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THE   
GRIFFINS  
SOCIETY

**SWIP**  
**SEX WORKERS IN PRISON**

## **PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT**

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## **Louise Clark, Griffins Society**

Louise Clark managed the Sex Workers in Prison (SWIP) project from October 2007 - April 2009. SWIP was an information development and training pilot to enable prisons to better support street sex workers in their care. Louise developed the project from her Griffins Fellowship research paper: *Provision of Support for Imprisoned Adult Female Street-based Sex Workers* (2006) when undertaking research with the Mannheim Centre for the Study of Criminology & Criminal Justice, at the London School of Economics & Political Science.

Louise delivered SWIP in partnership with sex work projects and the National Offender Management Scheme (NOMS) Women & Young People's Group.

Prior to this, Louise worked at a women's prison for Nacro for 3 years, co-ordinating the Voluntary Sector support services, where she also helped develop the prison's community work placement programme, co-wrote the Stage 2 Resettlement Unit business case and was a member of the Juvenile Unit development steering group. She sat on the Southwest Accommodation Gateway development committee and the Southwest NOMS VSO Commissioning Forum.

Louise is an associate member of the UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UK NSWP) and a member of their policy committee; a member of the Howard League for Penal reform; and an associate of Gibran, a not for profit organisation that supports Welsh women ex-offenders. She volunteers with a sex work project outreach service in Bristol.

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## Introduction

'Pathway 9: Support for Women Prisoners who have been involved in Prostitution' identifies the need for prisons to work with specialist sex work projects to address the support needs of this group of women.

Aimed at both practitioner and academic audiences, this paper reports on research undertaken by the Griffins Society to assess a training programme that was rolled out under Pathway 9 to raise awareness amongst prison staff of the support needs of street sex workers in their care.

This paper evaluates the training and provides recommendations for future improvements.

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In 2007, Baroness Jean Corston published her report on a *Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*. The report made 43 recommendations for improving the approaches, services and interventions for women in the criminal justice system and women at risk of offending. Prisons address the support needs of those in their care through the Reducing Re-offending pathways; these pathways cover issues such as accommodation, health, and children and families. Corston endorsed the two additional pathways for the female prison population, which had been introduced by the Women and Young People's Group through the publication of their Strategy and Resource Guide for the Resettlement of Women Prisoners (Spring 2006). One of the new pathways was 'Pathway 9: Support for Women Prisoners who have been involved in Prostitution'. The pathway identifies the need for prisons to work with specialist sex work projects to address any support needs the women may have.

In 2006, The Griffins Society published the paper *Provision of Support for Imprisoned Adult Female Street-based Sex Workers* (Clark, 2006), which made a number of recommendations on developing the knowledge base of prison staff and challenging negative attitudinal response towards sex workers in prisons. These recommendations were used to form the basis of the SWIP project.

The aims of the project therefore were to break down those barriers that may prevent the women accessing support, by introducing staff training on what support services are available, what support needs were and addressing negative attitudinal responses to disclosure.

This report will do the following: 1) explain the nature of the SWIP project, 2) report on the evaluation of the project and assess the impact of the training on prison staff and projects, and 3) suggest recommendations for future practice.

## Background to SWIP

The research paper *Provision of Support for Imprisoned Adult Female Street-based Sex Workers* (Clark, 2006) found that many prison-based staff were unaware of the needs of, and issues faced by, women involved in the sex industry who were now in the custodial system. The research interviews of prison staff, sex work project staff and sex workers in and out of custody, showed many gaps in knowledge and flaws in communication within prisons, which could result in even the support that was available in prisons not being accessed by the women. The findings also highlighted support needs that the women identified, but were not being met. The data that was gathered gave a clear indication that even knowledge amongst prison staff that there may be sex workers in their care varied, with one Governor stating that he had no sex workers in his prison. This belief does not reflect the demographic profile of women in prison and, even without exact figures, extrapolation from data such as the Bromley Briefings should indicate to Governors that they are highly likely to have women in their care who have been involved in sex work. Sex workers may not be very 'visible' because they are not in custody for prostitution, but often for non-payment of fine or breach of an Anti Social Behaviour Order relating to prostitution or for other offences e.g. theft or drug related. Nor may they choose to disclose their involvement in sex work or even identify that they are a sex worker, even if they have been involved in transactions of exchanging sex for money, drugs, accommodation, etc.

Where awareness did exist amongst prison staff on the existence of sex workers in their care, their thoughts on what support may be required was very insightful and valuable. But as there was a lack of awareness training in prisons, some staff were left to their own, ill-informed opinions of sex workers. As one staff member pointed out: "It could lead to pre-judgements". There was very occasionally a sense of dismay at the behaviour of women who sold sex as commerce. Unexpectedly, this was exhibited by a sexual health nurse and, whilst not representative of the majority, highlighted at the time a need for awareness training to be developed. The nurse referred to a sex worker as "a real scuzbag". She said that the woman had asked for condoms on the day prior to her release, and that "staff knew full well she was going to go out and use them that night". The

staff member was not aware whether the woman was issued with condoms. This minority attitude did not reflect the main findings, that whilst there may be gaps in staff knowledge, it was not because of an imbedded negative attitude. Staff said that they recognised there may be a stereotypical attitude but that they were “just beginning to learn about the subject [of sex work]” (prison officer). There were also staff who thought that this could be compounded because there may be some embarrassment for colleagues to discuss the issue either with each other or with the women in their care. So, whilst there were exceptions, staff often exhibited professionalism in their judgements and expressed generally positive and supportive attitudes towards the sex workers in their care. The example given of a negative response to a sex worker, underlined the misleading assumption that health staff may respond more appropriately to disclosure than prison officers and showed that any awareness training should be available to all staff working in prisons.

At the time of this initial study, 15 prisons were contacted and none that responded (10) had a policy or definitive strategy for meeting the needs of sex workers. None of the prison staff had received any awareness training on sex work. However, whilst the majority of the sex work projects did not have specific funding for work in prisons or formal partnership agreements, many delivered regular support and wanted to deliver more services to women in prison. All prisons wanted more services, better links and higher awareness and all sex workers wanted staff to have more awareness and to provide more information on support services they could access. It was apparent from the research that there was significant scope to improve training and practice in prisons, and to increase women’s access to specialist support organisations.

Several of the main recommendations from the study were taken forward by NOMS and, in partnership with The Griffins Society, were developed into the Sex Workers in Prison project, which is outlined in the following chapter.

## SWIP Training Programme

The SWIP training programme was developed in 2007 as an eighteen month pilot project in five women's prisons to provide staff training and information development. Working in partnership with sex worker support projects in the community (some of which already provided support in prison), SWIP had three objectives:

1. Raising prison staff awareness via training on issues relating to sex work.
2. Development of partnerships between prisons and sex work support projects.
3. Development of a directory of specialist support services linked to the prisons.

The awareness training was delivered to each of the prisons by the SWIP Project Manager through a cascade system, which aimed to develop a pool of trained prison staff, who would then go on to be trainers in partnership with local sex worker support project staff.

### *Training Aims*

Four specific aims under-pinned the training:

- First, to raise awareness among prison staff about the realities and effects of street based sex work.
- Second, to help prison staff become more confident in responding to disclosures of participation in street sex work.
- Third, to encourage consistent, supportive and informed responses from prison staff to women's disclosure of involvement in street sex work, fostering a more supportive environment for serving prisoners looking for either routes out of prostitution or wanting to work more safely.
- Fourth, to raise the profile of, and foster organisational relationships with, the local community-based support agencies who work specifically with this group of women.



The project had specific learning outcomes relating to attitude awareness, understanding risk, how to respond to disclosure, promoting a non-judgemental perspective, awareness on the role and services of specialist sex work projects, provide up-to-date resources, and the future dissemination of the core messages contained in the training by the participants to their colleagues.

### *Participation of Prisons and Projects*

The Project Manager contacted the pilot prisons and sex work projects with the SWIP brief and invited participation. Prisons and projects signed a service level agreement and Governors agreed to pay the travel expenses of project staff who would be participating in the training delivery. Project staff were to co-facilitate training sessions with prison staff and this partnership work aimed to build relationships between the two sectors and to support the SWIP aims by encouraging the sharing of experiences and knowledge amongst the training deliverers on the subject of supporting sex workers.

### *Programme Content*

The four hour training programme consisted of a combination of group work, case study analysis, films made by sex workers about their lives and discussion workshops. Issues covered were: current government policy; the law and sex work; what is 'sex work' and who are sex workers; drugs, health and sex work; safer working; desistance and harm minimisation; responding to disclosure; good practice when supporting women. The impact of the training was assessed by a questionnaire of sixteen questions designed using Likert scale or preference statements. The anonymous questionnaire was administered before the training and again immediately afterwards in order to monitor impact and change in attitude and knowledge base. A feedback form on the training delivery and content was also used to enable future development of the training package.

### *Who Was Trained?*

Governors were invited to identify a member of staff who would be the point of contact for SWIP. They would be the liaison between the Project Manager and the prison and would help facilitate the SWIP sessions. Some were leading on Pathway 9 work, others were drug strategy managers or key health staff and other prisons identified a senior officer. Their initial role was to ensure that there was a

mix of gender, age and job role represented in the training sessions and amongst the staff to be trained as trainers. The delay in some prisons responding to and commencing the SWIP project meant a lower number of sessions took place than was initially envisaged and that the final five participating prisons differed from the ones that were originally identified. Of the five prisons contacted to engage in the training, only one responded to the first correspondence addressed to the Governor. The information that prisons cascaded to staff when identifying a person to fulfil the key liaison role, was not always adequate enough for the staff to fully understand what was required of them, so there was some delay in them moving the project forward in its initial stages.

In total, thirty-two prison staff were trained to be trainers and fifteen project staff from nine sex work projects co-facilitated training sessions. The prisons involved were HMP Drake Hall, HMP Eastwood Park, HMP Foston Hall, HMP Holloway, HMP Styal, and the projects were Anawim (Birmingham), Armistead (Liverpool), Lighthouse Project (Liverpool), MASH (Manchester), New Horizon Youth Centre (London), One25 (Bristol), Open Doors (London), Routes Out (Liverpool) and Women's Work (Derby).

Thirty-five training sessions took place across the five women's prisons and a total of 292 staff were trained. One hundred and fifty-eight staff completed 'before' and 'after' questionnaires. The sample based on occupation, gender and age is shown in Table One on the next page. (Sample data gathered up to December 2008).

Attendance at the training was largely left to self-selection. Interestingly, as can be seen from Table One, only 30 male staff attended SWIP training within the sample taken. The representation of wing staff is mainly attributed to two prisons. None of the Governor grades, all of whom were male, were in-charge Governors.

There was high representation amongst healthcare staff (this included mental health and sexual health staff) and also substance misuse staff, which included Short Duration Programme staff and Carats staff. Project staff encompassed voluntary and community sectors staff who worked both full-time and part-time within the prisons.

Training ran monthly or bi-monthly at four of the prisons. The attendance rate varied in prisons, with some regularly having small groups due to regime pressures, yet others were so well attended that one prison ran weekly training sessions. The maximum allowed in a training session was 16, but one prison consistently had less than 6 staff attend. There could be a range of likely reasons for this low attendance, staffing pressures and sickness were given in some instances. Notably, a prison's commitment to the training didn't appear to affect levels of attendance, as low and high attendance occurred both where training was imbedded in the training programme of the prison and where the liaison was involved in Pathway 9 development and therefore enthusiastic about the project.

**Table One: Sample by Occupation, Gender and Age**

Age	18-24		25-34		35-44		45-54		55-64		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
<b>Admin: Secretariat</b>		1						1			2
<b>Admin: Wing</b>				1		1		2			4
<b>Catering</b>						1					1
<b>Chaplain</b>										1	1
<b>Diversity</b>					2	1					3
<b>Education</b>				1		4		2		1	8
<b>Gate Staff</b>		1									1
<b>Governor Grade</b>					2		2				4
<b>Healthcare</b>		2		4		6		5		1	18
<b>Housing</b>				1				1			2
<b>Independent Monitoring Board</b>							1	1		1	3
<b>Industrial</b>						1		1			2
<b>Officer: Induction</b>	1		1	1	1	1					5
<b>Officer: Offender Management</b>		1		2	1	3		2			9
<b>Officer: Security</b>								1			1
<b>Officer: Wing</b>	2	2	1	4	6	8	1	5			29
<b>Probation</b>		1		3		1	2	3			10
<b>Psychology</b>		1		2		2		1			6
<b>Support Project</b>		2		7	1	7		3		1	21
<b>Snr Officer: Offender Management</b>				1		1			1	1	4
<b>Snr Officer: Wing</b>				1		1	2				4
<b>Substance Misuse</b>			1	4		6	2	6		1	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>158</b>

The training was advertised by the liaison staff in each prison and staff asked to attend or signed up under their manager's direction. There were some who wanted

to attend but were unable to at the time due to regime pressures. Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that non-participating staff held significantly different attitudes to those who did take part, it should be noted that the majority of participants requested to attend the training and this may mean that they had a greater interest in and knowledge about the subject matter than those who did not attend. Any interpretation of and generalisation about the following findings should bear this caveat.

## Evaluation of SWIP

This chapter provides findings to ascertain if SWIP met its three objectives: to raise prison staff awareness via training on issues relating to sex work, develop partnerships between prisons and sex work support projects, and develop a directory of specialist support services linked to the prisons.

Firstly, raising awareness is viewed via a sample of responses to questions from the pre and post-training questionnaires and the feedback form. There follows consideration of the training experience and its impact on the development of the partnership between prisons and projects. Finally, the aim to develop a directory is commented upon.

Where specific findings have led to a recommendation that is listed in the final chapter, the corresponding recommendation number is indicated in brackets.

### **Raising Awareness:**

#### *Sex Work and the Law*

In response to the question that probed what staff thought the relationship between sex work and the law should be, only 4% thought sex work should be illegal and prolific sex workers imprisoned. This dropped to 1% post-training. In comparison, 68% said women should be able to set themselves up as workers legitimately and pay tax. (Rec.6)

#### *Attitudes Towards Sex Workers*

Staff were asked to attribute words that reflected their view of sex workers. 'Vulnerable' remained high pre and post-training, with 'Victim' lessening slightly post-training. A high recognition of sex workers being 'Homeless' was only identified post-training and derogatory terms such as 'Dirty' and 'Scum' lessened, though were still included post-training by some staff, with 2% choosing 'Dirty' and 1% choosing 'Scum' as appropriate descriptive words.

### *Attitudes Towards Clients*

In looking at who the clients were, staff were asked to attribute terms that described their views. The most common words were: Male, Married, Lonely, and Professional. Identifying the client as employed rose from 50% to 73% post-training and within that increase was an identification of employment in a white-collar profession, showing awareness that the client-base is from a cross-section of the population. The motivations for purchasing sex as mainly attributed to a higher male sex drive or promiscuity, dropped post-training as other motivations were acknowledged. The diverse make up of the client group was further explored in a second question as detailed below.

### *Purchasing of Sex by Prison Staff*

Staff were asked to identify the percentage of prison staff they believed had purchased sexual services. 100 of the sample 158 staff believed their colleagues had purchased sex, with the majority believing 10% of prison staff had done so. At most, it was thought to be no more than 30% of staff had purchased sex. This figure was consistent pre and post-training. (Sex workers in two prisons alleged that in the past they had identified clients amongst some of the male prison staff where they were held, and in one instance alleged that in the past a member of staff had purchased sex whilst still wearing his uniform).

### *Awareness of Support Needs*

Data collected demonstrated that staff post-training were more aware that specific needs such as sexual health may be important, but that the women may also need help in other areas similar to the rest of the female prison population (e.g. issues around children and relationships). Staff only identified accommodation as being a high priority for sex workers post-training, whereas for the general female prison population they identified accommodation in the top three support needs from the start.

### *Response to Disclosure*

Staff were asked to give examples of incidents where they may have responded to disclosure in the past. They were asked post-training how they would respond in future. The majority stated pre-training that they gave some advice, but post-training the majority were able to be more specific with identifying strategies,

projects and the range of support available under all the Reducing Reoffending pathways that may be appropriate for the woman. (Rec.1,5&7)

They also indicated specific support around enabling the woman to access safer working information at release. (Rec.7-9)

#### *Awareness of Strategic Frameworks*

Staff's ability to identify strategies and services within their prison to support sex workers was encouraging, though Pathway 9 was not identified in training sessions at the start of the pilot project - probably as it had only recently been developed. Staff listed a vast range of courses, support services and needs analysis procedures. This expanded slightly post-training to incorporate issues such as legal advice, diversity/equalities work and community strategies that the prison could link with. (Rec.5)

#### *Awareness of Sex Work Projects*

The knowledge of what sex work projects could offer in the community also increased, with examples of self-defence courses, court diversion schemes and UglyMug systems (a violence reporting system) cited. (Rec.1&7)

#### **Experience of the Training and Impact on Partnerships:**

Overall, prison staff found the training to be extremely beneficial: 89% felt more confident to respond to disclosure, 77% had identified their own attitudes towards sex work and sex workers and over 50% now felt they had greatly increased their knowledge on desistance, harm minimisation and could now identify support needs and support services. Others stated that their knowledge base was already at a high level and felt therefore that there had not been an increase in that particular area.

Staff cited the film of sex workers talking about their experiences and what support they needed as being the most informative section, with identifying their [staff] own attitudes as being the second most useful element. The final section of the training brings together the learning, by asking staff to consider the actual (negative) response given to past disclosures of involvement in sex work (as recorded in the initial research) and to state how they would respond to the described incident.

One prison reported that uniformed staff were defensive about this section, as they did not feel it reflected their attitude or that of their colleagues. The trainer was supportive in explaining that it was to highlight the existence, however minimal, of some poor attitudes to disclosure. The trainer and staff were constructive in suggesting that it be moved to an earlier section of the training, so that the session would end on a more positive note. *(Rec.3)*

The experience of the prison staff liaising with the SWIP Project Manager and local community projects to facilitate the training was overall very good. Staff felt the Project Manager had communicated well and had been supportive in addressing any teething problems and in responding to requests for assistance and advice.

Staff at sex work projects have stated that whilst it is too early to say if any women they work with are aware of the training having taken place, they certainly think “over time, service to the women will improve out of the skills they [prison staff] have learnt”. Another project pointed out that they tell the women that the prison staff are being trained, so should they be imprisoned, some staff are aware of the support needs and will appropriately respond to disclosure.

Improving trust and communication between sex work projects in the community, sex workers and prison staff has been a positive outcome of SWIP. Some projects developed partnership agreements with prisons and others incorporated their role in co-delivering the SWIP training programme into existing agreements. *(Rec.1)*

However, there were some incidents that left projects frustrated. One project found that their linked prison failed to recognise their staff constraints and the limits on their availability and the prison demonstrated a dismissive approach to their requests to resolve the problems – these issues greatly impacted on the project’s desire to remain involved in SWIP. It should be noted that projects were at times also unaware of the pressures on prison regimes and did not always grasp the need for sessions to be booked well in advance. In another communication incident, the SWIP Project Manager and a project staff member were given conflicting information from the previous day as to items allowed into the prison under security procedures. When the project staff queried the difference in



information, the gate staff member leant into her face and with a raised aggressive voice stated “I am just doing my job”. The Project Manager and project staff found the approach unprofessional and reported it to a senior member of staff, who addressed the issue and the gate staff apologised and was highly professional when the project staff left the prison. *(Rec.1)*

The cultural difference between the two groups (prison and project) also came to the fore when a prison staff member felt a project trainer had been patronising towards them and believed that it was attributed to them being a uniformed member of staff. This occurred during an exercise where staff are asked to imagine they are a sex worker and one of the things they must do is suggest their name. The prison staff member had made up a light-hearted name, which often occurs in the exercise and highlights the stereotypical view people often hold on the subject and enables the trainers to challenge the ideas. However, the project worker was reported to have been more critical than constructive with their comments at the time. The liaison staff member has worked with the project to resolve this. *(Rec.1)*

The communication problems noted above, impacted negatively on training delivery, for example one prison was left with a gap in the training timetable whilst communication regarding dates was unnecessarily drawn out, and created additional pressures for all involved. But as detailed above, efforts were often made by project and prison staff to positively move working relationships forward.

The training did require a large amount of preparation for the sessions and communication was lacking on this at times, with training facilitators not having access to pre booked rooms and equipment, or not being informed that sessions were cancelled and only finding out when they arrived at the prison. Some prisons and projects amended the delivery times and length of the training to accommodate the regimes of the prisons and timetables of projects, but in all cases where this happened, there were always some staff that were unable to attend. Some staff could accommodate the training over a day and others were only able to commit the half day session. Future sessions may need to be run both as whole and half days to accommodate the prison regimes. The work commitments of both groups are such that training may always be affected by

staffing and resource constraints and it is not something that was unique to the experience of delivering the SWIP project. *(Rec.2&3)*

Communication between the prison and projects worked best when the training was championed by the liaison person and they took a vested interest in making sure it happened, liaising with the project staff and providing a welcoming and professional approach towards the projects. Overall, both prison and project staff report many incidents of a good working relationship, even when frustrations existed. This positive view was partly attributed to both groups having had a pre-existing working relationship meaning they were able to understand and acknowledge the challenges that existed for both groups. *(Rec.2&3)*

### **Development of Directory of Specialist Support Services:**

The networks developed via SWIP have helped identify many sex work projects that work directly with prisons, which is valuable information for staff and prisoners. The initial intention was to develop a full directory of these services, but a comprehensive resource produced by the UK NSWP detailing projects, already exists. The UK NSWP provided many hundreds of copies of their directory for staff and prisoners to use. Therefore the list collated via SWIP, will be used in conjunction with the directory as a tool to pinpoint the services that have identified that they work in prisons.

### **Additional Outcomes**

The collaborative work with sex work projects also enabled the Project Manager to share policy and development information from the sex work sector to the benefit of Pathway 9 developments and was fed into national Pathway 9 events in partnership with NOMS. *(Rec.5)*

The profile of the project grew significantly in its lifetime and was promoted via a regular newsletter that enabled prison and staff to advertise their work and services as well as reporting on the developments of SWIP. The Project Manager presented on the training initiative at a number of regional and national meetings and conferences, including regional NOMS forums. SWIP is cited as an example of good practice within a NOMS regional toolkit for commissioning services for

vulnerable women. The Department of Health commissioned the Project Manager to scope the need for a similar project for health staff and a report on this will be published shortly. (Rec.4)

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The Project Manager's experience was that the successes and frustrations, the highs and lows of the project, as expressed by the prison and project staff, were also experienced by her in setting up the project and in managing the delivery.

The following conclusion and final recommendations review if the project aims were met, suggests ways in which the successful elements can be developed further and looks at how the difficulties can be learnt from and addressed, so that ultimately women involved in sex work, who come into the care of a prison, will be treated with dignity and given the support and advice required to help them work safely and/or exit sex work.

## Conclusion

The conclusion developed from the findings, also reports on whether the aims of the project have been met. This will lead on to the recommendations.

With the continuing presence of sex workers in prison, Pathway 9 should be a robust and serious means of addressing the needs of this often hidden population. The training programme aimed to address any existing Prison staff's negative attitudinal responses by challenging the myths surrounding who the women and who the clients are. Information was given on the realities of working and aimed to help understanding of why women may not be able to or have no immediate desire to exit from sex work. It also highlighted that whilst some women may not wish to disclose, it is necessary to ensure that if women did disclose, appropriate responses and advice are available through sex worker support services and that an environment conducive to preventing an atmosphere of stigma or isolation for a sex worker in prison was nurtured. It is evident from the questionnaire evaluations and the feedback that the staff have benefited greatly from the training. The knowledge base, awareness of support needs and positive attitude to sex workers increased in all cases. The input from prison staff, projects and sex workers to the content of the training proved to be extremely informative and a model that would work well in any similar training. The findings suggest that the training aim to enable a generic awareness of sex workers support needs, and also a good knowledge of available sex worker support services, was achieved amongst those trained.

The discussions that took place in training sessions facilitated by the Project Manager, along with some of the questionnaire responses, clearly exhibit a supportive attitude by staff and this was also reflected in their desire to increase harm minimisation for the women they worked with, by their eagerness to use the resources on support projects and safer working advice provided through SWIP. The role of harm minimisation within Pathway 9 is expanded upon in the final chapter.

Overall, the project was very successful. The 3 objectives: to raise prison staff awareness, develop partnerships between prisons and sex work support projects, and develop a directory of specialist support services linked to the prisons, were

all achieved. Much of the success can be attributed to the high levels of enthusiasm and positive contribution by many of the participating projects and prisons. Therefore the continuation of the training across all women's prison would further benefit staff and contribute to Pathway 9 in effecting positive change for the women in their care (*Rec. 2&3*). This is listed as one of several recommendations that follow.

## **Recommendations**

A number of recommendations have emerged from the experience of delivering SWIP and from the evaluation of the programme. They are listed below.

### **1. *Partnership Work***

Partnership work has been central to the success of SWIP and is vital for providing expert knowledge to staff and in delivering specialist support to women both in prison and on release. Expanding the partnerships beyond merely provision of support into strategic alliances, and also developing new partnerships, can build high quality and sustainable support, assisting the reduction of reoffending and crucially, helping divert the more vulnerable women from returning to a custodial setting.

The more formalised integration of the role of external projects into Offender Management, can help address pressure points within partnerships and assist the awareness raising of cultural differences between the sectors. CLINKS Working in Prison training course, that many prisons run, can also benefit external projects in understanding security procedures and other regime issues that they may not be familiar with and which can cause unnecessary friction. To reciprocate, projects could consider a shadow day, where prison staff visit projects, see the work environment and learn what pressures the project staff may face in their daily work.

### **2. *Cascade Training***

The cascade model for delivering the training was established to enable peer training and to enable prison staff's first hand knowledge relating to prison regimes to be available. The size of the training pool was in response to the prisons' concerns that they would otherwise need to release the same few people regularly to run the sessions. However, the cascading of the training via prison staff did sometimes mean staff only delivered the training once in the pilot period and so did not have a chance to build up a familiarity with the training pack or enable the development of anecdotal content to make the training experience more varied

and engaging. The co-delivery with a sex work project provided expertise and this worked well. Future training would benefit from a smaller training pool in each prison or to simply be set up with one or two national trainers, but still delivering in partnership with a project local to each prison, to enable the provision of expert knowledge. The continuation of a central champion to steer and develop the training would help eliminate the small but often problematic issues that have at times hindered some elements of the delivery to date.

### ***3. Formalising and Developing the Training***

Embedding the training into annual training plans within the prison would enable a more formal and accountable commitment and also go some way in addressing poor attendance. One project stated “the sessions were very poorly attended, never exceeding more than five people. This was always as a result of people cancelling or just not turning up”. Regime pressures, particularly on uniform staff, can mean last minute cancellations for some staff, but this prison consistently had low turnout, despite a maximum capacity of sixteen per group. Prisons do use their own monitoring forms for training attendance, but this system was not made known to the Project Manager until sometime into the pilot and did not appear to be used by all prisons. One of the purposes of the prison monitoring is that managers are able to see at a later stage, if staff have retained knowledge from training session and demonstrated that they have implemented the new skills in their work. This is beneficial for evaluating the longer term impact of training. As the use of these forms was not known until after the training sessions had been developed, some sessions had to incorporate the completing of the forms within an already tight timeframe.

However, it is recognised that there are huge demands on prisons to provide training to their staff, which also needs to incorporate the staffing levels in relation to the regime requirements at that time. Low attendance to training session is certainly not a general indicator of lack of interest in the subject area(s).

SWIP should be developed further to meet the training needs of prison staff. Many stated they would benefit from a day-long course with more opportunity for discussion and sections on law to be expanded, with additional sections on indoor working, trafficking and migrant sex workers. Sex workers need to be integral to

developing this training further and should be afforded the opportunity to participate in training delivery.

#### **4. *More Training Audiences***

The offender journey experience can incorporate a wide range of criminal justice staff and agencies as well as third sector providers. If female offenders are to be assisted wherever they come into contact with that process, or indeed if they are simply at risk of offending, then a course model similar to SWIP should be developed to raise awareness across the board. This would give a consistent response to the women and continue the building of partnerships between providers from across the different sectors.

#### **5. *Pathway 9***

The ongoing development of Pathway 9 via a national framework of standards is essential. This would aid a generic strategy that would ensure consistent support to women should they move between prisons and would benefit sex work projects that provide 'in-reach' to multiple prisons. It would need to reflect the specific demographics of prisons that may hold a higher number of foreign nationals for example. Auditing of this framework needs to be robust and should include a national steering group that includes representation of sex work projects and sex workers. Continued formalisation of partnerships between agencies working with prisons under Pathway 9 and the incorporation of their role within their local prison's strategy, is vital for pathway development and can contribute to evidence based targets, which in turn can support the securing of resources.

The content on harm minimisation was responded to enthusiastically by those trained and should be a central element of the pathway strategy. As one member of prison staff said "Ten years ago we were debating whether or not we should tell women in our care about safer injecting, but we wouldn't question that now". Similarly, prisons should be confident now in championing approaches that ensure provision of information on safer working practices and advice to women on potential dangers, whilst supporting those who wish to exit. Projects collate information on clients who have been violent, under a reporting system called Dodgy Punters or UglyMugs. Rather than rely on women possibly accessing this information prior to release through linking with a project, some prisons are



already making formal arrangements with projects to share this essential information and prison staff are able to help women access the details, even if a project can't get to the prison before the release date (particularly if the woman is released early). As some women may work the day of their release, this could be vital and in some cases, life saving information that prisons can provide as part of their through the gate support. Incorporating protocols that formalise this arrangement into the strategy will create an effective strand in the pathway and reflect much of the learning from the development and delivery of the SWIP project.

Pathway 9 is very specifically in place to support women involved in prostitution. Whilst some of the women may need help in areas covered by other, if not all, of the remaining 8 pathways, Pathway 9 should be stand alone. It was introduced at the same time as Pathway 8: Supporting Women who have been Abused, Raped or who have experienced Domestic Violence', and prison pathway leads and development meeting formats sometimes combine the work around these two pathways. As the two pathways develop, the specialism of each need to grow separately. This will support strategic frameworks that can focus on the core issues and encompass expertise from the relevant fields. It will also enable the strategy to reflect current research, which can orientate the aims of the pathways towards the identified needs of the user groups. In the case of Pathway 9, this report found that staff identified women involved in sex work as needing high levels of help around accommodation, and children and families, which indicates that they not only need support in similar areas as other women in prison, but need as much support in that area as under any other pathway.

## ***6. Updating Knowledge Base on Law and Policy***

Prison and probation staff both cited incidents where drug rehabilitation and/or accommodation places have been lost at the last minute due to external agencies' policies on not accommodating those convicted under the Sexual Offences Act. In addition staff had decided not to place a woman in a mixed accommodation hostel, as they perceived that she would engage the male residence as clients of her sexual services. In both instances, the women have had decisions made about their resettlement based on misinformation or lack of knowledge. As well as awareness training for staff, the strategy should include guidance to counter such

scenarios occurring. A continual updating of the strategy to meet changes in law and policy could be supported by ensuring the steering group incorporates bodies with expert knowledge in this field.

### **7. Toolkit**

The UK Network of Sex Work Projects supported the SWIP project by providing resources for prisons. They have produced a toolkit for working with sex workers that many prison staff now access and the Network would support the development of a specific prison toolkit. This specialist information would be invaluable to staff and prisoners and would complement the training pack development.

### **8. Sexual Wellbeing Support for Women in Prison**

HMP Bronzefield were, at the time of the SWIP project, delivering a programme of sexual wellbeing to their prisoners entitled Sex In The Modern World. The content, coincidentally, mirrored many of the issues that the SWIP training pack included and was, like SWIP, delivered in partnership with a local sexual health expert. It would complement the aims of the SWIP training greatly, to run a similar course for prisoners.

### **9. Release Kits**

Many prisons make condoms available to all women on release. A wider provision of items and information would support good sexual health and contribute to harm minimisation. Primary Care Trusts may be able to assist with the development of this provision. Suggested contents could include lubricant, GUM (Genito-Urinary Medicine) clinic contact details, safer working advice and sex work project contact details. To assist the Corston recommendations of diverting vulnerable women from custody, a release pack that reflects all 9 Reducing Re-offending pathways could incorporate these items, as well as detail court diversion schemes.

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## **The Griffins Society**

Founded in 1965, The Griffins Society aims to generate new thinking about women and the criminal justice system: we conduct and disseminate research, and we apply research findings in practice by initiating innovative projects that extend the range and quality of work undertaken with women. We draw policy makers' attention to deficits in the existing provision, and we make suggestions about how the criminal justice system's engagement with women can be improved.

The Society provides volunteering opportunities to women in custody or recently released, often through our partnerships with other organisations. In this way, we enable an authoritative 'voice for women' to be heard in criminal justice policy and practice development.

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. Our Fellowships programme provides a unique opportunity for people working in the criminal justice to make a significant contribution to knowledge about women and the criminal justice system through their workplace. The Society occupies a unique position as a provider of research that is practitioner led yet academically scrutinised, and which is enriched by the voices of women who are the subject of the criminal justice system's work.

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.

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

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**Ministry of  
JUSTICE**

National Offender  
Management Service

## **NOMS Women & Young People's Group**

The core aim of Women & Young People's Group (W&YPG) is to work to ensure NOMS meets the particular needs of women and young people

In taking forward this aim the Women's Team:

- will ensure that NOMS meets the "gender specific" needs of women prisoners and by such is compliant with the Gender Equality Duty
- will when appropriate, exercise operational authority as designated by the Chief Operating Officer, in order to ensure that the needs of women prisoners are best met
- will work in partnership with stakeholders to improve the life chances of and ensure positive outcomes for women in custody
- will work with the regions to provide advice, guidance and support to DOMS, Custodial Services Leads and Governors and Directors to enable them to deliver appropriate services for women prisoners.

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