



REPORT OF THE WOMEN'S RESEARCH AND POLICY EXCHANGE SEMINAR, 31 MARCH 2010 AT THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

INTRODUCTION: ROMA HOOPER, CHAIR OF THE GRIFFINS SOCIETY

This is the first Griffins Society Research and Policy Exchange Seminar, an idea which has been set up following the [GEO Women in Focus](#) events.

There are a number of strong themes that will come across from the Fellowships research we are presenting today:

1. Clear need for probation officers and practitioners to have positive relationships with offenders
2. Importance of taking a gender-specific approach, policy makers must recognize the need for women-only services. The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is designed around the needs of men and does not meet the needs of women offenders.

The key aim: reduction in the use of short-term prison sentences for women.

We will also hear about what the Youth Justice Board can do for Young Women.

Presentation 1:

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF GENDER-SPECIFIC PROVISION IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

Sue Matthews & Cath Smith [accompanying PPT]

Girls are labeled as being more difficult. Need to train staff to provide gender-specific services.

Eve; Pearl project

'What works' approach does not include women, young women and girls.

Youth Justice Board (YJB) 2009 report mentions an *ad hoc* approach to working with girls in youth justice system and notes

- 87% lack of attachment to education / training
- 20% cannabis users.

YJB must capture findings as part of quality assurance process. There is a lack of belief and understanding about female offending. Often it is said that there are not enough girls and young women in the system to justify gender-specific interventions but in Nottinghamshire there are 80 girls supervised by the YOTs, which seems enough. Main obstacle is attitude of managers; gender is not high on priority list, no money for training. The claim is that there's not enough girls coming through to justify training on needs of girls.

Investment in gender specific training

There is a view that 'boys behavior is much more a normal part of adolescence' and a lack of trained motivated staff.

Flow Chart:

GEO – YJB – MANAGER BUYin – INVESTMENT IN GENDER SPECIFIC TRAINING – TRAINED MOTIVATED STAFF – GENDER CHAMPION – GENDER SPECIFIC GROUPS/INTERVENTIONS – PROMISING OUTCOMES (back to manager buy-in) – see PPT

Suggestion: Named practitioner needed in each institution/service to take responsibility for gender.

Multi-modal gender specific provision in their study seemed to have more positive outcomes.

Environment is a key factor in ensuring girls felt safe.

Recommendations were made about:

- National policy
- Girls & young women's team
- Funding for a gender champion in every area
- Gender specific training
- Further research
- Gender specific training and assessment tools.

Presentation 2:

ATTACHMENT, THE SECURE BASE AND WOMEN'S RESETTLEMENT: OBSERVATIONS FROM THE WOMEN'S TURNAROUND PROJECT (TWTP)

Leeanne Plechowicz [accompanying PPT]

John Bowlby – childhood attachment, founding father of theory.

Leeanne interviewed 9 clients / 6 key workers / used quantitative data / observations / SSIs.

Successful outcomes were achieved where there were small caseloads, staff maintained professional boundaries, managing transfer of cases, successful resettlement.

Future research should look at whether addressing attachment needs decreases risk of reoffending.

Recommendations for TWTP: small caseloads, transfer minimization, voluntary service

Recommendations for other agencies: reduce caseloads; introduce one stop shops.

TWTP now

Drop in centre; dramatic increase in staffing; increased caseloads; waiting lists; satellite office.

Presentation 3:

DOUBLE INVISIBILITY: RECALLED & FEMALE – AND FORGOTTEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Rev Rosie Deedes [no PPT]

Rosie is a prison chaplain. She researched women going into prison on licence recall. Reasons given for recall seemed somewhat insubstantial. Looked at whether a particular group of women was being recalled.

7 women interviewed in HMP Downview in Mar-Apr 2009. Also contacted offender managers.

The literature review showed that there is very little research on recall – male or female.

Between 2005/06 and 2006-07 = 58% increase in recall. Between 2007-08 = 30% increase.

Why is this not being looked at to reduce the overall cost of the prison service?

Less sympathy and support from public?

Why have recalls increased recently? Criminal Justice Act 2003 (introduced 2005) made it easier to recall prisoners but lack of protective factors.

Findings

Interviewed 2 sex workers = nocturnal lifestyle; difficulty attending appointments

Common factors: estranged children; engaged in care process themselves, trust issues with authority. Most described circumstances of abuse.

Chaotic offenders were given more appointments, rather than less, which seemed setting them up to fail. Is being chaotic justification for recalling someone to prison? When faced with women with complexities, some are given more conditions – is that setting women up to fail?

All 7 interviewees had been homeless at some point. Homeless offenders were given more appointments by probation. It seems harder to place women, especially those with violence on record. It was said that it is easier to place a male paedophile than a violent woman. Reasons included lack of funding, small numbers, negative attitude towards women who offend. One woman was held for 14 months based on allegation, had never missed appointment.

Struck by neediness: all had drug/alcohol issues, all 7 described mental health issues, 2 personality disorder, 3 suicide attempts, low boredom thresholds, limited ability to make positive lasting relationships. Poor self image, pessimistic about changing.

6/7 recalled within 3 months, 2/7 within 2 weeks. Why? Conditions of licence: complex document, difficult to explain especially when distracted at end of sentence. Call back based on allegations, investigated once back in custody... All women did not understand recall in terms of risk of re-offending.

Recommendations

- Further research; collation of accurate statistics
- Simplify licences (take into account level of literacy), make conditions offender specific
- Review risk avoidance approach (unfairly targets neediest offenders)
- Only recall if serious risk to public

- Allow representation against recall
- Target interventions and support
- Provide consistent support for those at risk of recall
- Use welfare support model when appropriate
- Encourage additional research compare male/female.

Q&A DISCUSSION

Debbie Cowley, Action for Prisoners Families:

Q: Interested in importance of attachments, talked about perceptions of women being more needy, did you (Leeanne) conclude that they are more needy or is that just a perception?

A: Leanne - I didn't interview men, so cannot comment on whether women are more or less needy, but they all seemed needy. Reading cases and literature it is certainly an issue. Some research that women are influenced more.

Dr Sue Rex, Head of Offender Engagement, NOMS East of England

Q: Theme that has come out throughout: high level of chaos. What kind of support should practitioners give offenders? Some practitioners may think they are offering more support but may inadvertently be setting women up to fail...

A: Sue Matthews said: the girls become the adult women highlighted by other Fellows. Clear lack of understanding, staff should be trained to understand criminogenic needs of girls. At the moment, 'what works' research is provided which is predominantly based on male offending.

A: Cath Smith said: why don't we have something like the Turnaround project for girls? We've talked about having a girls' centre. One of the issues in running gender-specific programmes is if they're delivered in a youth offending environment they're very superficial and associated with court orders, as opposed to safe community space. If it is separate and safe, the outcomes are better.

A: Leeanne Plechowicz said: often TWTP receive referrals direct from prison and can help with immediate concerns upon release. Having that relationship with a probation officer who can understand the chaos, having time to build that attachment and be able to start to help unpick things is really important.

A: Roma Hooper said: to be able to engage on sentences for young women, to recognize complexities and inform magistrates and probation because they

don't know, there is a gap between what is perceived and what is happening on the ground. We need to involve magistrates so that they know.

Lesley Fraser, Clinks

Q: What's coming out for me is the importance of key relationships which aren't bound by statutory requirements, that aren't affected by aberrations and behaviour through periods of recall and resettlement so that there is a stable attachment throughout journeys which we all know are not smooth.

A: Rosie Deedes said: probation officers are often relocated to new areas so it's very difficult to build up a positive relationship. Some women were really frightened by probation and the risk of recall, so something like TWTP has a better starting point for building a trusty relationship. Plus funding issues.

A: Leeanne said: there are many things probation can do to take skills from TWTP and be allowed to the work that every probation officer wants to do when they go into the service, but others cannot be done, as they have to recall at times and report to court. TWTP gives women space to engage and they can be involved for as long as they want. Knowing that TWTP is always there for them is really key, even though some women reported positive relationships, they were also aware that the relationship would come to an end.

John Thornhill, Chairman, Magistrates' Association

Q: It is a concern to magistrates, funding is often not available for diversion from custody. There is also a disconnect between all the agencies involved. It's striking that we are listening to positive and really good projects for offenders who have gone a long way down the offending road. I dealt with a young lady aged 19 who had failed to comply with anything – how do I address that? Another woman who had 43 convictions, only 3 custodial... when do we put money into offending behaviour? I believe we don't put it in soon enough, perhaps the sixth or seventh offence. Drinking and drugs, shoplifting, in Liverpool it's also related to prostitution. Is there any underlying cause and can I intervene now? I'm prepared to issue a conditional discharge if I can make a referral including to voluntary agency. Until the offender wishes to change, whatever we do it will not be effective. The other issue for me is that very often you and I in the CJS are left to clear up mess caused elsewhere... why are we not tackling those issues elsewhere? A recent case I had there was a child 6 months old, the mother was 16 in prostitution, grandmother 32 also a prostitute, great grandmother still actively a prostitute. If you want to legalise prostitution, and I know many of my colleagues would have no problem with that, what is the point in fining

someone? Incidentally, I was stopped the day after fining a woman £30, she offered me sexual services for £20 the next day. We need to tackle the underlying issues.

A: Sue Matthews: the youngest girl we've worked with was aged 10. Preventative work is really important. Constant confusion to us, we don't understand why money isn't put into young girls, so much money goes into adult women diversion. Why don't we start early diverting them as young women and teenagers? 40+ girls in one service area is more than enough, but the money just isn't there. We have adapted what is currently there because there isn't enough money in the training budget. We have to work in a non-discriminatory way, or pay out of our own pockets but there needs to be an investment to stop them getting to that point.

A: Roma: the money has to come from government and we've been championing that.

Will McMahon: Chair of Care Leavers Association

Q: How many care leavers were in your samples?

A: Cath Smith: Pink Project - 1 girl was currently in care. 25% have history of being looked after, up to 71% have history of contact with social services.

A: Will McMahon: YJB report number was that 50% are in care. It's an enormous issue relating directly to attachment, we can start putting together research proposals. In US, prison is called 'concrete mama'. People going through the care system, which puts them on the agenda, people with very traumatised backgrounds do something we [society] don't like and then we punish them.

A: Cath Smith: if a young person is going into custody, we hold a case review, as social workers it is our responsibility if they have done something and are being punished. For young people who are extremely vulnerable who have gone through very traumatic circumstances then they are fast-tracked through the system.

ACHIEVING CHANGE – NEXT STEPS

Jackie Lowthian, Griffins Trustee & National Policy Manager, NACRO

We need to continue to commission independent research and continue to fund practitioners to conduct research. Need to focus on youth and young people; policy and investment in young girls with management buy-in. For all of us, what do we

do to bring these changes about? Leeanne has talked about attachment, and Rosie about recall – entirely depressing to hear about this. The voluntary sector has a specific role, each presentation talked about engagement, continuity, sustainability. On the one hand you have the enforcement role, on the other support from voluntary sector. We need more evaluation, we need to evidence results and outcomes.

From a sentencing perspective, TWTP is a wonderful highlight, the Together Women Project we've got, new initiatives are being funded, but if they are to be sustained we need local commissioning and its not just criminal justice sector – it's a whole range to address the chaos and social exclusion that exists in people's lives. It's all about funding and sustainability. With regard to Rosie's point about recall and breach, Nacro did small piece of research in 2008 about recall and came out with very similar things.

Bigger picture: we've got the opportunity with a new government coming to think about what to do. National audit report on short-term sentences concluded that they are waste of money. Alan Duncan mentioned the need for a rehabilitation revolution recently. In the early months of the new government, we need to use our influence, authority and knowledge to get women on the agenda.

Recently, there was a major event 'Eaves Women's Question Time' which was saying that the women's vote is key. Gender Equality Duty: this legislation provides us with tool to ask, 'is there gender specific work? Are women being factored in?' 4266 women were in prison at the end of March 2010. The number was static for a long time. The numbers are coming down and there is commitment that they come down further, but how do we achieve that together? Keep working with the Ministry of Justice colleagues and use our influence.

FUTURE FELLOWSHIPS RESEARCH

Peter Dunn, Director of Griffins Society

Summary of other Fellowships' findings from last year...

1. TWO WAY PROCESS: PERSONALITY POWER AND PARTNERSHIPS

Pip Tibbetts

Pip explored how voluntary sector partnerships and probation in West Yorkshire were addressing the needs of offenders. Partnership work was a challenge for some voluntary agencies, expected to work in a way that was different for their usual ethos. Pip sets out how these challenges were overcome. Services such as TWP

were not always made available, referral depended on the level of interest from offender managers. Qualities were variable, worsened by a focus on prioritising high risk offenders leaving limited time for work with low risk chaotic offenders. Nevertheless Pip shows in her report how well the system can work in West Yorkshire, so the message is positive – such difficulties can be overcome.

2. EVALUATION OF FREEDOM PROGRAMME

Lucy Watkins

Despite enthusiasm of prison service staff, they were not sufficiently trained or supported to address the difficult issues evoked by domestic violence. Showed how transfer of a programme into the prison environment requires substantial revision and staff training. Concern has been raised by Griffins to NOMS, NOMS have re-issued guidance to prisons on safeguards and facilitator training. They are exploring provision for women in custody affected by domestic violence.

Peter also set out the projects that are the subject of the current Fellowships Programme

28 April 2010 is the closing date for 2010-11 Griffins Fellowships applications.

GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY FOR DIVERTING WOMEN AWAY FROM CRIME

Frances Flaxington, Head of Criminal Justice Women's Strategy team, Ministry of Justice

We know the profile of women is different, for women as victims, women as sex workers. Maria Eagle has driven forward the women's agenda. Ministry of Justice funding: in response to Corston findings. Everyone today has mentioned relationships, need for holistic support. Calderdale: one of longest standing projects, includes specialist seconded staff holding appointments in community projects. Probation is critical, NOMS are being held to account, being asked what is being done to promote women's centres.

Judiciary: Ruth Dratkin (Anawim board) Judge on recent IWD conference. Additional funding, more of a joined up approach...

Early intervention: young women and working on conditional cautioning is an example of joined up approach... Launching 1 April, family intervention approach into case management approach, 25 local authority projects who recognize by

supporting women they are helping to support children, solid developments in health.

TWP evaluation: to get Ministry of Justice money, had to argue that figures that would add up, we want to give you the killer stats – to save child poverty, health inequalities, social exclusion.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Roma: Fantastic opening seminar, lots of ideas for policy-relevant research and practical action. We need to create further opportunities for Frances to attend, share practitioner info etc.

The Griffins Society

April 2010.