



STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 – 2012

“I recommend acceptance of the offer made by The Griffins to act as a central repository for information for and about women who offend or are at risk of offending and to promote its use by others” Home Office (2007) *A Report of a Review by Baroness Jean Corston of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System.*

1. Introduction

This is the Strategic Plan and Business Plan for The Griffins Society, an independent charity whose overall purpose is to stimulate new thinking about women and criminal justice. Our objectives are to make a contribution to the debate about women and criminal justice by initiating research and promoting effective practice with women who are offenders or who are at risk of offending. This is so that the resettlement of women can be improved, and the over-reliance on imprisonment as a response to women who are caught up in the criminal justice system can be corrected. The Griffins Society aims to provide an informed voice for women in the criminal justice system.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to ensure a clear shared understanding among The Society, its stakeholders and partners, and other organisations interested in women in the criminal justice system about our aims and objectives, and how we will achieve them.

2. The Aims of The Griffins Society

The Society aims to generate new thinking about women and the criminal justice system to stimulate real improvements in practice. We conduct and disseminate research, and we work to ensure that research findings are applied in criminal justice work with women. We draw policy makers' attention to deficits in existing provision, and we make suggestions about how improvements can be made. Our Fellowships Programme provides a unique opportunity for people working in criminal justice to contribute to knowledge about women and the criminal justice system through research that they undertake in their workplaces. The Fellowships Programme research is influential: findings have been incorporated into government reviews, and innovative projects have been established to implement recommendations.

The Society also provides volunteering opportunities to women who are in custody or who have recently been released, often through our partnerships with other organisations. We enable an authoritative voice for women to be heard in criminal justice policy and practice development. These activities enable the Society to occupy a unique position as a provider of research that is practitioner led, yet academically scrutinised. Our research is enriched by the voices of women who are the subject of the criminal justice system's work.

3. The Griffins Society's history and structure

"The Griffins Society's contribution to the rehabilitation of women offenders... reveals a powerful initiative on the part of women in the voluntary sector to influence the penal system's traditional disregard of female offenders. Moreover, this endeavour pre-dates most contemporary efforts to raise awareness of the plight of females in the predominantly masculine world of deviance and punishment" (Rumgay, Judith (2007) *Ladies of Lost Causes: Rehabilitation, women offenders and the voluntary sector* Cullompton, Willan Publishing).

The Griffins Society was founded in 1965 by a group of volunteers at HM Prison Holloway. They had worked for the Holloway Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, which closed that year when the after-care of prisoners became part of the responsibilities of the probation service. The volunteers believed there was still a role for voluntary work with discharged prisoners so they formed The Griffins Society. The name was chosen because the old Holloway Prison had a statue of two griffins above the main gate. The griffin is the emblem of the City of London, whose Corporation built Holloway Prison.

During the next 30 years The Griffins Society provided hostel accommodation in London for women leaving HMP Holloway and secure psychiatric hospitals. However, by 1995, despite the hostels being successful and well run, the Society had come to the conclusion that the management of hostels had become a task that required increasingly high standards of specialist professional expertise that a small charity run by volunteers could not meet. The Society passed its hostels on to specialist accommodation providers and it focused on working for improvements in the resettlement of women offenders and women remanded in custody.

In 2000, The Society established The Griffins Society Visiting Research Fellowship Programme in partnership with the Mannheim Centre for Criminology at the London School of Economics. We also provide the Women's Information Network. This includes a searchable database of community-based provision for women and an index of research reports and publications.

4. Governance

The Society is governed by a board of trustees, the Council. Trustees include representatives of other voluntary organisations, academics with expertise in criminal justice and women's issues, ex service-users, and people who have served on high profile committees and governing bodies. The Society has three staff: a director, a research and information officer, and a part-time office manager. We have a small but active team of volunteers, most of whom are women serving prison sentences.

The Society's patrons are Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Angela Camber and Professor Frances Heidensohn.

5. The Society's values

Women who are caught up in the criminal justice system are a small minority in a system that is designed for men. The result of this is that the particular needs and circumstances of women offenders are often not reflected in the criminal justice system's work. For example, prison security procedures designed to ensure men are properly contained are often unsuitable when applied in women's establishments. The way in which women are an add-on in the system is reflected in the difficulty that criminal justice structures have in meeting

women's mental health, maternity, family, offending-related and emotional needs. The Griffins Society works to achieve a better understanding of how women can be more effectively enabled to avoid offending, and how their particular circumstances can be better understood.

The Society believes that this work should wherever possible take place through productive partnerships among criminal justice agencies and other voluntary organisations. The work of organisations in the women and criminal justice realm is most effective when conducted collaboratively rather than competitively. We aim to ensure that The Society's work takes place without unfair discrimination on the basis of women's race, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, level of educational attainment, or age.

6. The current context

"Of course it is right that the judiciary should jealously guard its independence from government and the executive. But that does not mean that it should ignore the concerns expressed by others about the trends for which its decisions are responsible. The family justice system is asking itself whether it is indeed unjust to fathers. The criminal justice system could also ask itself whether it is indeed unjust to women" (Lady Justice Brenda Hale DBE, quoted in the Fawcett Society report *Engendering Justice: from policy to practice. Final report of the Commission on Women and the Criminal Justice System 2009*).

The political, social and criminal justice context in which The Society currently operates has a number of features that are of relevance to this Strategic Plan. It may be a time when economic uncertainty and recession are increasing competition among charities for funding, but trends in criminal justice do illustrate the need for The Society to extend its work and influence. These trends included until recently a steady increase in the use of short prison sentences for women, most often for offences of dishonesty and for breach of community penalties. The continued hardening of government approaches to crime and justice is signalled by the NOMS Director General's statement that the only new money being made available in the system in the next few years will be for increasing prison service capacity (Phil Wheatley, NOMS Director General speaking at the NOMS Race and Equalities Action Group Conference, 23 March 2009). This is despite research evidence that there may be less public support for punitive approaches to offending, and women's offending in particular, than is sometimes assumed (Smart Justice opinion poll quoted in Prison Reform Trust Bromley Briefings *Prison Fact File 2008*).

The Government's approach towards women in the criminal justice system is characterised by tolerance of punitive approaches that allow a steady increase in the use of custody. Nevertheless there is also a commitment to improving the position of vulnerable women. This is evident in the Government providing funding for some very specifically defined alternatives to custody. The 2007 report by Baroness Jean Corston, *Review of Women with Particular*

Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System, recommended that the Government should develop plans to replace existing women's prisons with small, geographically dispersed multiple function custodial centres. The Government has not accepted this recommendation, but the Ministry of Justice is funding bail support and women's centres to the extent of £15.6 million with the aim of reducing the number of women going into custody. This provides an opportunity for The Society to influence the development of effective alternatives to custody for women. With a reduction in the scope of the Fawcett Society's criminal justice policy work about women, there is an opportunity for The Griffins Society to pick up the recommendations of their 2009 Commission on Women in the Criminal Justice System. This would help connect these recommendations with the criminal justice developments that are currently being funded.

Under recent equalities legislation, public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality, including since 2007, gender equality in service provision. Despite the production of Prison Service Order 4800 and the National Service Framework for Women, there is still no guidance on the commissioning of services for minority groups such as women (HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2009) *Race relations in prisons: responding to adult women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds*). This suggests a need to ensure that services are kept under review, and that research findings should be combined with practice experience to inform the evaluation and improvement of services to women in the criminal justice system. "The Government recognises the value of the diversity of organisations in the sector in providing choice for under-represented groups, in campaigning for change, in creating strong, active and connected communities, in promoting enterprising solutions to social and environmental challenges and in transforming the delivery and design of public services. The third sector has always been at the heart of social and environmental change and the Government wants to continue to work to create the conditions where organisations can grow and achieve their aims" (HM Treasury and Cabinet Office (2009) *The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report Cm7189*).

The Griffins Society is in a uniquely strong position to inform the debates about these matters. We combine a strong academic approach to the design and conduct of research with the practitioner focus that our research Fellows bring. This, in turn, is complemented by the insights provided by our volunteers, most of whom are ex-offenders with recent first-hand experience of the criminal justice system.

7. A review of The Society's recent work:

The Griffins Society Visiting Research Fellowships Programme

Since 2001 The Griffins Society has provided the Griffins Visiting Research Fellowships Programme in partnership with the Mannheim Centre for

Criminology at LSE. The aim of the Programme is to provide 'thinking space' for people working in the criminal justice system or related fields who wish to research a particular aspect of the treatment of women offenders in the UK. At the end of their Fellowship year, Fellows prepare a report on their research findings. The Society disseminates each report and posts them on The Griffins Society web site. A number of Fellowship reports have stimulated innovative new projects in the criminal justice system. For example, our recent Sex Workers in Prison project, which attracted Prison Service funding and which developed from a Fellowship research project. So far ten Fellows have successfully completed the Programme.

Women's Information Network

WIN is a database of projects and services all round the UK that help women in the criminal justice system. It is searchable by anyone who has basic computer skills and who has access to the internet. It is provided and maintained by the Society and it is available free of charge. WIN is used by the Prison Service whose booklet *Supporting Women Who Have Been Affected by Violence or Abuse: Guidelines for Staff and Directory of Services* is based on it. WIN also contains a searchable database of recent research reports and publications about women in the criminal justice system.

Serving prisoners' volunteer programme

The Society provides volunteering opportunities for women in custody who can establish a work record and a reference by volunteering while they are still serving their sentence. The volunteering programme is currently being extended by our support for Transitions for Women, a partnership that offers women in prison voluntary work placements with community groups and businesses.

LSE Intern Programme

The Society has set up an Intern Programme with the LSE whereby MSc Criminology students with particular interests in women can do voluntary work for The Society, usually research, while they study. The Programme continues to attract strong candidates from LSE and many previous interns maintain contact with us after their internship ends.

A profile of a woman in prison who has recently volunteered with The Griffins Society:

Maureen was 38 years old when she was sentenced to twelve years in prison. She said she will never forget the day when customs officers followed her into the toilets at work and told her she was under arrest for conspiracy to import and supply class A drugs.

Maureen had met her boyfriend who she had been dating for six months that summer. At first he was really nice to her, picking her up after work, taking her out for meals, and buying her presents. Little did she know that he was grooming her to become one of his 'girls' who helped him supply drugs. He also introduced her to crack cocaine, and it was then her life began to spiral out of control. By the time she realised what she had got herself into, it was too late: he threatened her that if she did not help him he would tell social services she was taking drugs and that she was an unfit mother.

There were still two of her four children at home at the time of her arrest – Tom who was twelve years old and Lilly, who was three. They both went off to school and nursery that morning never dreaming that their mum would not be at home when they returned. The first her son knew of his mum's fate was when his aunt, Maureen's sister, opened the door when he arrived home after school. With Tom being older, he understood everything that was going on and he told his mum not to worry, he would be 'man of the house' while she was away and look after his younger sister with his aunty. But Tom's trauma did not end there. Two months into his mum's remand, social services came and took his younger sister Lilly away. Lilly and Tom had different fathers, and because Maureen and Lilly's dad did not get on, Lilly had little contact with him and did not want to go and live with him. Her dad had applied to the Family Court, who had granted him an interim order. That was five years ago and Maureen is still having problems seeing her daughter, battling with the court and her ex-partner for access rights.

Maureen will soon be eligible to apply for parole and she has just completed five months voluntary work with The Griffins Society to enable her to gain more work skills and establish an employment record. She has made an excellent contribution as a volunteer, while also balancing the stressful complexities of completing her prison sentence, dealing with her family problems, keeping in contact with her children, negotiating the parole system, and starting the process of applying for employment. Her experience typifies the reality of the lives that many women face when caught up in the criminal justice system, and these are some of the issues that The Griffins Society works to address.

8. Funding

Running costs of The Society amount to about £85,000 per year and this is currently met out of investment income and by drawing on reserves. However, there is now a negligible return on investments. This situation is unsustainable and The Society must now raise income. A separate Fundraising Strategy will work alongside this Strategic Plan.

9. The Society's strategy for 2009 – 2012

Overall aims:

The Society's purpose is to stimulate new thinking about women and criminal justice that will help lead to significant improvements in the way it works with women who offend, are imprisoned, or are remanded in custody. During 2009 to 2012, The Society will achieve this purpose by:

- Maintaining our current Visiting Fellowships Research Programme and improving the dissemination of Fellows' research reports
- Establishing a similar programme for women in prison, in the form of a Griffins Society Research Studentships Programme
- Improving the WIN database by a) working with other partners to improve and develop the database of women's resources; and by b) engaging more MSc criminology students to maintain the publications database. This objective will enable The Society to consolidate our position that is, as the Corston Report recommended, a 'central repository' of information about women in the criminal justice system
- Explore the potential for establishing new research partnerships with academic institutions and research organisations to strengthen The Society's influence in criminological research concerning women
- Hold a major conference each year to highlight recent research about women and the criminal justice system.

Specific objectives:

9.1 Fundraising

- Write and implement a Fundraising Strategy
- Evaluate some recent Griffins Society projects to showcase our recent work and to enhance The Society's credibility with potential funders
- Produce a printed wallet in which the Annual Report, this Strategic Plan, the Fundraising Strategy and other literature produced in connection with funding applications can be attractively presented.

9.2 Griffins Fellowships Programme

Maintaining current work -

- Investigate options for renewing the Fellowships contract with LSE or moving it to another academic establishment such as Kings College London
- Through the Fundraising Strategy, set up sustainable funding for the Fellowships

New projects and developments -

- Identify voluntary organisations that might support, be involved with, or learn from Fellows' research early in each year's Fellowship Programme
- Establish a plan for disseminating and publishing Fellows' research papers, to become operational in this current academic year
- Arrange at least one annual seminar each year, to which all relevant independent and statutory organisations will be invited, to disseminate findings from Fellows' research
- Investigate the potential for regional events to disseminate Fellowships research, with the possibility of sponsorship by statutory criminal justice agencies
- Tie-in the Fellowships with our annual conference programme so that the conference will become a means of disseminating research
- Evaluate the Fellowships Programme each year, to include follow-up of each Fellow and their research after a period of two years to assess the extent to which the research has influenced policy and practice
- Establish ways in which findings from Fellowships (and Studentships) can be taken forward in pilot projects. The Society will initiate these, then hand them over to other providers when successfully accomplished.

9.3 Griffins Studentships Programme

- Work up a detailed proposal for a Griffins Studentships Programme with City University, to be piloted in the 2009/10 academic year
- Ensure that opportunities for synergy are created by linking the dissemination of Studentships research findings with the dissemination of Fellowships research
- Establish an advisory group for the Studentships Programme
- Ensure the Studentships programme is fully funded.

9.4 Public profile

New projects and developments –

- Enhance The Society's image by the adoption of a new logo and strap line that will be used in improved publicity materials
- With key partners, hold a conference in 2009 on the theme of 'The Corston Report: two years on' to promote The Society's work, particularly among the academic community and criminal justice policy makers

- Improve the media profile of The Society through issuing at least two press releases on a) the conference and b) a Fellow's research paper; and securing publicity as a result
- Establish a panel of women willing to talk in public or write about their experience of imprisonment.

9.5 Academic, research, and policy profile

Maintaining current work -

- In conjunction with LSE, devise and implement a strategy for the dissemination of Fellows' research papers, to include publication of Fellows' research in academic or practitioner journals and on-line

New projects and developments -

- Use the research project with London Probation on Asian women's experiences of community penalties as a project that showcases The Society's competence as a research organisation
- Set up a system to regularly scan web sites and relevant publications to improve the scope and accuracy of the WIN database of publications
- Set up an arrangement with Leicester University for Masters students to complete their dissertations on an issue that is of relevance to The Society's work, and revive the existing arrangement with LSE
- Explore the case for re-establishing the Women's Reference Group.

9.6 International work

- Make contact with similar independent organisations in other countries to create an international reputation for The Society
- Establish at least one strategic partnership with a similar independent organisation in another EU state, to help secure EU funding for piloting a project to implement recommendations from The Society's research.

All the objectives specified here will be progressed through a Work Plan for The Society's staff to implement. For each objective, completion dates and key milestones will be identified.

10. Summary

This Strategic Plan sets out the purpose and aims of The Griffins Society, specifies a set of objectives to which we will work towards during the next three years, and provides a summary of some of The Society's recent work. The Griffins Society is committed to an outcomes-focused approach. This means that all our activities will be measured and evaluated in terms of our central aim, providing new thinking about women and criminal justice and an informed voice for women that can bring about real and necessary change in the criminal justice system.