

Research Paper
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Full Report

'A two way process'
Women offenders,
personality, power
and partnerships

By Pip Tibbetts

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Executive Summary

This research explored partnerships in Bradford District who are working with women offenders.

Partnership work, with women offenders and the probation service has been both formal (from contracting out of services) as well as informal (picking up the telephone with an offender and signposting them to a service). Increasingly this process has become formalised since the publication of the Carter Report (2003), which specifically promoted the concept of a purchaser and provider split within probation. In addition, it asked whether the probation service was providing the best value service to offenders. Alongside these changes there has been the development of specific services for women offenders as part of the Corston Report (2007) ; the impact of which is explored in the context of local partnership work for women offenders in Bradford.

This research focuses on those organisations who are members of the Women's Forum in Bradford, and their experiences of working with probation and other statutory organisations to provide services for women. A snowball approach to selecting respondents was used to gain a cross section of workers from manager to key worker and also the perspective of women offenders themselves.

Broadly there was a real will to work together to improve outcomes for this group of offenders. However, it was also evident that partnership work with or for women is difficult for two reasons. Firstly, due to the complex needs of this particular client group and secondly the way in which the work was carried out. Specifically, some agencies had more power to direct services than others and as the processes for partnership work were formalised some of the flexibility of smaller groups was lost.

There was also evidence of competing priorities for women around health needs and criminal justice needs, which could be real barriers to achieving positive outcomes. Partnership work for women is seen as positive, and necessary. However, there is a lack of consistency amongst probation staff working with women offenders. The service women offenders receive largely depends on who they get to supervise them rather than a policy that dictates practice. This leads to a sense of powerlessness by other agencies who have more contact with women on a day to day basis than offender manager.

The creation of specialist roles, and a new contract with women specific services for 50% of women offenders in Bradford was perceived as a positive means to enhance and mitigate the lack of knowledge amongst offender managers of the needs of women offenders.

Conclusions of the research:

The service women offenders receive are often driven by the personalities behind who is delivering the support. Concentrating activity amongst a smaller pool of Offender Managers to assist in 'skilling' them up to work in a gender sensitive way was welcomed by those involved in the research.

Avenues to share knowledge, ideas and resources are important in developing partnership arrangements that cater for women offenders. Forums in Bradford such as the Domestic Abuse Forum, Together Women's Local Implementation Group and the Women's Forum were all avenues for partnership agencies to share knowledge about this client group. There was evidence to suggest that this was facilitating less duplication in services, greater cross agency working and better outcomes for women.

In future Local Area Agreements are going to be an important mechanism for resourcing interventions for women offenders. At present women offenders are not considered a priority group within Local Area Agreement Targets, and this is because they rarely feature as priority persistent offenders (PPOs) or classified as 'high risk'. This means that women are often hidden within partnership arrangements within Safer Communities in Bradford.

The current offender management model that allocates resource (in offender manager time) to risk is not suitable for women offenders. The importance of building a relationship with women to improve confidence to access outside resources is undermined by the level of intervention that can be offered under the current workload measurement tool within the probation service. The current workload measurement tool does not assess on the cost of women re-offending, or the level of intervention required in delivering a sentence plan to the holistic needs of women. This means that offender managers are given the minimal allowance to build relationships with women offenders, and help them to address issues that are often complex and inter related.

Those who are best placed to provide gender specific services should do so, whether within the voluntary sector or statutory. However, this should not be on the premise of efficiency gains in contracting out to the voluntary sector – rather looking at quality and value added. The success of those contracts should not simply be measured on the attainment of restrictive inter agency performance outputs, rather related to outcomes.

Service User involvement at all levels of organisations is crucial in developing services that are both gender sensitive and meaningful for the women who use it. This includes the probation service, where women feel that they are subjected to a process rather than being empowered to make life changes.

The needs of sex workers in particular was an area where there were competing initiatives and targets. Offender Managers had a poor knowledge of the health risk, and risks to personnel safety experienced by them. Often these women were those who were most chaotic, utilising a range of partners to receive interventions, but also a group likely to breach probation orders due to their lifestyles.

Recommendations:

1. Reducing re-offending rates by women should be included within Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership's performance data. This is because the cost of offending extend to children and families of women. The social impacts extend to families and children. When the Probation Service become a responsible authority within CDRPs later this year, part of their strategy should include a needs assessment of women offenders, and a strategy to provide services for women offenders across the CDRP partnership that takes into account their specific pathways into crime.
2. The needs of substance using offenders, particularly those of street sex workers are currently not being met by the offender management model. Training for all offender managers in Drug Rehabilitation Requirement units should encompass an element of work specifically focussing on street sex workers.
3. All offender managers should receive dedicated training on how to implement the Offender Management Guide for Working with Women Offenders (2008).

4. A new gender sensitive model for women offenders should be developed to take into account the time needed for offender managers to help build meaningful professional relationships with women. This should take into account the whole life cost of women's offending, to allow for adequate resource time to be allocated. This would mean that women classified as low risk but complex needs, are afforded time. In addition, this model should take women's needs as a whole, blurring the Reducing Reoffending Action Plan pathways currently given to offenders. This would allow offender managers to deliver meaningful interventions that look at women's offending holistically.
5. Probation should seek to develop its own women's service user groups which is able to feedback directly to the District Management Group and the Senior Management Group to inform probation practice and contracting for women's services.
6. A Woman's Champion that links to the Local Strategic Partnership would assist in bringing a sharper focus to the needs of vulnerable women in Bradford District and to drive the delivery of The Gender Equality Duty.

1. Chapter One:

Introduction

My background is that of working within West Yorkshire Probation Board. Having worked as a Probation Officer in West Yorkshire I then moved into a role as Voluntary Sector Coordinator for Bradford District. My remit was to source, develop, and enable partnerships across Bradford District to engage with the Probation Service. This role was then developed into the current Partnership Managers role, which now sits in every District within West Yorkshire. The Partnership Manager posts in West Yorkshire are seen as crucial in terms of West Yorkshire Probation Trust becoming much more outwardly focussed, and meeting the needs of local areas.

Given the above is perhaps inevitable that I am interested in the world of partnership. My interest for this research stems from my current role as Lead Manager for Women Offenders in Bradford. West Yorkshire Probation Board has achieved much in terms of how it has changed practice so as to deliver better outcomes for women. In particular it developed a policy to enhance the skills of a specific group of offender managers. Half of their case load is made up of women offenders and it is the responsibility of the Lead Manager to develop and implement this policy in each District. More recently this has been enhanced by the implementation of women specialists, whose caseload is entirely made of women offenders and are co located at women one stop shop centres throughout West Yorkshire. My interest lies in delivering better outcomes for women offenders, to assist I set up the Women's Forum to inform and change the way probation works with women offenders. I am also interested in what organisations think of probation, and how positive partnerships can be developed. When I first became involved in partnership work, I felt that there was a gap developing between what probation feels is a partnership approach and how that is experienced by women offenders and voluntary sector agencies. I wanted to test whether this was how probation was being perceived, as well as being able to take this forward in terms of future approaches in working with women offenders and the voluntary sector. This will become increasingly important when aspects of probation service delivery is scrutinised under best value reviews. Within this context it is possible that probation services will be challenged to demonstrate they are best placed to deliver offender management to women. In addition all of this takes place in the context of a changing role of probation officers and increase in what is termed 'managerialism'.

This research seeks to address the following questions:

- 1) How do voluntary sector agencies working with women offenders currently perceive partnership work as being?

- 2) What is the current and emerging National and Statutory policy with regards to working with women offenders and how does that impact on the partnerships in Bradford District?
- 3) What barriers are there to successful partnership work?
- 4) What impact does the contracting of services have on partnership activity for women offenders?
- 5) How can partnerships sustain and develop in future to improve outcomes for women offenders?

The approach to this research combined both qualitative and quantitative data. The original research brief was an attempt to look vertically across three different partnership agencies. It draws on perspectives from managers down through key workers and finally the women offenders' perspectives on the service that they received and how this linked with their Sentence Plan and Offender Manager. The initial plan was to compare the perceptions across differing services to ascertain congruence or patterns of engagement with the probation service for the benefit of women offenders, and to compare this to the perceptions of those Offender Managers tasked with the responsibility of brokering out the sentence plan. However, during the course of the research it became evident that this was becoming led by key workers and managers within the services that had participated in the research in terms of how the partnership work was perceived. Therefore, it necessarily concentrates more on the perceptions of those individuals given their crucial role in the delivery of the current services for women.

Chapter 3 specifically explores how partnerships are defined, particularly with relevance to the experiences of agencies working with and across sectors for women. The focus of this Chapter rests on how partnership is a problematic term, and how this has differing meanings based on how a partnership is contextualised. Partnership work with women is therefore based more on individuals knowing 'what's out there' and the power between agencies as mediating how those arrangements may work.

Power in partnerships is addressed specifically in Chapter 4 since it has bearing on how agencies feel 'successful' partnerships work. The use of sanction by one agency over another is discussed, as well as how this is being driven nationally, in an overt use of power. Contestability in developing a diverse market place for women's services and the effects this has on partnerships and service delivery is also highlighted. Specifically for women offenders, the development of women specific services and the challenge this poses to the 'probation' role is analysed in terms of how personalities of offender managers can drive partnership activity. This is a more subtle way of power being exerted,

through the amount of referrals and signposting that offender managers do for those women they supervise.

Chapter 5 focuses on personality, both in driving the women's agenda in Bradford and in terms of how women offenders experience partnership work dependent on who their Offender Manager is. Although there are Gender Specific Standards in working with women offenders, it is evident that this is not being implemented, and that this leads to inconsistency of approach.

Contestability, competition and the professionalization of agencies is explored in terms of the future of partnership development in Chapter 6. The impact that this already has on collaboration is explored through the way in which agencies feel they are responding. How far independent organisations wish to go in terms of taking on a more statutory role is explored.

Conclusions will be drawn that will assist women's services move forward together in Bradford. Wider implications of the Bradford research could, of course, be used to change policy and practice nationally with women offenders.

2. Chapter Two

Methodology

Introduction:

In order to test the research hypotheses I needed to consider the best way in which to collect the data that could answer those questions I had posed. This chapter seeks to explain the choice and use of different methods of data collection: which are crucial to gaining a representative view. As someone who works in Bradford District it is also important to first address issues such as access, interviewing technique and bias in the research before going on to explore the themes that emerged from the data. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used and each will be outlined below.

Access:

Access to a field site was not problematic for this research. The field site for this research centred around those involved in the Women's Forum in Bradford. I established The Women's Forum whilst working as Partnership Manager in the Bradford District. The Partnership Manager role gave me the advantage of being able to gain access to the research site, through the networks that already existed in Bradford. However, there are issues to consider with regards to bias which will be further explored.

The aim of the Women's Forum is to bring together those organisations working with women offenders in order to improve their outcomes through collaborative work. Participation of agencies in the Women's Forum is voluntary, and is therefore based on the goodwill and enthusiasm of the agencies that choose to attend. All members of the Forum offered to participate, which I was extremely grateful for. I outlined to all members the purpose of the research and how the research would be conducted. 3 partnership agencies from all those who offered to participate were then selected at random and then approached to be interviewed.

Research design:

Originally the research was going to be much wider in scope and based on a snowball approach to qualitative data collection. The scope initially was for a senior manager to be interviewed in NOMS, followed by three Managers of agencies who were members of The Women's Forum who wished to participate. Those managers would then nominate three key workers, who nominated three women. Finally, two offender managers would be selected at random from the pool of Offender Managers in Bradford District and approached to participate.

Sampling:

Snowball sampling works on the principle of approaching one respondent who from the field site and asking that person to nominate another respondent and so on and so forth. The disadvantages of snowball sampling are widely documented in terms of the ability for research to be replicable and representative in terms of selection bias (Van Meter 1990). What is suggested is that a large sample be drawn to assist in mediating against this bias. Given that this is a small scale research project this has not been possible, and therefore it will be important to point out that this is a 'snapshot' of individuals working within the women's field in Bradford. Large scale generalisations are more difficult, however, the literature and other research into partnership work (Brunton 2009) is useful in terms of locating this project within a wider context.

Snowball sampling had important advantages for this research in that it provided access to 'hidden' populations (Whyte 1955, Patrick 1973). This research project tests out the thoughts of a range of individuals, who, without being nominated by someone more senior to themselves, may otherwise not have chosen to participate. This is on the basis that the research tests ideas that could be seen by respondents as being sensitive to their working practices and those of others. The snowball approach has been able to mediate against this.

Difficulties:

In practice this was more difficult to organise, and despite high levels of buy in from managers, it took some time to organise the other interviews with key workers and women. At the conclusion of the fieldwork stage I had successfully interviewed a NOMS representative, three Managers, two key workers, and one offender manager and one woman (another woman was interviewed but the recording of the data was not successful and therefore there was no data to transcribe). The research was therefore focussed more on the relationships between key workers and managers than the women offenders themselves. Although I would have liked to continue to capture the thoughts of women offenders in particular, I decided that due to time, and the need to be able to code this data, that it was time to stop collecting.

Bias:

The question of bias is important to consider, particularly in this research. I currently chair The Women's Forum, and I am therefore in a high profile position. In addition I contract manage and am involved in activities which have an impact on services in Bradford through my role as Partnership Manager.

The Women's Forum is a 'collective' of organisations who want to drive better outcomes for women. It has no budget or bearing on whether or not organisations who participated would receive any further benefits from doing so. Those individuals who volunteered did so because of their commitment to explore issues of partnership. All had been fully briefed through the forum before deciding whether or not to participate. The views expressed in the research were honest and critical at times of how partnerships operate and work. There was a sense that those who participated were jumping between many different competing priorities, not just those of the criminal justice system. Respondents did point out the inadequacies of the probation service, as well as other statutory and voluntary organisations in a partnership context. Bradford District has, over a number of years, been developing its feedback and challenge mechanisms through robust and comprehensive Service User groups, and this spirit of challenge is very much embraced by all organisations working within Drug Treatment and women's services, including the Women's Forum.

All organisations who have participated have been fully briefed, and the terms of the research explained at the beginning of every interview. This includes an exploration of respondents' thoughts about me being an interviewer, and my position within probation.

Interviewing:

The interviews were very much a two-way process. The respondents understood the interviewing process, and this is taken on the premise that this is an 'interviewing society' (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). The structure of the interviews was directed by the participants, and although there were some standard questions posed to all respondents the timing of those questions, and how these were asked varied depending on what respondents wished to say. The direction of travel, pace and length of interviews was dictated by their respondents. All comments contained in this document are anonymised, and false names have been used to protect their identities.

All the respondents were guaranteed confidentiality and this underpins the research process. I arranged the interviews directly with all respondents, once a name and contact details had been forwarded on. All respondents were given the opportunity to be interviewed anywhere and at any time that suited them. Respondents were all confident to express their opinions to me, including those that were critical of other services (particularly those who had power and authority). The driver for all those participating was to break down and explore some of those barriers, and issues that have arisen which stop them from providing the services that they want to women. In addition they gave personal narratives of how their experiences have varied working with different agencies.

The interviews were all recorded on Dictaphone and I transcribed most, but later enlisted the help of a professionally qualified transcriber to save time. In typing up, the 'um's and 'ahs' have been omitted, but the rest of the transcripts are exact to those words recorded. After each transcript was completed this was then 'coded' in order to identify themes that were emerging from the data.

Quantitative Data Analysis:

To mediate some issues highlighted with regards to bias, a quantitative data method was also used to triangulate the research. A sample of women offenders who started a community based sentence in Bradford District between January 2008 to the 31st of March 2009 was taken. A quarter of those sentence starts were randomly sampled; this was achieved by taking a printed list of all those women and selecting every fourth case to examine in more detail. The sample was returned to in June 2009 to ascertain whether those women had gone on to complete their period of supervision successfully. In total 20 women were in the sample.

The sample has been cross referenced against the type of Offence they had committed. The Tier of Offender (this is the level of risk, or Tier that a woman is assessed as posing, Tier 1 being low and Tier 4 being a high risk) was also noted as this has a bearing on the level of intervention a woman will receive from the probation service. Voluntary sector involvement with those women was analysed by looking at whether there was interaction with agencies recorded on CRAMS (Case Recording Assessment Monitoring System), our case work recording system, and also whether this was in OASys, which is an assessment and sentence planning tool. This was used to look at how proactive offender managers were at liaising with other agencies, and whether this was being recorded.

During the sampling process, the OASys assessments were read alongside entries in CRAMS to ascertain if the offender manager had made any proactive attempts to broker the sentence plan with other agencies.

Conclusion:

It is evident that there are some issues with regards to sample size and bias in terms of my role within the research. However, this has been mediated by the use of triangulation of data where this is possible and through the free and open means by which respondents volunteered themselves and their services to participate in this research project.

Although the sample is small, the research carries themes which were apparent in all the data that has been collected from the qualitative sample. These themes centre around what respondents

perceived partnerships as being, power in partnerships, personality in driving partnership work and the impact of contestability on the professionalization of partnership work. These themes will be explored, and the quantitative data will also be used to highlight discrepancies and correlations with other aspects of this research.

3. Chapter Three

Partnership Working: What is a 'partnership'

Partnership work, and its development in relation to women offenders cannot be understood without placing it within a political and theoretical context (Brunton 2009, Stenson 2005, Hughes 1998, Cross 1997). Indeed the term partnership may mean different things to different people across and within organisations (Kemshall and Ross 2000). The development of work with offenders outside of the probation service began with extending the service provided for those offenders subject to community punishment through the outsourcing of more of those contracts (Home Office 1988, Home Office 1990). This has coincided with the development of a more 'managerialist' culture within the probation service (Nellis 1995, Nellis 2002, Newman and Nutley 2003), and a changing of the traditional value base of 'assist and befriend' to 'enforce, control and risk assessment' (Malin 2000, Clarke, J and Newman, J 1997, Raynor 2003). The 'What works' (HMIP 1998, McGuire, J; Priestly P 1995) initiative gained impetus once New Labour came into power in the late 1990s and was a real force in challenging the probation service to look at what it provides best, and how to evidence this.

The ideal of the probation service concentrating on its core tasks of enforcement and risk assessment and 'brokering' out its interventions in sentence plans was given impetus through the publication of The Carter Report (2003). The Carter Report sought to place the probation service within the context of 'best value' for services and a 'purchase and provider' split. There was an expectation that the probation service would increasingly seek to contract out more of its services to other providers (commercial and not for profit organisations being part of this provision). It also challenged the value base of many probation staff in terms of how it perceived its professional role. This was taking place within a changing climate of resource allocation to 'end to end' case management of offenders (Edie 2000) and that resources should follow risk. Hough (2005) argues that this development may have an impact on partnerships by undermining positive collaboration and a sharing of goals, through introducing contestability.

Alongside this framework is the model by which the probation service is to deliver sentence planning – The Offender Management Model. The development of the 'Offender Management Model' by NOMS proposes how probation officers should seek to work with those it is in a contractual relationship with. As such it is the NOMS definition of a formal partnership. This is borne out by the Offender Manager interviewed for this research, who had a clear understanding of what the role was now:

George: part of the supervision plan will be carried out by other agencies and also when we're looking at the supervision plan, risk management will be included, so I'll describe to her how I fit and what I'll be delivering and how others such as Together Women and Social Services...link into that informing them that I will be liaising with those other services.

Partnerships are therefore defined by organisational values (Brunton 2009, Rungay 2003, Kemshall and Ross 2000 and Rungay and Cowan 1998). All respondents were asked to consider what they thought partnership working was. A strong theme evident from the respondents was that successful partnerships were ones with clear boundaries, but also ones which acknowledged competing priorities. There was congruence in terms of the political need to work together to be effective. It was apparent that as long as there was a clear boundary and context to that work, then services were comfortable with those arrangements. McLaughlin (2004) suggests that successful partnerships were ones which were based on structure, leadership, information, identity and durability of resources. In terms of leadership, most managers that participated had a clear perception about how a partnership should work for women both outside of their organisation and within it;

Rachel: ...its quite professional... I think its quite boundaried and I think we are quite clear on what we do and they are quite clear on what they do and occasionally, its fairly black and white, occasionally there is a grey area in the middle but we work that out on a case by case basis. Which I am quite comfortable with that kind of relationship as well.

Carol: ...a two way process, the partnership work that each of the services are enhanced by joining up or you know alongside each other but where we are identifying gaps and filling those gaps and where the women come out with the best result as a combination of that joint partnership work.

However, one service in particular had had difficulties in terms of working in partnership, particularly with statutory organisations. This was very much linked to how those statutory organisations had tried to impose its values on it and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4. This is what Gilling (1993) refers to as the 'lure of collaboration', where in some circumstances collaborative work can be counterproductive, particularly if perceptions don't match. Here it is political 'will' that is driving the partnership. A respondent called Helen was talking about the need to treat the health needs of women in their service. The political drive in Bradford by some agencies was about harm reduction, and getting women into treatment first. This was being funded by the PCT. What is evident from Helen's experience is that this partnership with health was working well, whereas their relationships with non health related organisation was not as productive. This was due to an overarching concern with reducing re-offending from those organisations rather than treating underlying health problems as a priority:

Helen: We are also ultimately looking at helping women...although it doesn't look the same as how other people expect it to look at the service.

Helen's service is one that is providing health interventions for vulnerable women, often involved in criminal justice. She is suggesting that the perceptions of other agencies about what they should deliver changes the relationships they have if those agencies who may not come from the same value, or perception. This is often rooted in organisational values.

Rumgay and Cowan (1998) found, that voluntary sector agencies entered into partnerships seeing that collaboration for service users was based on the value added rather than a substitute or replacement activity for probation and this chimes with the comments from Carol and Rachel. In Bradford, although the principle of partnership work was welcomed, there was evidence that there were areas of conflict. This was around the expectations that agencies had of one another, linked to the preservation of organisational integrity. A Manager of a service for vulnerable women, Helen, encapsulates this well:

Helen: ...Instead of trying to get us to focus on the offending behaviour or us trying to get them to focus on their health as the priority when we are talking of a package of care, its all important. We each have our priorities which are all important but it's the woman who sits in the middle. And I just think that we need to stop thinking about us being right in attending to our particular priorities and to see the whole package as being important, that I think is about training and knowledge, and talking to each other.

This has been observed by Crawford (1998) he found that partnership work can be undermined where collaborative aims are overridden by internal agency priorities. In this case, those priorities were also from agencies considered to wield more power this is explored more fully in Chapter 4. The frustration is evident and is reflected in literature which notes the narrow focus of criminal justice agencies on the criminogenic needs of offenders, rather than a holistic approach that takes into consideration children, families and wider social impacts. This is particularly pertinent for women offenders (Burke and Collett 2008, Clark 2005). This blinkered approach therefore deems other 'problems' as secondary instead of interlinked. The priority for many of these agencies is that these issues are interlinked and central to positive outcomes for women, and that those outcomes may not necessarily be a reduction in re-offending, but improvements in health, emotional well being or contact with children (Rumgay 2005 and Clarke 2005). Therefore the basis of successful partnership work returns to the need to have defined and agreed mutually beneficial goals that cross cut agency cultures (drawn from Kemshall and Ross (2000)).

Knowing who you are and where you are:

Information about each other and how this was shared was a strong theme which all respondents alluded to as being related to successful partnership approaches, particularly with respect to women. Information sharing, in this context, relates to a sharing of knowledge and understanding about services and service perspective. This took the form of managers sitting in various District wide forums. Agencies from differing backgrounds, both statutory and Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) were coming together to look at specific issues facing women in Bradford District. This may support Holdaway's (1986) concept of shared uncertainties, where agencies who may be seen to have competing identities can come together to find common ground. In Bradford District, a Women's Forum, set up to address the needs of those involved in the Criminal Justice System as well as other forums such as the Bradford Violence Against Women's Forum, is functioning. Forums like these were seen as avenues for changing perceptions and sharing information:

Carol: I think that Bradford is quite an up and coming area where there is a lot of women's initiatives coming on. People in organisations seem to be taking that risk and its showing that its paying off.

Anna: We sit on lots of different forums. So we have a formal arrangement with some of the services.

Finding women offenders in the Local Delivery Plans on Crime: Hidden pathways

There is no specific strand in the Local Delivery plans within the Community Safety Partnership in Bradford which specifically relates to women offenders. Rather, this is subsumed into larger strands of work, for example such the Domestic Violence Strategy in Bradford and Prostitution Strategy which are part of a larger theme group which tackles violent crime. It is interesting to note that the interests of women offenders are being subsumed here into groups which deal with women as victims. This group reports to the Bradford Safer Communities Delivery Group. The general needs of women offenders, not related to sexual or physical abuse, remain within internal agency policies and procedures. Rumgay (2003) argues that outcomes for women offenders can only be improved where there is strong cross agency work.

What is missing is a specific avenue for influence on the needs of women offenders to be fed back up to the Safer Communities Delivery Group and Strategic Group. This requires better data collection from the probation service to contribute to needs analysis with regards to women offenders. This

has already been highlighted as a key recommendation by Mace and Lowthian (2008) in the Women Offenders Service Review, for Yorkshire and Humberside.

With new Local Area Agreements and a central grant awarded to local authorities to deliver on National Indicator targets, a specific focus on women through a women's strategic partnership would assist in keeping the needs of women (and through this women offenders) as part of the delivery plans across different pathways. This could cross cut many themes in the LAA linked with the achievements of children, domestic violence, substance misuse, sexual violence and social deprivation, given that many of these elements are well documented as being linked to women offending (Mace and Lowthian 2008).

Developing knowledge of partnerships for those working with Women Offenders:

There is an emerging structure which is enabling partnership work to develop across manager grades, but this needs to be replicated underneath to practitioner level. The Offender Manager interviewed was a Semi-Specialist, whose caseload is half made of women. Semi-Specialist work had enhanced knowledge of women's services, but good practice in developing those partnerships was not being filtered across to other Semi-Specialists or probation staff.

George: What the Probation Service tends to do is have a set number of agencies they work with and that's it. And there might be an individual officer every now and again that's exposed to something different. Whether that gets shared around the office, in my experience that doesn't happen, there's a lot of agencies out there that people just aren't aware of, and I think as Semi-Specialists it would be good, as when I come across new things I feed that back to my team. Not just with women but with everything else, like mental health and all the other specialisms out there. That doesn't seem to be fed back. We need some kind of forum. I know we are doing that in Semi-Specialists and you have been encouraging the other agencies.

The Offender Management Guide for Working with Women Offenders (2008) was designed to highlight how probation officers work in a gender sensitive way. It details specific attributes related to women's pathways into crime, best practice in developing productive relationships with women. Importantly there is an expectation of signposting to gender specific services. This has not been made a mandatory standard (through becoming a Probation Circular or Instruction) and not supported by training, therefore it is unlikely that this is being implemented. However, this should be taken in the context of an overwhelming number of different standards, and targets that offender managers need to work towards, therefore without Gender Specific Standards being made mandatory, it not likely to be prioritised.

Key workers interviewed in the other agencies also noted this perception, and there is a sense that they are working in isolation of probation at times:

Anna: I think if all services involved or who had dealings met on a regular basis, something like that, trying to network of people together on a regular basis and then brainstorm.

Mattersich *et al* (2001) argue that successful cross agency collaboration requires cross agency training and focussed investment by probation. This should be combined with the incorporation of the skills and talents of those already working in a gender sensitive way as part of the training for staff. This is already the case and documented as part of the developments in drug treatment (Rumgay 2003) particularly where probation is embedded and working with voluntary and statutory agencies in care pathways to deliver drug treatment interventions. There is also potential to develop similar models in West Yorkshire through the new Specialist Offender Managers who are co-located at one stop women's centres. This gives probation a unique opportunity to develop a partnership approach with a women focussed organisation which could be replicated elsewhere.

Partnership was, therefore, described and referred to as a fluid term by all respondents. It relates to what outcomes those organisations wish to achieve with women offenders. What seems to be happening is that there is some work being undertaken that is seeking to enhance work with women offenders that respects organisational identities. This work is not being coordinated by the Local Authority, and there is a danger that the needs of women offenders are lost in a wider concern about the offending of the majority, who are male offenders.

Transferring that information to practitioners is still ad hoc, and related more to the personalities involved in delivering services for women than standard practice, and this will be explored as part of Chapter 5 There is also evidence that power in partnerships has an impact on the ability to work in collaboration, particularly where one internal performance drivers is having an impact on the ability of others to deliver theirs and this will be explored in Chapter 4.

4. Chapter Four:

Power in Partnerships

The rise of managerialism, contestability and competition: power to change the voluntary sector?

In this chapter I am going to consider with reference to the findings as well as other scholarly and professional literature the issue of what I am broadly calling 'power' in partnerships. In particular I am going to consider how power is utilised in issues such as (a) funding (b) practice, in particular where organisations are seeking to meet the needs of more than one statutory organisation and (c) sustained relationships/policy format.

The probation service, like many other statutory organisations in the late 1990's onwards, has been subject to a 'rise in managerialism' (Raynor 2006, Nellis 1995). This resulted in the increasing need to performance-manage the outputs that the probation service achieved, through the introduction of 'weighted score cards', league tables of best and worst performing probation boards and evidence based practice (Chapman, T ; Hough, M 1998). The effect of cash incentivising performance was a retraction of the probation service from the voluntary sector (Burke and Collett 2008). The rise in importance of cognitive behavioural therapy as underpinning 'What Works' agenda placed the importance on offenders themselves accessing those resources as part of problem solving, rather than this being part of the probation services remit. This in itself contributed to an under recognition of the importance of a range of interventions to assist offenders in addressing their needs.

The Carter Report, advocated a shift into slicing the probation service into 'purchaser and provider'. Although now modified, the expectation was to first commission 5% of its services, and then rising to 10%, whilst demonstrating that it was delivering the 'best value' in offender management. Hough (2005) raises concerns about knowing where the line was to be drawn in contestability of services in probation, and in particular argues for local commissioning for local services rather than regional and national contracts. He also warns that there is a risk in bringing in contestability that this will spoil what he terms a 'spirit of common purpose' (31) amongst probation and its partners. However, this research highlighted that there was a sense of common purpose in Bradford District, especially where all agencies were working towards an agreed goal. Reducing re-offending as part of Local Area Agreement targets has certainly helped bring together organisations, however, as discussed this is mainly with regards to male offending. With regards to women offenders, this has been through the creation of a forum whose purpose is to seek means to divert women from custody and work collaboratively to deliver joined up interventions to women in the District.

The voluntary sector operates within political contexts. Although often referred to as having a 'grassroots' approach to working with individuals (Rumgay 2004) a large source of their funding is often sourced from statutory funding streams such as health or the criminal justice system. It is here that a power imbalance between the purchaser and provider of services may occur particularly where there is a limited marketplace with few providers. However, what is evident by all respondents was that they were striving to maintain their 'grassroots' identity, in terms of being women-centred and flexible in their response to the needs that women were presenting.

However, there is a tension for voluntary sector agencies working in this context, where funding is dependent on larger and more powerful organisations that are state funded. The following respondent had worked for an organisation for some time. However, securing ongoing funding had often been a problem, meaning they had to tailor working practices to meet the needs of the funder:

Susan: We are constantly having to change the way that we do things and hopefully now that we have got proper funding and we are a proper organisation

What is alluded to here is that the flux within funding streams which is the life blood of the voluntary sector, ultimately means that they may need to bend to the more powerful funding body and will do so if they need to attract funding or sustain it. There was no sense with Susan that she was concerned about this change, rather that this was an inevitable consequence of working within the voluntary sector.

Power of statutory over voluntary, competing priorities for work with women offenders:

All agencies interviewed highlighted some issue where they were drawn into cross fire between competing priorities between more powerful organisations. Power was being defined here as those organisations with an ability to effect the women they were working with through breach, arrest or a withdrawal of an important service. This was particularly difficult for those services working within drug treatment who were satisfying the needs of health, as well as trying to work alongside the needs of women and agencies within the criminal justice system. One worker in particular identified the tension between working with the police, who had been supportive of women working in sex work, but was clearly fearful that this could all change. She also highlighted that working with probation was problematic because they had little understanding of the health needs of those women.

Anna: They are working on the same common goals we are, we're not working against each other. That might be changing, I don't know...They've got someone new in charge and I think they're going to have a different tact of, well we've told them, we've done this with them and that with them, right that's it we'll start arresting them. Which is not the answer, but I think it's someone else's decision now.

There were other examples surrounding the work of social services and the inability of those working closely with the women to influence decision making; prescribing agencies having the ability to withdraw their services if appointments were missed. In addition, the sanction of breaching the offender was imposed on women who were involved with the criminal justice system. The common theme between all these examples was that although there *is* collaboration up to a certain point or intervening event (missing an appointment, breaching etc). However, once that point is reached the agency that is able to impose the most serious of sanctions is the one who is ultimately more powerful. This is coupled with the agency who holds responsibility, for example probation in delivering a court order, or a prescribing agency in controlling the level and dosage given. This is not to suggest that power in those relationships was being ill used, rather it was a perception by many of those working directly with women that they had little influence over decision making. This was the constant tension and balance between top down approaches taken by statutory agencies working from policy initiatives and bottom up approaches that the VCS adopt. There is a frustration when putting women at the centre of service delivery that the views of service users are not taken into account. This is undermined by organisations who are led more by policy than its service users. Literature suggests that this is not uncommon, where priorities of organisations are about what they want to achieve, and how this relates to central policy may be mismatched (Crawford 1994, Sampson et al (1988).

This lack of 'clout' that VCS groups have was designed to be ameliorated by the COMPACT.¹ The COMPACT was used to hold commissioners to account and an attempt by the government to mutually respect the differences in the approach of the Voluntary Sector in working with local communities. It recognizes the complimentary roles that VCS organisations bring to the Statutory sector and seeks to put this into an agreement. Martin (2006) remains sceptical and believes that the Criminal Justice System is using the VCS sector as a means to cheapen interventions and drive down costs rather than celebrating innovation and respecting different and more flexible working practices. It is what Gilling (1994) calls the 'lure or collaboration' where it is assumed that 'two heads are better than one', and where the driver is efficiency rather than innovation.

¹ COMPACT 'The Compact is an agreement between Government and the voluntary and community sector in England. It recognises shared values, principles and commitments and sets out guidelines for how both parties should work together'. See <http://www.thecomcompact.org.uk/>

Power and the probation service: Feelings of Dependency, collaboration or conflict:

All respondents were asked about how they worked with the probation service. Power in those relationships in terms of statutory and voluntary sector was also evident here. However, what is interesting is that organisations who had closer, and more formal working relationships with probation felt it in different ways. For example, where an agency was beholden to probation for its referrals. For voluntary sector agencies post managerialism, the money follows the 'client' therefore the number of referrals may reflect that agency's only or main source of funding. Consequently, an agency may feel it necessary to work in particular ways to ensure continued funding. Brunton (2009) found a similar problem existed between statutory organisations where she found that Probation services were not keen to work on a 'pre-offending' project as it may affect the numbers of those who move on through the criminal justice system and ultimately end up with probation services. In my research it was clear that the power lies within individual offender managers and this is further explored in Chapter 5. Where there was little cross pollination between probation and voluntary sector agencies, the starting point was described as a conflict:

Helen: Conflict I think is possibly our starting point. Probation service, probation workers that contact us are looking at the offending of the individual, we are looking at the health and social needs of the individual. I know that there is...somewhere that we can meet in the middle but I think that it is clear that that is what the conflict is.

Part of mediating the power of this is in working together to understand each other's agency culture and finding the line to which both could work successfully with one another. It may be argued that in some cases this could never be possible, for example working with high risk women offenders. Probation hold responsibility for the risk management of cases, which, were it goes wrong have long lasting consequences for the offender, service and wider community. What Helen is suggesting is that through greater understanding of what agencies are trying to achieve, some informal working practices could be established that could suit both. She is arguing for a balance, where the responsibilities for health interventions and reducing re-offending are not necessarily at odds. However, with such clear lines of responsibility this is likely to be small scale and on a worker to worker level, rather than agency to agency.

What was interesting is that one agency in particular had managed to in a sense invert the power relationship with probation. They were happy to provide services for offenders (and under no contractual arrangement to do so), including offering offenders appointments that could be counted towards their national standards appointments. They were very clear with the probation service as

to where the boundary between co-working began and ended. In this example probation is seen to be sticking to what it does best; enforcement, risk assessment, offence focussed work and is working closely with VCS to give them the freedom to work outside of these constraints. This VCS group is, giving a clear steer on boundaries in terms of what they are willing to deliver:

Rachel: ...if probation said to us, which sometimes they do, this person is on a DRR (Drug Rehabilitation Requirement) what are we going to do on their timetable together with the individual so the individual knows where they need to be and when, 'cause there is no point in doing duplication if the woman is happy to class those appointments as national standards, and we are not breaching them its probation that are doing that, then I am quite comfortable with that...

Although there are clear boundaries, what is very evident here is the power of the Offender Manager in those relationships. They are able to decide what constitutes engagement with those organisations, breach and level to which they are prepared to liaise with organisations that women are accessing. It was pointed out that with such high caseloads, Offender Managers may not be able to have the close and intimate knowledge of their clients as VCS agencies do. There was a sense of frustration that at times this can be counterproductive in terms of understanding the needs that the woman may be exhibiting.

Pip: How receptive are probation at looking at those issues?

Helen: They are not really. They usually get a three strikes and you are out attitude.

Pip: What impact does that have on the women you are working with?

Helen: They give up, they just completely give up. It's just insurmountable they can't see through that. They can't get beyond the first hurdle.

The vision for women's services, indeed for all offenders particularly where there is a contractual arrangement, from NOMS is that the Offender Manager is at the centre of the model. It is termed the "Offender Management Team" (NOMS 2006: 41) and this is the driver for relationships. As the NOMS worker states:

Lydia: ...it's about being very innovative and very creative with having key workers that would, or workers that would, work with women...the offender management model would still be able to respond to that because you would still have the offender manager who drives practice or the support for the sentence plan.

The role, therefore, of the offender manager in this model of work is a powerful one. In order for this to be effective for women offenders the offender manager would need to have the knowledge of all other agencies working with the women. In addition they would need an understanding of the

contexts that each agency works within, and a clear and defined relationship with each organisation which fits with their organisational culture. What is heartening is that within the quantitative data, of the 17 cases with a Supervision Requirement, proactive engagement with voluntary sector organisations was being recorded in 11 of those orders. In June 2009 this sample was revisited and where Offender Managers had been involved, those cases were more likely to complete their orders successfully. This also suggests that the offender manager role is powerful, and that individual offender managers can have a great influence on the outcomes for women offenders. This is considered in forthcoming chapters.

Influencing policy: Putting women offenders at the centre of powerful relationships:

How services can be influenced to focus on the outcomes of women offenders, and supporting local needs based led services can only be influenced by changing policy both within the Criminal Justice System but also within Local Areas where probation services are operating. When interviewing the officer at NOMS it was evident that there was a high political need to move quickly in order to forge partnerships for women services whilst there was still the impetus to do so. The officer believed that the role in NOMS was very much one of building 'coalitions' to look at the needs of women. This often involved large powerful statutory organisations such as health and the police and selecting a voluntary organisation to be a part of this. It was a top down (Rumgay 2004) approach which could then change what was being felt by those working with women at local levels.

Lydia: ...my role is very much with commissioners and interested parties and the voluntary sector almost like a matchmaker. You are working with both parties to see which way they might go, where are the commonalities, and with commissioners you may do some raising awareness not only about the needs of women but the PSA areas you know and the indicators and then saying this is how the women's work fits into that or working with women's offenders fits in with that, and the needs of their children their accommodation needs. So it's a much more sort of broader approach to women themselves.

What is suggested here is that women are often not considered as central to service delivery by local authorities. There is a brokering in terms of how to interweave the needs of women offenders into the broader context of Local Area Agreements and Public Service Agreement targets. This local approach is considered as crucial in order to embed services for women offenders (National Service Framework for Women Offenders, MOJ 2008).

The success of raising the profile of women offenders is also dependent on who, as she described, is interested. In terms of bringing together statutory organisations to look at the needs of women, the Gender Equality Duty and the needs for every service to complete an Equality Impact assessment before implementing new services is designed to assist. However, what is suggested here, is that

more is needed to highlight how women offenders need to be considered as a cross cutting theme in delivered Public Service Agreements, and that having a specific role within the Local Strategic Partnership could help to deliver this. This is particularly relevant for developing a model that takes into account the cost of women's offending when looking at the impact on future generations.

What this chapter highlights is that there are several layers at work in terms of power in relationships which affect the outcomes received by women offenders. Firstly that of the importance of listening to service users in determining what services are required for women offenders. Secondly how powerful the Offender Manager is in determining what services women offenders get access to, how their sentence plan is organised and brokered. Finally, the importance of the needs of women offenders being interwoven into local area arrangements in order to embed this within powerful decision making bodies which may attract funding.

5. Chapter Five

Personality in Partnerships working with Women:

When conducting interviews in the field for this research, all respondents made reference to personalities. This was done in two ways, either driving partnership activity in working with women offenders, or 'within' - what they felt were productive relationships between known workers. These workers had a reputation for being amenable in building successful relationships between partners and investing in them. The 'Tyranny of personality' in partnerships is extensively documented by Brunton (2009), through the examination of partnerships in a Crime Reduction context and there are clear crossovers with her work, and some of the themes emerging in the research in Bradford District. There was a sense that individuals drive partnerships rather than agencies working together.

In a broader context, West Yorkshire Probation Service developed an area wide policy of developing semi-specialists which has been mentioned in Chapter 3. Those semi-specialists work with half of a caseload being women offenders. Latterly in recent months two specialists have been put into post, whose entire caseloads are constituted of women offenders. This has been implemented as a means of concentrating activity amongst a small group of practitioners and developing their skills in working with women offenders. Each specialist Offender Manager is now co-located at women one stop centres across West Yorkshire. Each District has also a Lead Manager for Women Offenders, who coordinates the activities of those semi-specialist and specialist workers.

If personality affects partnerships work, the first question explored here is about whether probation staff understood the role that was being asked of them, and if that perception is shared by key workers in other agencies. The NOMS Offender Management Model which has already been outlined is important here. This could be deemed a 'functionalist' approach (Parsons 1951). Each role is clearly defined and represented in a model, from key worker, women offender, case administration all reports to the Offender Manager who sits at the centre of it. It was evident that the Offender Manager who was interviewed had a clear understanding of where power and authority lay, in delivering a court order stating that:

George: I think a lot of the time, that I, the offender manager, that I run it all, that we oversee everything and that we then liaise with the others...There may be other service providers helping, but ultimately I am responsible for managing the whole lot.

George's perception matches that described by the Home Office (1990b) where it states "Probation officers must see themselves less exclusive providers of services and facilities and more managers of

supervision programmes.” (P.iii). However, what is evident is that, as described in Chapter 4, the power and authority sits with George in delivering the sentence plan and this may affect the quality of the partnership arrangements.

Those organisations who had been able to develop closer partnership arrangements with the probation service understood the Offender Management Model. Although they acknowledged the differing organisational cultural bases, were working together to deliver this model of practice.

Sharon: there is the partnership working with probation as well. With that you are kind of working together, you know with the client, for the benefit of the client but it's a lot more kind of close working than you would do with other agencies

For those organisations where there is little knowledge of this formal agency structure there was a lack of congruence with this functional perspective on multi agency work, in a NOMS context. Personal relationships between workers and managers were therefore drivers in working with those agencies, particularly where there was no formal relationship which was present in those responses that highlighted a more structural approach to work together. This work was underpinned by a Service Level Agreement, or by a formal contract. Helen encapsulated this where she described the relationship with probation being based on single officers who had a little understanding of what they were trying to achieve with women:

Helen ...all based on individual probation officers really, their understanding of the work that we do and the nature of the work that the women do. And it just depends on their priorities

Helen's perspective appears disempowering both for her as a worker and for women offenders and based on who you know and what you know. This happens where local systems aren't supporting cross collaboration as in this example.

Who you know and what you know, interaction formulating partnerships:

Most organisations working with women in Bradford District are not in a formal contract with the probation service to deliver work for women offenders and, therefore, interactions between workers are vital in delivering coordinated approaches for women offenders. It is what Mead (1934) called the creation of 'self' which is constructed by a series of interactions, rather than prescribed roles that workers follow. Recent probation research into role shift (Raynor 2007) highlights the dangers of constant re-organisation in terms of the potential to alienate probation staff from their role, what Robinson and Burnett (2007) term as 'initiative confusion'. The suggestion is that

responses become more rigid by practitioners rather than encouraging engagement with offenders. This is due to less flexibility within the system to work with offenders and their families and the role shift that the National Offender Management has taken in terms of efficiency. There is some congruence here with Brunton's (2009) research into CDRP's in that, where there was uncertainty this resulted not in innovation in partnerships but a retreat into agency structures which revolved around those who were most powerful in the partnership.

Against this backdrop of changing roles within the probation service, one would therefore expect that there would be some ambivalence to the role of the semi-specialist, specialist or partnership work. Looking at the quantitative data, it was evident that certain probation officers preferred to work in collaboration with other agencies and that this was recorded whilst others did not. The service delivered, and level of collaboration that a woman could expect is ad hoc and not standard across the quantitative data sample. Practice is not consistent, and that, for some, a retraction into 'do everything yourself' was evident, whilst others were embracing the 'brokering' role that NOMS is encouraging. It could be argued that signposting offenders to other agencies does not alleviate workload, in fact, it is argued in literature (Kemshall and Ross 2000 and Rungay and Cowan 1998) that setting up and maintaining partnerships is a time consuming exercise. Therefore, if there are no easily defined pathways in which to refer to this may be putting Offender Managers off. Even partnership work that works well requires time and effort to maintain to share information, set up agreements, and review progress. This can be cross referenced with the qualitative data, where again and again respondents in agencies described service being dependent on probation officers knowing about them and wanting to work with them. This phenomenon was observed by Clarke (2005) and it is apparent that there is still little development since this:

Sharon: I know about 20 or 30 probation officers that refer to us on a regular basis, but I have a list of probation officers on my desk and I know that there is a lot there that I have never spoken to you know, that probably don't know very much about us (their service for women).

Rachel: we are very proactive otherwise we have learnt that you need to be proactive otherwise they don't refer them to you.

There is a danger here for the semi-specialist and specialist Offender Manager roles for women offenders. Although there is an emerging structure in West Yorkshire Probation in delivering services for women offenders, none of the roles created have specific requirements or expectations as to how those would develop. There was no expectation on semi-specialists, or specialists, to develop their training and skills base. Therefore, this is subject to local variations, dependent upon who leads the semi-specialist role in terms of Lead Manager input as well as who volunteered for the roles

when advertised, and their personal preferences to working with offenders and women. Therefore, services that women receive in Bradford may be different than Leeds, Calderdale or Kirklees; depending on who is 'driving' the agenda locally at management level, and what local training and skills knowledge has been developed amongst semi specialists and specialist Offender Managers.

This variation was picked up by respondents, most notably a woman currently under probation supervision:

Wendy: I've had different experiences depending on what Probation Officer I've had.

Pip: So what was your experience like before?

Wendy: Bad.

Pip: In what way?

Wendy: That I just missed this appointment and that was it. And then another appointment I turned up for and they swore blind I didn't have to be there, but it turned out I did. I went all the way to Shipley, that's 2 big long bus journeys. And I'm not the only person who says that.

Therefore, in order for the benefits of semi-specialist and specialist offender management to be realised there is clearly a need for a more defined role for those working with women offenders. This should be coupled with gender specific training for those offender managers to develop greater consistency and consolidation of learning that may be occurring in a piecemeal fashion. Some of this rests on the expectations of how the Offender Management model works and this will be explored in Chapter 6 when considering how agencies respond to the greater contracting out of interventions for women offenders.

Development of knowledge of probation staff in working with women offenders is possible through the training of probation staff. Research suggests that this is a powerful tool in shaping practice. As Annison *et al* (2008) highlight, working with offenders is a 'human art' (263) and that the changing modes of entry and training given to officers shapes how they perceive their role. Holt (2004) builds on this in terms of how the formulation of offender managers' perceptions of their role is based on how they experience offender management, how an offender responds which then re-affirms that belief. Satisfaction in their role as offender managers has an impact on the way that they conduct their day to day work. Holt argues that offender management is about building relationships, and not technocratic form filling. Holt's concern is that too little time is afforded now to the development of relationships, which has an impact on the way in which offender management is now conducted. In fact, positive relationships is seen as a key feature in the NOMS model so there is

a tension between expectations and reality in delivering offender management. Partnerships for women are about developing relationships, not just with women offenders but across organisations.

These variations suggest a need for direction for Lead Managers, and a structure that they will need to tap into to share best practice and to continue developments in work with women offenders. This is observed at strategic level

Lydia I think there's, pockets of good practice I don't think it's permeated through the organisation. I think in some areas it's a bit of a deep freeze...non specialist staff that you know come from other routes into probation are highly skilled. But I think that doesn't mean that everyone understands the general thrust that a woman's pathways into crime is different.

This suggests that there is more than a need for training, that this needs to be supported throughout the organisation to effect change and looking at how probation works with women. Where there was conflict between agencies was where there was one more powerful person than another in the relationship. This was exerted through being able to breach women, taking children away from women or withdrawing medication. The frustration was that there was no consultation between workers, rather it was a decision taken by the agency who had the greatest level of statutory authority. This is explored in more detail elsewhere. But nevertheless follows similar findings to that of Brunton (2009) where she observed that those who are more powerful in personal relationships between workers were those who were able to impose more rigidity in the relationship overall.

Personality in partnerships is therefore inescapable. However, what is evident is that the development of knowledge amongst a group of 'specialists' in Bradford District is yielding results. They are learning about each organisation and how it works but also building bonds within the field of working with women with other key workers in women centred agencies. What is required for more consistency is a framework for Lead Managers and semi specialists and specialists to work towards, as well as bespoke training for them in order to develop the knowledge and understanding of those practitioners. This needs to be embedded in local provision and involves practitioners in local women's services.

6. Chapter Six:

Contracting out – Taking on the Probation role?

This chapter will explore the tension between contracting out of services for women offenders and the views of organisations that are taking on those roles. Some of the organisations in this research adopted the broad use of National Standards and others did not; both are considered. There are three strands to this analysis, firstly that of the 'Top Down' approach, and the impact on those participants in the research. Secondly the 'rise in managerialism' across sectors and how this has affected service delivery to women in Bradford is explored. Finally, perspectives on working within the Criminal Justice Sector by voluntary sector groups is highlighted. I have considered the relationship between voluntary services interviewed and the probation service for women offenders. This research explores whether the rise in one stop shop services for women has increased the knowledge probation has of good practice when working with women offenders. I will also be using the research to consider whether this is professionalising voluntary and independent sector groups to work specifically with women offenders. There may be a tension developing whereby there is greater contracting out of supervision for women offenders and whether this suggests that voluntary sector agencies working with women offenders will be expected to take on a larger Criminal Justice Role. This chapter will highlight the experiences of those agencies interviewed and how they were working 'outside' of the probation service, and what impact this has on women offenders and those agencies themselves.

Commissioning Services:

The use of the Voluntary Community Sector and other services outside that of the criminal justice sector was highlighted in what Cross (1997) calls the Lavender Paper of 1990 and then again in the Peppermint Paper in 1992, without defining what those arrangements would look like or how those would be delivered.

At the heart of these changes lie the introduction of contestability and the principles of 'Value for Money' in public sector work which began under the Conservatives but was taken as mantra by New Labour, who were keen to show their departure from their previous 'old labour' values (Nellis 1989). At the same time that there were shifts politically there was also a concordant cultural change occurring within the probation service, in terms of the move from assist and befriend, to control, punish and manage risk. Those skills that were person centred, and based on the development of relationships with offenders were being tendered out to other outside agencies. This resulted in a change in role for both probation and the independent sector (Nellis 1989, Gibbs 1996).

Nellis (1989) argues that this has increased centralised control, not only through the rise in performance management targets in the public sector but also the concomitant performance management of independent organisations. This has happened because independent (in this case) voluntary organisations have been taking on some of the roles that have traditionally been performed by probation as part of this contracting out process. This was evident in the field work, through a trickle down of what could be termed 'statutory principles' not just through performance management of organisations who are working directly with women offenders, but also those organisations who have been contracted to deliver other services for those women. For example one agency had a clear understanding of the pressure to work towards models set by the criminal justice system:

Carol: I suppose pressure could have come originally through the Ministry Of Justice (MOJ) and this is the model that it is and this is about you know this partnership working, but you couldn't do this without having that model

In a health orientated environment within a drug treatment agency, performance management is evident in the description by the following respondent. The Treatment Outcomes Profile (TOPS) she mentions is a performance management tool used by the National Treatment Agency to evaluate drug treatment effectiveness.

Helen: ...we have shared care plans, we have shared TOPS, we do the common assessment tool to assess them, things like that...

It is apparent that there are different performance measures being used to 'control' the practices of independent organisations, but does this produce competition between agencies? And does this 'up skill' those agencies? Here we will explore the tensions between contracting out, what Barton (2005, 2008) terms 'colonising' the independent sector and whether this is borne out by those agencies working with women offenders in Bradford.

Trust in contracting out:

Barton (2008) uses the term "Organisational Isomorphism"(pg1) to describe the transformation of services who were independent of, to subservient, to New Labours agenda to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency. Barton uses this term to argue that New Labour does not trust those organisations that have been contracted by the statutory sector to deliver its policies. Therefore, it

introduced evaluation tools and auditing strategies (which had been used on statutory services) to ensure that the same perceived high levels of organisational excellence are achieved. These standards revolve around efficiency, effectiveness and economy. He also highlights the increasing power and importance of The Audit Commission as a direct high level response to New Labour's policy and practice initiatives. Barton's article highlights that the 'what works' agenda of New Labour is where what works in one area is mechanically applied across sectors, not just within the Criminal Justice Sector, but Health, Child Protection practice and so on. The danger in doing this is that it does not take into account the differing working practices across sectors. Or that overlaying one principle over all working practices will cause competing priorities and practices between sectors (Barton 2002, Barton 2005, Barton 2008, Kemshall and Ross 2000). This tension was a key finding of the field work in the research conducted for this work. Here Rachel describes the barriers of working with others in particular probation and health:

Rachel: ...(there is) a lack of flexibility and a lack of understanding of some of the issues that the women may have. It's not just as straightforward as accessing childcare as well as all sorts of complications around the family and women that are caring. So, a lack of understanding and a lack of willing(ness) to change practice really and that whole square peg and round hole - you come here you fit in this service like this not, 'what are your needs?' and (therefore) not being genuinely needs led.

It is evident that Rachel's service is striving to be service user led, but constrained by what she describes is the constricted performance led approach of statutory organisations. Whilst these two aspects may be in competition at present it is not inevitable that they always will be. Kemshall and Ross (2000) point out that often quality is not associated with value for money. This means the production of outputs that are rigidly defined is what is measured, rather than the outcomes that may be 'softer' or defined by service users. This tension was noted by other respondents who described it in chapters 4 and 5, being performance managed by another sector. However, this focus for voluntary sector services on 'softer' outcomes may conflict with the Probation Service's agenda of demonstrating effective practice to reduce re-offending and enforce missed appointments (National Standards 2008). This was particularly relevant in this research to health orientated approaches to working with women. The first priority for these organisations was helping women access treatment services and not enforcement of sentence plan objectives such as regular attendance at probation centres. Barton's (2005) own research into outreach work for problematic drug users concurs with these findings. He found the lack of control over the outputs of work, and the high levels of professional autonomy needed to complete such work, undermined the larger political agenda to quantify this service, provide health benefits and reduce re-offending at the same

time. Barton's thrust is that targets should not be output orientated, rather meaningful and respectful of how organisations run services that are not easy to quantify.

It could be argued that in working with women offenders these tensions are exacerbated since the resource follows risk principle in allocating probation time and resources does not allow enough time and energy to be spent in building relationships with women offenders (Carlen 2003). Women are assessed in the majority of cases as lower risk in terms of harm to the public. The focus, therefore, is with risk management, and so it follows the ethos is not needs led. It is these softer skills in building relationships, giving women space and time as well as assertive engagement with other agencies that were identified as being important in assisting women to reach positive outcomes. This then fundamentally contradicts the characteristic which all agencies interviewed in this research demonstrated and felt committed to and was a central part of their 'needs led' service provision. The frustration from the offender manager with regards to this tension is evident. Here he talks about the Tier that an offender is given is based on a risk assessment and not on needs:

George: The thing that I find about working with women is that accurate tiering and resource allocation is difficult because, when with tiering you look at offence and risk and things, I think, from my experience, with like to like cases of men and women, women will be a lot more demanding

What George is referring to when he states as 'demanding' is that those women he is supervising have higher levels of support needs that can't be met under the restrictive workload measurement. This ascribes his time simply to those who are the 'riskiest' and not those who have the highest levels of support need. Therefore the time given to forge community based relationships, or a relationship with the women in order to be able to use other agencies is limited. For example a National Standard for Tier 2 cases is that they are seen four times in four weeks and then contact is reduced to fortnightly. One meeting is comprised of inducting the offender into their sentence, one in terms of talking about the sentence plan which leaves the following two weeks to build a relationship where a woman may feel comfortable to be seen elsewhere. A note of caution needs to be levelled here. What is not suggested is that women should be seen as more risky in order to access those resources and offender management time. This would be counterproductive and may push women deeper into the criminal justice system. The 'What Works' literature talks of criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs. This research support the idea that women have many interconnected 'needs' that are not related to high risk of harm. Nevertheless, they do affect their rate of re-offending. The way in which time allocation per case is given to women is that it is related to risk of re-offending and risk of harm. Activities are then targeted at sequencing interventions

which tackle those termed 'criminogenic' needs that are related to those risks. Women's needs are interlinked and should be taken as a whole, rather than compartmentalised as occurs now. Rather, a way of working that assists women in meeting those needs should be developed. If more time were afforded per case for women, then offender managers would be able to spend time in helping women making connections to outside resources, as well as using their time in a more effective way. This is not to suggest that women should be put onto probation for low serious offences, far from it, women should be diverted out of the criminal justice system. Rather that when women are on probation a different approach is required that takes into account holistic needs, and affords time to those offender managers working with them to make positive connections with a range of interventions outside the service. What George was suggesting is that women often want to see him above their national standards reporting, and wish him to be proactive in helping them to make practical steps to meet needs. Currently, he is unable to give the time that would be required to do this.

Changing the ethos of the Independent Sector :

There have been some strong criticisms of the changes in probation (Nellis 1995, 1992) and that there is a perception that the probation service is becoming de-skilled, to one that acts as an agent to broker, and enforce whilst utilising the independent sector to fulfil the functions that they would have undertaken in the past. The arguments with regard to de-skilling of probation staff is mirrored also in the lack of any training now being delivered to individuals wanting to come into the probation service as probation officers and the disbanding of the current Diploma in Probation Studies Qualification. Whether this has transformed the way that probation staff see themselves is still contentious, and Annison et al's (2008) recent study does highlight that the perceptions of probation staff role and their reasons for working in the service are still consistent with probation staff feeling that they are able to offer a person centred approach. Lipsky's (1980) work has real resonance here. What he suggests is that those front line workers, whom he terms as 'street level bureaucrats', often face dilemmas when working in public sector organisations. These dilemmas place them at the centre of how they feel they practice (being person centred in this case), against what policy and organizations want. There is an issue here of accountability of those workers, particularly where policy fails to take into account how practice actually works on the ground. What George has described overleaf is how he feels he needs to work with women, against how he is expected to work with all of his cases through National Standards. If he chooses to work with women above and beyond those standards, he would be expected to do so not to the detriment of the rest of his caseload.

This 'holding on' to cases as a reaction to these constant changes to role are mirrored in the quantitative data, in Chapter 3. It was noted that the level of 'brokering out' is dependent on the Offender Managers' own perception of their role and how much of the work they wish to retain, as well as control over those cases should anything go wrong.

What the term professional is being equated with in this context is that restriction in autonomy, auditing and tracking of performance is having an impact on the probation role, which is equated with the de-professionalization of the role. This may not mirror with the perception of probation staff, as is noted earlier, in terms of how they try and work within those constraints. Elements of the role have been stripped, whereas others still remain central, for example risk assessment and work with high risk offenders. This is not to suggest that this is negative, rather that probation is focussing more on its core business tasks of risk management which has affected some of the elements of its role that may have, in the past, been attributed to it.

What could be argued here is that the stripping down of responsibilities in some elements of the probation role, is being mirrored by the consequent professionalization of the independent sector, who are taking on more of those functions. Those who work within gender specific organisations have specific skills that probation staff has not. Greater contracting out is therefore broadening, and enhancing, the roles of some key workers in Bradford. For example Susan suggests that working with the Criminal Justice System is bringing her new skills:

Susan: I didn't have any training or any qualifications and I did it all by experience so I thought that coming into this was a really good opportunity step to use all the skills that I had got but to be more specific as in the criminal justice side of things and learning about criminal justice and how women fit in within the criminal justice system

Barton (2008) argues that this professionalization of the independent sector is a positive development, in order to improve the viability of the independent sector as an alternative to the statutory sector. Those organisations that are unable to meet those standards will simply be unable to compete with those who are and are likely to be those providing niche, or specialised services.

The contracting out of the 'softer skills' for offenders which probation may have once delivered itself is in evidence already with women's services, through the current contracting out of Offender Supervision to women's centres across West Yorkshire. This is not negative, indeed this has been through consideration in *The Corston Report* arguing for women offenders to gain access to one stop

shop services, as well as highlighting the difficulties for women in accessing probation sites. The introduction of 'one stop shop' approaches to delivering needs led services for women and the realisation that probation is not best placed currently to meet those needs is a positive and much needed development for women offenders. Where the conflict lies is in the questions that need to be asked in terms of how probation utilises one stop shop centres to deliver those interventions so that those organisations are able to maintain an approach that is both woman centred and different from the probation experience. There is a real risk that in future under 'value for money', and in increasing conditions of tight public sector spending, that those organizations may be pushed to take on much more for less, or that their practice is constricted by the contracts which they are compelled to enter into. It could be argued that this is what Martin (2006) states is the link between the role of the voluntary sector to one "that not only fosters innovative practice but would help to bring down the costs and carry out mundane tasks that the state no longer wanted to bother itself with"(Pg 40). Martin argues strongly that the independent sector should not be used to deliver on the cheap, and wants the sector to be valued as a direct and dynamic alternative, rather than more of the same. Probation has traditionally been more paternalistic in its approach to delivering offender management. The VCS organisations interviewed for this research took a very different approach, which was based service user needs, and directed by them.

Therefore, the evaluation of this new approach currently being trailed in West Yorkshire, would benefit from measuring the wider 'social capital' of working with women closely with key workers from one stop shop centres which looks holistically at effectiveness. The views of women offenders subject to these new arrangements should be taken as a central part of this evaluation. The current contracting of women's services in Bradford is delivering high quality and a greater diversity of services for women but it isn't a model that saves money from the probation budget. What is crucial is that this is weighted carefully to take into account those costs incurred if those women had re-offended. This is much broader in remit and extends beyond probation budgets to those of social care, education, prison establishments. This is based on the premise that getting it right with women offenders has wider social benefits. Recent initiatives, such as Total Place (of which Bradford is a pilot site with an offender theme) could be seen as a step in the right direction here.

Were organisations in the research comfortable with this? One organisation interviewed was able to sit comfortably with this tension. In fact she felt that it was important for her organisation to challenge existing practices of the statutory sector.

Rachel: ...we have the ability to really really quickly respond to gaps and needs...whereas the statutory sector are like the QE2 aren't they? They take a long time to turn around, it takes them six miles to stop and turn around and that's one of the benefits to being in the voluntary sector. I do think there is still a gap in different culture and ethos but I think a lot of it can be ironed out with communication and attitude.

As Rachel highlights, participants in the research did not feel that they were compromising their organisational identity to pursue new funding streams or adapt their work to suit. Indeed it was seen as imperative for service delivery to be seen as professional, flexible and different. Rachel encapsulated this which seems to support Barton's argument for the increasing professionalization of the independent sector:

Rachel: ...sometimes people think that the voluntary sector are all just volunteers that they are all just do gooders but actually we are not, we are trained we are professional, but we are reflective and more responsive as well...

There is a suggestion in this that there are some that see the tag of voluntary, as meaning volunteers, rather than professionals. This was a stereotype that was picked up on by two of the respondents in the research project which they both felt was unhelpful and unfounded. What both of these respondents picked up upon was that those stereotypes were held by agencies who had a poor understanding of what they were trying to achieve with women, rather than those who were funding their activities.

All services participating in this research were asked what their role with women were, and how they worked with them. All of the individuals in the organisations interviewed believed that they were needs led, and talked about support, and women's needs coming first. It could be argued that this highlights that the basis and cultural ethos of those services is not mimicking the services provided by the statutory sector despite all being performance managed through various frameworks within it, rather that they are working within the constraints which are placed upon them.

One agency in particular showed that it had a good understanding of the market place in which it is operating, and effectively commissioned and managed its own partnerships, recognising when partnerships no longer added value to its organisation and terminating its contract with them. As Carol states

Carol: ‘...sometimes one organisation can be moving forward and leaving the other one behind and it’s about positively ending a partnership or you know moving together in the right direction with it really.’

It is evident that Carol’s organisation is one that is working from a position of strength within the marketplace, who has a good understanding of managing relationships and has a business ethos. As Barton highlights, it is organisations such as these who will benefit from professionalization whilst others will fall by the wayside.

Conflict arose where there was an organisation that were motivated to provide a service for a particular client group of women. These women were sex workers, who were often subjected to serious sexual and physical abuse. The women who were accessing this service were marginalised in society because of work that they were engaged in and this oppression seemed to work through the organisation. They reported feeling repressed, or in conflict with other statutory organisations who didn’t understand the complex needs these women were facing. Again this relates to power in partnerships, and whereas this organisation is supported in one sector it is not supported in working in others. This conflict was picked up by both manager and key worker in this organisation. This is not to suggest that they felt unable to work with those agencies or to compromise, rather that the climate in which they operate is more problematic than other agencies reported.

Helen: The barrier, I think personally, is that we are trying to shift each other’s agendas and I don’t think that should be our starting point - (instead) somewhere in the middle that we can come together

Here she is describing resisting the temptation to shift the ethos of her organisation to suit those who she perceives as being more powerful than hers to change policy. She was seeking the balance between flexibility, innovation and statutory drivers of performance management and targets. What is interesting is that this is not an organisation that is part of the independent sector; rather it is part of the statutory sector but has a specific remit to work with a particular group of women, but does so using key worker methods and flexible and innovative practice.

The other thorny issue is that should commissioning of services for women offenders become widespread over the coming years, the market, it could be argued, may not be developed enough to give choice in terms of competition. Those who are already in a position of strength will continue to have such momentum, whilst smaller organisations, particularly those delivering discrete services or

specialisms, such as services for sex workers, substance misuse outreach work, may be left out of such competitive processes or indeed not wish to become involved. We have seen the failure of markets to provide competition in other sectors such as the health sector.

Forums to collaborate; means to find common goals and objectives:

If there are competing priorities, goals and aspirations how can this be mediated to produce greater connectedness in working together for women offenders? Clarke and Stewart (1997) suggest that the government's language of partnership up until the mid 1990s was one of competition and not cooperation. This is supported by literature produced, including the Carter Report, which puts competition and value for money at the centre of practice in the probation service. Although probation is well established in contracting for drug treatment, this is not the case for working with women offenders specifically, and there are few providers who would be able to provide the holistic service that is now expected under the Corston Report (Trehan 2008). This may therefore offer an avenue for collaborative work with women offenders. An example of this is the West Yorkshire Probation Service which has contracted with women's centres, in the voluntary sector and has commenced this year specific services for women offenders, including offender management.

Kemshall and Ross (2000) analyse what qualities in partnerships make them successful within probation and offer a model of working. Kemshall and Ross's model suggest evaluations of partnerships and contracts should be participatory and not led by the contractor. All involved should be able to agree on the objectives of the partnership together at the beginning of the enterprise, in a sharing of power, where both are accountable for success and failure and not one over another and where all stakeholders are involved in developing the model of work including service users.

Cross (1997) explores collaboration (drawn from Locke's 1990 work) as a means of effective working together which may assist in avoiding the loss of the ingenuity of interventions offered by the independent sector. She argues that collaboration may come in several forms. Although her paper focuses on those which involve contracting of services, there are some elements that have relevance to the research in Bradford. Cross points to the importance of sharing of resources, and goal setting that is of mutual benefit as part of the collaborative process, and underlying this is a trust between organisations. It was evident in Bradford, that although there are tensions between agencies at times because of competing priorities there are also significant commonalities between them.

It must also be pointed out that the basis of those who participated in the research are all current members of the Bradford and Keighley Women's Forum, a forum that is constructed around an agreed set of principles which centres on all organisations who are members looking at means to

improve outcomes for women offenders. The use of this forum as a means to learn about organisational cultures, and to work together to bring about outcomes was highlighted particularly by Rachel as a beneficial collaboration for women:

Rachel: ...now that we have got the Women's Forum I've got a good understanding now of what is going on in Bradford women wise...I think that it's about getting the right links at the right levels.

However, in order for the Women's Forum to function, feedback from service users, and services themselves need to be fed into larger structures so that this can be incorporated in local planning for women offenders. At present there is no avenue for this within Safer Communities or Stronger Communities under its Equalities delivery group.

To conclude, this chapter has found that the 'managerialist' language of performance management, across sectors is in evidence in Bradford partnerships working with women. It has explored how organisations are keen to become professionalised, through increasing its training and knowledge base, and through contracting with statutory organisations that are performance managing outputs.

There is a real danger in particular with new contracting arrangements in place for women offenders in West Yorkshire, against a background of diminishing resources, that the holistic needs of women may be lost. The focus of any success of this contract should not be simply the completion of probation performance indicators and probation offender management tasks rather it should also incorporate the wider 'social capital' of working with women offenders.

It is also evident that it is a natural part of contracting between the centre and independent organisations that there will be some cross fertilisation of statutory culture and ethos. However, it is evident that where there is a strong foundation and historical context to organisations, this does act to mitigate this. Indeed, it was evident that two of the three organisations interviewed saw it a part of its ethos to challenge statutory practice and policy, and respond to gaps quickly. It is, as yet, unknown how this may change when funding become scarcer following the economic downturn and consequent recession, or how forecast public spending cuts will effect what independent organisations will be asked to do. There is a risk that this may be contracting out services to do things for less, rather than do things for the better for women offenders. The statutory sector, in lean times to come, may be expected to pool their resources, protecting their own (heavily unionised staff) at the expense of VCS contracts. Any response, of course, will be a balance between

a range of internal and external stakeholders – whose interests may be at odds. Again, highlighting vulnerability for women offenders in future for specific services for vulnerable and at risk women.

However, there is a spirit of collaboration in Bradford. Organisations were seeking to find where there are common values and where smaller scale changes within organisational practice and mutual support can be met. The spirit of collaboration that is evident in Bradford needs to be capitalised upon by wider structures in the District in order for this to effect larger scale changes, both by the probation service and within the local area in order to influence practice and future funding prospects.

Conclusions:

The research has explored services that are being provided to women offenders in four different contexts. Firstly, that of partnership approaches to working with women offenders. It is evident that the word partnership means different things to different people, and agencies. However, a theme that was evident was that Bradford District is engaged in many positive activities which are helping to provide a variety of services for women offenders. Coordinating activities through forums (both the Women's Forum and the Violence Against Women's Forum) which is based on good will and equality of services who attend is producing a more joined up approach to working with women offenders and links between services.

However, what the research highlights is that those links that were established at forum level were not being filtered down to practitioner level. It was apparent that voluntary sector agencies, or those led by women offenders, gave much more time and effort to coordinate between services. The probation service did not engage in this activity as readily, and it was very much down to individual probation officers as to how they wished to supervise women. Without a coordinating role at a more strategic level it will continue to be left for individual agencies to implement the gender equality duty, and then to link with each other through good will. There is currently no driver for this within the Safer Communities partnership.

Partnership work is undermined where performance drivers don't match. For example there was evidence that agency performance drivers with regards to providing health interventions for very vulnerable women offenders, did not match drivers with regards to reducing re-offending or attendance on supervision requirements.

Power between agencies and how that is exerted, is a factor that was underlying the research. Through the greater contestability of contracts, particularly within probation the introduction of the 'purchaser/provider' model for service delivery was changing how services for women offenders were being delivered. This was not seen as negative, rather positive, so long as the process to which the services were being delivered allowed for those organisations to maintain its identity.

Power could be mediated by building clear organisational boundaries. However, it was apparent that where one organisation could apply a sanction to a woman that overrides the work being undertaken by another, there was often a tension and frustration. The importance of 'sticking to what you do best' was something that helped to build those boundaries. It was evident that where there was a common understanding of the issues being faced by women offenders by each group, that a boundary could be made where agencies were comfortable working with each other. There

was a need to be able to understand that there are variations between women offenders in terms of client group. For example, women involved in sex working were a group that were particularly prone to being caught between powerful relationships between agencies. The police and how they enforce street sex working, health and interventions they wish to provide, and probation in terms of enforcing court orders. In these circumstances there were competing priorities and lack of understanding about this particular group of women, meaning that operating within these conditions was problematic, and one of conflict. The needs of sex workers, and the specific issues facing those women are poorly understood within probation in Bradford and setting up collaborative relationships here for women was difficult.

The importance of service users in challenging the practices of agencies was a cross-cutting theme. Listening to, using and changing practice based on the feedback of those women who experience it was seen as something that was a driver of service delivery by all respondents. Services were being shaped, and developed on the basis of the feedback of women who were using them. What was needed was to use this as a means to influence the practices of those outside of their agencies, and to coordinate this particularly with regards to women offenders. A specific theme looking at the needs of women offenders, and not just women involved in health interventions, or women's centres, would assist in challenging the practices of those working within organisations with poor service user engagement.

The offender manager is in a powerful position for women offenders. They decide who to refer to, how to deliver interventions and coordinate activities. Clarity in the roles and responsibilities of those who are delivering interventions for women as a semi-specialist or specialist would assist in helping those offender managers deliver better outcomes. This also needs to be matched by coordinating the activities of Lead Managers for Women Offenders, in order to develop consistency of approach and support offender managers who are working with women in Bradford District and throughout West Yorkshire.

Identifiable key personnel as being drivers of partnership activity were a strong theme throughout the research. Given this, the development of Specialist Offender Managers and Semi-Specialists was seen as positive in concentrating knowledge and developing links between a group of practitioners across agencies. However, Probation Officers are not implementing the Gender Specific Standards which were produced by the Ministry of Justice. As yet, there has been no implementation of those standards through training of staff. There has been no formal training requirement for probation officers in working with women offenders, and delivery of interventions. Whether or not those women are referred to a women's agency is therefore dependent on individual probation officers.

The professionalization of those working with women offenders within criminal justice was evident. The skills and talents of those working within health were already well established in Bradford District. Where probation was working with women in a 'brokering' role, the skills of its partners in delivering a criminal justice led service were increasing. This is setting up a market place for one stop shop provision for women offenders.

Contracting services out for women offenders is in my view, a progressive move. Those best equipped to deliver services for women should do so. However, this should not be at the expense of squashing the abilities of those agencies to deliver services that were innovative and service user led. There is some fear that contracting services for women offenders would mean a loss of the importance of the 'softer' outcomes being achieved by women through voluntary sector interventions. And that progress would be measured by constrictive statutory performance targets. Value for money should not equate with 'services on the cheap' rather a balance between efficiency and quality. There was no sense that this was occurring in Bradford, rather a note of caution in terms of how services for women were being evaluated and a strong desire from all services to be led by the needs of women, rather than funds.

Short term contracting out in Bradford District has increased the diversity of provision for women offenders. It is not 'value for money' in a narrow economic sense; rather this has increased the quality, and I hope effectiveness of interventions received by women offenders under probation supervision. It is the quality of interventions that women offenders receive rather than efficiency and that is welcomed. This is particularly pertinent, since women offenders in the past have received less than their male offenders because of the resource follows risk principle in offender management. This is not to suggest that women offenders should be 'upgraded' as more risky in order to receive higher levels of service from the probation service. This is about developing quality interventions that women can utilise in safe women's spaces, whereby they can build relationships with individuals who understand their needs and are needs led. A new gender sensitive model which both blurs the traditional 'Reducing Reoffending Pathways' and looks at the 'whole life cost' of offending for women is therefore needed.

There is an important role in collaboration between agencies to support women offenders. There is a rich and diverse voluntary and statutory sector delivering gender specific services in Bradford District in drug and alcohol treatment in particular. The introduction of a one stop shop women's centre has acted as a catalyst to bring together agencies who are delivering discrete services for women and this has helped to bring a focus also on women offenders. Coordinating this, and linking

it to broader structures within the Local Strategic Partnerships, through a champion for women (and within this women offenders specifically) would assist in continuing to give this a high profile.

Recommendations:

1. Reducing re-offending rates by women should be included within Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership's performance data. This is because the costs of offending extend to children and families of women. The social impacts extend to families and children. When the Probation Service become a responsible authority within CDRP's later this year, part of their strategy should include a needs assessment of women offenders, and a strategy to provide services for women offenders across the CDRP partnership that takes into account their specific pathways into crime.
2. The needs of substance using offenders, particularly those of street sex workers are currently not being met by the offender management model. Training for all offender managers in Drug Rehabilitation Requirement units should encompass an element of work specifically focussing on street sex workers.
3. All offender managers should receive dedicated training on how to implement the Offender Management Guide for Working with Women Offenders (2008).
4. A new gender sensitive model for women offenders should be developed to take into account the time needed for offender managers to help build meaningful professional relationships with women. This should take into account the whole life cost of women's offending, to allow for adequate resource time to be allocated. This would mean that women classified as low risk but complex needs, are afforded time. In addition, this model should take women's needs as a whole, blurring the Reducing Reoffending Action Plan pathways currently given to offenders. This would allow offender managers to deliver meaningful interventions that look at women's offending holistically.
5. Probation should seek to develop its own women's service user groups which is able to feedback directly to the District Management Group and the Senior Management Group to inform probation practice and contracting for women's services.

6. A Woman's Champion that links to the Local Strategic Partnership would assist in bringing a sharper focus to the needs of vulnerable women in Bradford District and to drive the delivery of The Gender Equality Duty.

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