the voluntary sector and upset the traditional relationship that had existed between the funder and the funded.

3.4.3 Voluntary sector perspectives

The unease felt by the funders about treading on the toes of their grantees was reflected in the ambivalence of grant-seeking voluntary organisations about the prospect of trusts and foundations breaking out of their traditional role: *“There was some intake of breath, some disquiet about whether they would continue to be funded, but also some anticipation.”*

In March 2009, the CIFIC organised a breakfast briefing in order to explain what they were doing to voluntary sector representatives. The notes of that meeting show that



At the end of the day success will be measured by a reduction of women in prison and if this happens the CIFIC will be one of the things that tipped the balance.”

Voluntary sector representative

⁴⁹ Between 2001 and 2004 Rethinking Crime and Punishment supported more than 50 projects working to increase public understanding of, and involvement in, criminal justice. It also aimed to produce fresh thinking into the debate and set up a major independent Inquiry into Alternatives to Prison. A full report is available from www.rethinking.org.uk.

⁵⁰ CIFIC Response to ‘Breaking the Cycle’, February 2011.

“

The fact that trusts and foundations were able to come together and steer the agenda through a change of government has been hugely supportive. We could have fizzled out under a lot of political excuses.”

Women’s centre
representative

attendees wanted to be reassured that the funders would continue to support their campaigning work; they expressed concerns about possible duplication of effort; they thought the Advocate’s role might be too wide – and they made a number of suggestions to widen it still further! Two years later most of those who had attended the breakfast briefing and were subsequently interviewed regarded collaboration between funders as a useful approach and felt that the CIFC had done a good job by showing that funders can: “*work together and with government while keeping their integrity*” and “leverage access and resources in significant ways”. The Advocate, in particular, was appreciated for her “*much needed voice*” to articulate the issues and the time and energy she could devote to them.

There were also a few reservations: one survey respondent pointed out that she had not been provided with sufficient information upon which to make a judgement, and an interviewee expressed dissatisfaction with the CIFC’s collaboration with the wider voluntary sector: “*It was a bit of a top-down initiative that wasn’t as collaborative as it might have been.*” With so limited a sample it is difficult to draw conclusions, but it did not appear that the funders had undermined their relationship with voluntary sector grantees (if that is possible, given the power imbalance) as had been feared.

4 Key Findings

4.1 Through funder advocacy and collaboration across boundaries the CIFIC achieved outcomes that individual trusts and foundations could not have achieved alone

<p>The CIFIC's open letter played a part in helping to lever a Ministry of Justice funding package of £15.6 million to develop a network of women's centres offering integrated alternatives to custody.</p>	<p>There are now at least 37 women's community projects offering integrated alternatives to custody. The Women's Diversionary Fund developed and sustained these centres for a further year after the end of major MoJ investment.</p>
<p>The CIFIC made sure that the Corston agenda was not lost or downgraded during a change of Government, a loss of key personnel in the MoJ and the changed priorities and structures of a new regime.</p>	<p>When local commissioning did not happen as anticipated in 2011, the CIFIC negotiated a joint rescue package with the MoJ and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to provide bridging finance of £3 million for 26 women's centres.</p>
<p>The CIFIC's response to the Government's 2010 green paper 'Breaking the Cycle' on the future of the criminal justice system provided a detailed vision for the future of the criminal justice system as it affects women and raised the profile of trusts and foundations that work in the criminal justice sector.</p>	<p>A commitment was negotiated to ensure that from the start of the 2012/13 financial year, projects which have a clear evidence base to demonstrate effective diversions from custody will be commissioned by NOMS.</p>
<p>The joint CIFIC/MoJ Women Diversionary Fund 2010 laid the foundations for a strong and well organised sector of women's alternatives to custody and a key infrastructure organisation, Women's Breakout, was established to take on a strategic leadership role in strengthening this newly emerging field.</p>	<p>The CIFIC demonstrated that trusts and foundations can play a credible role in social policy reform.</p>

4.2 **It is not possible to draw any conclusions about the impact the CIFIC (or any other single agency) has had on the women's prison population but the CIFIC's contribution was helpful and timely and identified pathways for future progress**

Change objectives have profoundly different characters and time scales; they can be:

- Local, national or international in scope
- Relatively easy to solve or more complex
- Accomplished fairly rapidly or over a long period of time.

The pressure for reform in the criminal justice system, and more specifically for reducing the numbers of vulnerable women in custody, has a long history – starting long before the publication of the Corston Report, so this assessment of impact happens at an arbitrary point in the change process. Furthermore the CIFIC was and is but one of many voluntary and statutory agencies pressing for change in the criminal justice system as it affects women so that attribution is virtually impossible.

The CIFIC wanted to achieve a reduction in the numbers of women being admitted to prison every year but despite the loss of one women's prison (HMP Morton Hall), women still represent about 5% of the overall prison population. The women's prison population has remained fairly stable over the last ten years being 4,394 in 2002, 4,505 in 2008, 4,267 in 2010⁵¹ and 4,185 in 2011⁵². These figures represent a small, but perhaps insignificant, decline. However, since women remain in prison for very short periods what counts is the overall numbers of women received into prison each year – first receptions. Although these have declined slightly over a five-year period the latest figure – 11,044 in 2009 – is, nevertheless and disappointingly, slightly higher than the 10,875 figure for 1999⁵³.

It is therefore not possible to draw any conclusions about the impact the CIFIC (or any other agency) has had on the women's prison population but there are some promising signs that some of the CIFIC's lower level vision agenda is being realised:

- The Minister for Prisons has publicly declared his support for reducing the numbers of women in custody and the Government's 2010 Green Paper, 'Breaking the Cycle', recognises that women offenders have a different profile of risks and needs⁵⁴
- There is an expanded network of women's centres providing integrated alternatives to custody and although their funding isn't yet secure, the WDF2 rescue package is giving them time to develop strategies to compete for funding when local commissioning comes on stream. The National Offender Management Service is currently looking to sustain funding for those community projects that are critical to diverting women away from crime in their local areas⁵⁵

⁵¹ Table A1.1, Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2010, Population in prison by type of custody sentence length and age group 2002 to 2010, England and Wales, Ministry of Justice.

⁵² Provisional data from table 1.1c: Female population in custody and age group, on a quarterly basis, March 2010 to June 2011, England and Wales, Ministry of Justice: www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/statistics-and-data/mojstats/omsq-q1-2011-tables.pdf.

⁵³ Table 6.1, Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2009, Female receptions into prison establishments by type of custody, sentence length and age group, England and Wales, Ministry of Justice.

⁵⁴ 'Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders' December 2010, MoJ.

⁵⁵ *Diverting Women Away From Crime: a Guide to the Women's Community Projects*, MoJ 2011.

- Women's Breakout, the new national body supporting women's centres, has received sufficient MoJ funding to secure its future for a few years and is in the process of developing guidelines and accreditation to ensure consistency and quality in standards between projects nationally.

The CIFIC made a valuable contribution by adding its influence and funding to these changes in the social and political landscape, and its response to the 'Breaking the Cycle' Green Paper provided the basis of a clear action plan for the treatment of women offenders. Bearing all this in mind, the contribution of the CIFIC might be viewed as a timely and helpful intervention at a critical point in the journey of reform.

4.3 The CIFIC's strategic plan to achieve a reduction in the number of women in prison was ambitious, given the available time and resources, and little progress has yet been made in one of the three strategic priority areas

The Advocate developed a plan that was ambitious in scope, given the available time and resources. The plan consisted of three priority areas and impact depended upon progress in all three. The weak link is the lack of progress made to date in reaching and influencing the sentencers in order to ensure that women are consistently diverted from custody into community provision.

Nevertheless, there have been some positive developments: the Government has agreed to maintain the commitment to have a liaison and diversion service in every court and custody suite by 2014⁵⁶ and a considerable amount of successful work has been going on at a local level to reach and influence the sentencers. One exemplar is the Together Thames Magistrates Court Diversion Scheme, which was saved from closure in 2010 by WDF and Pilgrim Trust funding and is described in the final report of The Women's Justice Taskforce (2011). This is one of the 11 liaison and diversion services provided by the mental health charity, Together and indicates that a lot can be done below Government level to influence the court as long as sentencers trust the professional abilities of those suggesting the disposal.

4.4 The CIFIC has demonstrated the role of funder advocacy and the potential of funder-Government collaboration

The 'voice' of grant-making trusts and foundations is qualitatively different from that of campaigning voluntary organisations because their financial independence enables them to approach Government on a more equal footing. Yet the CIFIC's voice on proposed reforms for women in the criminal justice system was unexpected and surprising because UK trusts and foundations have rarely articulated their social policy goals, much less worked together to achieve them. The funders' long histories of investment in the criminal justice arena had earned the CIFIC the right to be recognised as key stakeholders in reform – they were concerned as to whether their funding was propping up a dysfunctional system or contributing to change. Although an opportunity for securing additional funds might have attracted the Minister's initial approach, the subsequent level of engagement and co-operation with the MoJ and NOMS shows that the CIFIC was regarded as a credible partner in the social policy process.

⁵⁶ Breaking the Cycle' op.cit.

This co-operation included:

- Information and intelligence-sharing
- Shaping complementary strategies in the awareness of each other's plans
- Running two major co funding initiatives
- Acting in a co-ordinated fashion to consolidate change.

4.5 **Although there are increasing numbers of funder collaborations there are some features of the CIFC which makes it a unique and interesting model:**

- The CIFC involved a larger number of partners than is usual in funder collaborations. A total of 22 funders came together in a formal coalition, and still others contributed independently to the cause
- The funders came together, not for grant-making purposes, but to progress a social policy area of common interest through advocacy
- Rather than funding a post in the voluntary sector, the CIFC wanted to use its own voice and took a bold decision to employ an Advocate to raise the profile of the women's policy agenda in the criminal justice system and to influence change
- The CIFC was strategic, using a theory of change to plan its road map and engaging with a full range of tools to pursue its vision, including advocacy, research, policy response, grant-making and capacity building
- The CIFC worked across a number of boundaries to build credibility, form alliances, obtain leverage, recruit champions and make their case.

4.6 **CIFC members found the collaborative experience to be interesting and rewarding despite some early frustrations**

Despite the many challenges of collaboration, members of the CIFC found the experience to be overwhelmingly positive with benefits that included:

- Working together on something interesting and challenging
- Establishing new relationships
- Having a shared meaning and purpose
- Pooling experience
- Developing new skills
- Exploring new territory.

Engaging, many for the first time, in funder advocacy also enabled them to:

- Punch above their weight
- Better understand the policy process
- Appreciate the complexity of change
- Recognise the importance of advocacy in the change process.

5 Lessons from the CIFIC experience

The suggested learning in this section, especially that which relates to funder advocacy, about which there has been very little relevant research to date, arises primarily from the CIFIC experience and should not be viewed as a prescriptive model for all funder collaboration.

5.1 Funder collaboration is challenging and should not be undertaken lightly

- Collaboration demands a quite considerable amount of time and effort, especially for those who undertake leading roles
- Progress can be slowed down by accountability processes as trust and foundation officers need to secure the agreement of their respective boards
- With many partners to accommodate and boundaries to observe, collaborative processes can be experienced as messy and ambiguous.

5.2 Successful collaborations share certain characteristics

The CIFIC kept its member trusts and foundations together for nearly three years; its success in doing so can be attributed to a set of characteristics which closely matches the findings in literature on funder collaboration from the USA⁵⁷:

- A unique opportunity to collaborate on a well-defined and documented social issue
- A passionate champion/s who instigates the collaborative effort, recruits members and provides initial leadership
- A diverse group of funders and a critical mass with sufficient funds to make things happen
- An inclusive/participative structure through which members achieve consensus on important decisions
- An open and flexible approach which strikes a balance between shared interests and the interests of the individual member organisations
- Time for planning, especially in the early stages
- Appropriate staffing and a willingness to jointly fund the work
- Stability and long-term agendas, especially for funder advocacy
- Trust between participants which must be nurtured over time.

5.3 Funder advocacy has its own distinct drivers, challenges and success factors

All grant-makers want to feel that their funding is making a difference, but because of the complexity and long-term nature of social change, making a difference requires social reform at a level that can only be achieved by Government policy.

⁵⁷ The Philanthropic Initiative 2009; Buhl 2007.

While there is little available research on this subject, the CIFIC experience suggests some of the drivers, challenges and success factors particular to funder advocacy:

Drivers

- A public policy issue that impacts upon a field of funder interest and investment
- A broad consensus for specified changes
- A champion or champions to take the initiative
- The identification of a role that can't be played by other sectors.

Challenges

- Role boundaries: funder advocacy needs to establish and operate in a 'legitimate space' between the Government and the wider voluntary sector
- Representing the collective voice: establishing consensus on broad goals is one thing but delegating the detailed elaboration and approach to a spokesperson is not without its reputational risks and needs to be carefully managed
- External events: advocacy rarely goes the way we think it will, and even the best-designed strategies can be knocked sideways by external factors such as political, economic or social changes
- Managing advocacy: the advocacy role is largely opportunistic and difficult to manage so that careful monitoring of a written plan becomes an essential ingredient of control.

Success factors

- Timing: the advocacy issue needs to be high on the Government's social policy agenda and ready to take advantage of any window of opportunity
- Clarity about advocacy goals: the CIFIC's advocacy goals were provided by the Corston recommendations and did not have to be negotiated between members
- Commitment and legitimacy: the funders' long-term investments in the criminal justice field made them key stakeholders in reform
- Theory of change: a strategic plan should be informed by a theory of change, setting out what changes are desired, what conditions have to be in place for those changes to be realised, how those conditions might be brought about and what assumptions are being made along the way. There is a helpful tool that provides a more detailed analysis of the advocacy process: the Advocacy Progress Planner⁵⁸ looks at some of the building blocks of a campaign and facilitates a tidy logic model that can be used as a planning document and as a basis for ongoing evaluation and learning
- Time and resources: sufficient time and resources need to be devoted to implementing the plan.

⁵⁸ This tool is developed from Julia Coffman's Composite Logic Model and is a project of the Advocacy Planning and Evaluation Program (APEP) at the Aspen Institute, www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/apep.

5.4 Partnership with Government exposes some fundamental tensions and requires careful handling

Working across cultural boundaries with different agendas, timescales, constraints and accountabilities can lead to frustrations and misunderstandings.

- The CIFIC's relationship with civil servants improved with the opportunity to build respect and trust through joint grant-making and the employment of an Advocate to represent the collective voice
- Government interest in independent funders is primarily to do with their money, whereas trusts and foundations are keen to avoid substitution of Government funds. Funders should be clear and explicit about the conditions under which they will contribute funds
- Joint funding can be contentious, raising questions about who is exercising leverage and being accompanied by political pressure to meet targets and get the money out of the door. The terms of engagement need careful negotiation.

6 Concluding Remarks

As this report was being finalised the CIFIC's Advocate had come to the end of her contract and the CIFIC was considering its future as a funder coalition. The original intention was that the CIFIC should be 'time limited' but a number of CIFIC members feel that because the desired impact on the numbers of women in custody remains elusive, this may not be the right time, especially since at this juncture:

- The network of women's centres to provide alternatives to custody is not yet sustainable
- The NOMS commitment to commission those women's centres with a good track record, from April 2012, has not been tested
- There is no comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of women's centres in diverting women from custody
- The sentencers have yet to be convinced of the effectiveness of diversionary schemes.

However, the work of the CIFIC in future is clearly going to be made more difficult by the recent struggles of Ken Clarke, the Justice Secretary, to progress his policy proposals on sentencing, including limitations on the use of remand in custody, in the face of attacks by both the Labour frontbench and rightwing Tory MPs.

The CIFIC grasped a golden opportunity to play an effective role in social change and what emerges from that experience is that funders can sometimes accomplish more by working in collaboration than working on their own. But collaboration is not the easy option and should not be undertaken lightly. For the purposes of advocacy, collaboration is crucial – demonstrating support and consensus, providing access to a wider pool of resources and skills, and accommodating partners who would not otherwise go it alone. Collaboration for grant-making purposes comes into its own when the goal is to initiate, develop or sustain a field of practice (as opposed to a one-off project) and funders lack the resources or expertise to make a difference individually.

The CIFIC experience raised a number of questions which are worthy of further study and debate, for example:

- Are funders key stakeholders in social policy decisions?
- Is funder advocacy a legitimate and useful change strategy?
- What other change strategies do funders have at their disposal?
- Can joint funding with Government be consistent with good practice?
- How can funders work successfully across boundaries?

Meanwhile, it is to be hoped that this study has generated some useful material and continues to stimulate some interesting debate. It is to the CIFIC's credit that they were willing to expose themselves, their processes, their achievements and their disappointments to a wider audience through independent evaluation.

Appendix 1

Text of Open Letter sent to the Lord Chancellor on 18 June 2008 and published in the Guardian Online

Dear Lord Chancellor,

Implementation of the recommendations of the Corston Report on vulnerable women in the criminal justice system

We are a broad range of independent charitable funders. Our organisations invest many millions each year in civil society organisations working in the field of criminal justice and human rights and we stand ready to commit further funds to genuinely innovative projects within the Criminal Justice Sector.

We warmly welcomed the Government's commissioning of Baroness Jean Corston to investigate the treatment of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system and strongly support the conclusions of her 2007 report. We are aware of the wealth of evidence of the vulnerability of women prisoners.

The Government's acceptance of almost all the Corston Report's recommendations and the recent National Service Framework for Female Offenders heralds a bold and principled move to deal more effectively and humanely with women offenders. However we remain concerned about whether sufficient resources have been allocated. Without an adequate ring-fenced budget and a commission with the independent authority to drive forward the far-reaching changes envisaged, it is difficult to see how this blueprint for reform will be implemented.

As independent funders we have both evidence and insights to support the proposition that prison is not the best way of reducing women's offending and that community based rehabilitation projects are more effective.

We now wish to take part in constructive dialogue with the Ministry of Justice to consider how this new National Service Framework and Baroness Corston's overarching recommendations can be fully implemented; and in what way we can support such a strategic and principled development.

We look forward to hearing from you to see how we can work together to take this agenda forward.

Yours sincerely

Teresa Elwes
The Bromley Trust
Nicholas Tatman
Chair, LankellyChase Foundation
Martha Lane Fox
Founder and Chairman, Antigone

And on behalf of the following organisations:

Yves Bonaverio, Trustee, AB Charitable Foundation
Sara Harrity MBE, Director, AB Charitable Foundation
Rebecca King, Managing Director, Antigone
Jen McClelland, Trustee, Appletree Fund
Jean Ritchie QC, Trustee, The Bromley Trust
Bharat Mehta, CEO, City Parochial Foundation
Jane Streater, Trustee, Charles Hayward Foundation
David Brown, Administrator, Charles Hayward Foundation
Dr Astrid Bonfield, CEO, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund
David Gold, Chair, Glimmer of Hope (UK)
Lady Rachel Billington, Trustee, The Longford Foundation
Elizabeth Shields, Chair, The Mary Kinross Charitable Trust
Fiona Adams, Trustee, The Mary Kinross Charitable Trust
Kevin McGrath, Trustee, The McGrath Charitable Trust
Mark Woodruff, The Monument Trust
Margaret Mayne, Chair, Nationwide Foundation
Lisa Parker, Chief Executive, Nationwide Foundation
Simon Buxton, Trustee, Noel Buxton Trust
Lady Jay of Ewelme CBE, Chair, The Pilgrim Trust
David Potter MA, PhD, FEng, CBE, Trustee, The David and Elaine Potter Foundation
Elaine Potter PhD, Trustee, The David and Elaine Potter Foundation
Angela Seay, Director, David and Elaine Potter Foundation
David Sanderson MBE DL, Director, The Rank Foundation
Gordon Roddick, Trustee, The Roddick Foundation
Lady Judy Moody-Stuart, The Wakefield and Tetley Trust
Rev. John N Wates, Chairman, The Wates Foundation
Brian Wheelwright, Director, The Wates Foundation
Lady Edwina Grosvenor, Trustee, The Westminster Foundation

Appendix 2

Funders of WDF1 and WDF2

WDF1

J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
Edwina Grosvenor
Paul Hamlyn Foundation.
LankellyChase Foundation (banker and signatory to the grant agreement with the MoJ)
The Monument Trust
The Pilgrim Trust (whose Director was Chair of the Grants Committee)
Rosa
The Wates Foundation

WDF2

Barrow Cadbury Trust
City Bridge Trust
The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund
J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
Guildford Academic Associates
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Charles Hayward
Anonymous Trust
LankellyChase Foundation
The Monument Trust
Northern Rock Foundation
The Pilgrim Trust
Saint Sarkis Charity Trust
The Wates Foundation

Appendix 3

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Julia Kaufmann, OBE, has spent 30 years working in the voluntary sector. As a campaigner and service provider in the role of Chief Executive of Gingerbread, as grant-maker in the role of Chief Executive of the BBC Children in Need Appeal, and (at different times) as a board member of the National Lottery Charities Board and Capacity Builders. She has been chair of a number of voluntary sector organisations and is currently chair of Eaves Housing for Women. Julia now works in a freelance capacity as a facilitator, capacity builder and evaluator.

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