

Research Paper

2012/02



Moving forward: empowering women to desist from offending

Exploring how women experience empowerment, compliance & desistance during enforced contact with a women's centre and probation

Shelly-Ann McDermott

www.thegriffinssociety.org

Acknowledgements

I thank the women who generously gave up their time to participate in this study. I am grateful to each of you for sharing your personal narratives with me.

Thank you to staff at the Jagonari WERC for welcoming me so warmly. I truly admire your dedication to changing women's lives.

I am indebted to London Probation Trust for granting me access to conduct this research.

I am grateful to The Griffins Society Council members, Dr Jon Jackson, Shona Pollock and my Research Fellowship Programme colleagues for their on-going support and guidance.



Contents

	Page
Abstract	5
The research problem	6
Policy and organisational context	7
The role for probation and women's centres	8
Formulating <i>a priori</i> themes from existing literature	11
Promoting women's empowerment	12
Promoting women's compliance	13
Promoting women's desistance	14
Methods	17
The procedures	17
Sampling	18
Data gathering	20
Thematic analysis strategy	22
Results and Discussion	
Putting the Specified Activity Requirements (SAR) into context	24
What women say about their experiences	26
What factors do women identify as important for desistance?	26
What is empowerment?	31
Is being empowered an important part of desistance?	35
Does enforced contact with interventions empower women, or does a court order undermine empowerment?	37
What contributes to women's decisions about engagement and compliance? ..	39

Conclusions	43
Research aims and objectives: strengths and weaknesses	43
Further research	44
Practice implications, recommendations and ways forward	44
References	50

Appendices

Appendix 1: Detailed description of the Jagonari Women's Education and Resource Centre (WERC)	56
Appendix 2: Literature search strategy	58
Appendix 3: NOMS and LPT Research permission letter	59
Appendix 4: LSE Ethical approval letter	60
Appendix 5: Eligibility criteria for gatekeepers	61
Appendix 6: Information sheet	63
Appendix 7: Informed consent	65
Appendix 8: Exploring the ethical issues further	67
Appendix 9: Interview schedule	71
Appendix 10: Focus group topic guides	74

Abstract

This qualitative research explores women's experiences of empowerment, desistance and compliance. The study engages directly with seven women sentenced to woman-specific court orders delivered within London Probation. The individual and group interview data were analysed using the template analysis technique (King).

The key finding is that women who offend require practical assistance alongside confidence-building support in order to move away from criminal activity. Furthermore, provision should clearly delineate between criminal justice (focused on risk and punishment) and social support (that is individualised and holistic) in order to promote desistance (SETF, 2009).

Funding services in a sustainable manner would facilitate women's continued access to provisions within mainstream settings that last beyond short-lived court sentences (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007). Crucially, early and preventive interventions can effectively empower women to overcome underlying problems and pursue conventional lifestyles (SETF, 2009; Sommers *et al.*, 2004).

The research problem

This study gathers qualitative data to explore service-users' experiences of woman-specific provisions within community sentences. The research was conducted within a practice environment whereby probation and a third sector provider deliver court ordered interventions specifically for women who offend. This presented an opportunity to explore the debates within existing literature about processes that may promote women's empowerment, compliance and desistance (Gelsthorpe, Sharpe & Roberts, 2007; Hedderman, Gunby & Shelton, 2011; Rumgay, 2004). The main objective was to capture women's insights about their experiences of empowerment during their engagement with enforced community sentences. This offers the possibility of identifying the processes that could empower women to develop non-criminal identities and rebuild their lives to desist from crime (Maruna, 2001; Pollack, 2000; Sommers, Baskin & Fagan, 2004). Hence, this research asks:

- What factors do women identify as important for desistance?
- What is empowerment?
- Is being empowered an important part of desistance?
- Does enforced contact with interventions empower women, or does a court order undermine empowerment?
- What contributes to women's decisions about engagement and compliance?

These questions fostered a line of exploration that enabled service-users to talk about their experiences of compliance, empowerment and desistance. This focus is critical in light of the Together Women¹ evaluation finding that practitioners were concerned about the detrimental impact of enforcing women's contact with services (Hedderman, Palmer & Hollin, 2008). The professionals felt that enforcement would undermine empowerment and rob women of their choice rather than improve compliance (ibid.). Indeed, most women offenders within the joint inspection of community sentences expressed preference for the informal support offered within women's centres (CJJI, 2011). The inspectors also discovered that women went through the motions to avoid breach action and had superficial interactions with their offender managers² (ibid.).

¹ The Together Women project (TWP) received a four-year government grant which facilitated its creation during 2006 across North West, Yorkshire, and Humberside regions with the expressed aim to reduce women's offending. The initial evaluation used an action research design involving interviews with over 40 service users at first contact then after three months, as well as observations of TWP in operation, interviews with 40 workers and stakeholders, and an audit of 50 cases (Hedderman, *et al*, 2008).

² The 'Offender Manager' can be a Probation Officer (PO) or Probation Service Officer (PSO). This official generic title describes all probation practitioners involved in 'managing offenders' and will be used throughout

It is noteworthy that the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) plans to become desistance focussed to improve the quality of probation supervision (McNeill & Weaver, 2010; NOMS, 2010a). Moreover, NOMS commissioning seeks to identify 'credible alternatives to custody' for women (NOMS, 2010c, p.16). Sadly, such provisions tend to be marginalised within a male-oriented criminal justice system and are often characterised by competing priorities and budget cuts (CJI, 2011; Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; SETF, 2009; Women In Prison, 2012; Worrall, 2002). This overall practice context begs the question: can enforced contact with gender-specific interventions support women's desistance? Too few studies explicitly examine how empowerment techniques are applied within community sentences, or the relationship between empowerment and women's desistance (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; Hedderman *et al.*, 2011). Pollack's (2000; 2004) research analyses empowerment, but was based on peer support within a Canadian prison. A further gap is the absence of studies into court ordered attendance to women's centres since evaluations have only examined diversionary provision (Hedderman *et al.*, 2008; Jolliffe, Hedderman, Palmer & Hollin, 2011) and police conditional cautioning (Easton, Silvestri, Evans, Matthews & Walklate, 2010). The joint inspection of community sentences investigated women's compliance, but does not analyse empowerment and desistance (CJI, 2011).

Policy and organisational context

The coalition government plans to 'pay only for what works' to reduce re-offending and welcomes competition between providers from all sectors to deliver services (Ministry of Justice, 2011, p.2). Notwithstanding the government's promise to, 'take into account the different profile of women's offending', several evaluations already highlight that it can be difficult to measure the success of woman-specific provisions (*ibid.*, p.6; Hedderman *et al.*, 2008; Jolliffe *et al.*, 2011). The potential long-term savings from early and preventive interventions are often overlooked since outcomes are not easily measured and 'payment by results' is an unproven strategy for criminal justice (Neilson, 2012; SETF, 2009).

Critically, the Together Women reconviction analysis was unable to quantify how the empowerment approach impacted on women's re-offending rates (Jolliffe *et al.*, 2011). Hedderman and colleagues (2011) caution policy makers, service commissioners and researchers about the predominance of narrowly defined evaluation measures. Such assessments trigger fruitless searches for 'the next magic bullet' and fail to recognise that women's services must be multifaceted (Hedderman *et al.*, 2011, p.17). Crucially, service-users' underlying problems, 'often begin long before women enter the criminal justice system, yet they have not been able to engage in or get the support they need' (SETF, 2009, p.3). The eagerness to locate 'panacea' for women's complex problems places expectations upon services that, 'they can and will always appeal to all women, that they suit everyone's

this report. Recently, there has been recognition of the negative connotations and moves are afoot to return to PO and PSO titles.

needs, and that women will not question the [intervention's] value' (Clarke, 2004, p.30). Therefore, "payment by results" initiatives will require...clearer understanding of what interventions are designed to achieve...more consistent measurement of needs, interventions and impact' (Jolliffe *et al.*, 2011, p.26; Hedderman *et al.*, 2011). These concerns must be addressed since payment-by-results approaches to community sentencing seem inevitable (Neilson, 2012).

The NOMS Offender Engagement Programme recognises that, 'one-size-fits-all approaches run the risk of fitting no-one' (NOMS, 2010a, p.4). However, the need to manage demands on limited resources due to budget cuts may dilute desistance-focussed practice solutions (NOMS, 2010c). For example, resource intensive interventions are reserved for higher risk offenders who pose a medium to high likelihood of reconviction, or a serious risk of harm to others (LPT, 2010b; SETF, 2009). This risk principle may disadvantage women who predominantly have lower rates of reconviction and do not pose serious threats to the public (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; Home Office, 2007; LPT, 2010a; SETF, 2009; Worrall, 2002). Women usually require specialist support for multiple and complex needs, but are deemed ineligible for the expensive and intensive community sentences, such as drugs, mental health and alcohol treatment requirements (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; SETF, 2009).

The joint inspection found that offender managers repeatedly failed to recognise the interconnectedness between women's problems (CJJI, 2011). Consequently, referrals to provisions were disjointed and undermined women's engagement with support (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the dominant 'risk talk' within criminal justice practice could have a net-widening effect, whereby women's higher needs are reconfigured as higher risk and thus trigger more restrictive, punitive sentences (Worrall, 2002, p.144; Clarke, 2004; Maruna & LeBel, 2003). The 2008 national guidance insists that '[w]omen should not receive a more stringent or demanding sentence as a means of accessing support' (Ministry of Justice, 2008b, p.14).

The role for probation and women's centres

The 2009 government strategy advocates service commissioning and partnership arrangements between probation and women's centres (Ministry of Justice, 2009). Years earlier Clarke (2004) called for sustainable, creative and innovative partnerships between statutory and voluntary agencies. Twenty-five Ministry of Justice funded women's projects existed across England and Wales working with over 5,400 women in 2011 (Women & Equalities Group NOMS, 2012). NOMS and the Corston Independent Funders Coalition awarded £3.2million of funding for 2011/12 and NOMS will centrally fund most of these services into 2012/13 (*ibid.*).

London Probation supervises a, 'relatively large number of women', accounting for 13% of the community caseload in 2009 and the majority (87%) are sentenced to court orders

(NOMS, 2010c, p.12). From November 2010, London Probation implemented two woman-specific Specified Activity Requirements, available within a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order (LPT, 2011). The two activities are the Structured Supervision for Women (SSW) one-to-one programme and sessions with Women Ahead at the Jagonari Women's Education and Resource Centre (WERC).

Both Orders start similarly with a pre-sentence court report and are followed by a post sentence induction appointment at the local probation office. Thereafter, women on SSW orders continue their appointments with an offender manager to complete 16 sessions from a programme manual. By contrast, those on Jagonari orders must attend individually tailored support services with Women Ahead staff at the Jagonari WERC. Whereas SSW is delivered by statutory sector probation staff, the second activity is delivered by the voluntary sector Jagonari staff. Probation has limited involvement with Jagonari orders. An offender manager retains enforcement responsibility to initiate court breach proceedings for any failure to comply, but need never meet these women face-to-face. Once Jagonari confirm that women have successfully completed the required sessions, the offender manager closes the case file.

SSW is a cognitive-behavioural programme to encourage women to acquire new skills and reframe their thoughts, attitudes and beliefs (Thornburn, Durrance & Hosking, 2009). The intervention expands upon the pre-existing generic Structured Supervision Programme (SSP). The SSP evaluation found that focussing on individual needs improved engagement and offenders reported positive impacts on their personal circumstances (ibid.). This intervention was adapted to be sensitive to women's needs, including assistance to develop healthy relationships and budget more effectively (LPT, 2011). The SSW delivery model, emboldened by the Offender Engagement Programme, directs that specialist offender managers work exclusively with women to provide quality supervision and build community links (LPT, 2010a; LPT, 2011). Additional time is invested to improve relationships and provide alternative locations for appointments, such as women's centres or home visits, in recognition that probation offices can be intimidating (LPT, 2010a).

The second community sentence developed from localised agreement between Jagonari and the probation local delivery unit. Jagonari has an extensive history dating back to the 1990s as, 'one of the first women's centre in East London to struggle against discriminations and to fight for women's rights' (Iqbal, 2006, p.3). The founding members erected the purpose-built centre as a welcoming space for women and children. The name was inspired by Kazi Nazrul's Bengali song *Jago Nari Jago... (Rise Up Women, Rise Up...)* (Nazrul; Iqbal, 2006). Jagonari's objectives include reaching out to 'disadvantaged communities' using an 'empowerment' approach (Susan Field Limited, 2010, p.2). The WERC provides 'non-intimidating' 'safe and welcoming settings for women to grow' and 'promote[s] women's personal, physical, social and educational development' (ibid., 2010, p.3). These aims are palpable when visiting Jagonari (Appendix 1).

Jagonari secured Ministry of Justice funding in September 2009 and launched Women Ahead in March 2010 (Rice, Ahmad & Caldwell, 2011; Susan Field Limited, 2010). This diversionary project works with 'hard to reach women' for 'their personal empowerment' (Susan Field Limited, 2010, p.4). The interventions include one-to-one support, a drop-in service and various courses based on the nine crime pathways, such as domestic violence support (Home Office, 2007; Ministry of Justice, 2008a; Rice *et al.*, 2011).



Formulating *a priori* themes from existing literature

A systematic literature search identified three conceptual areas relating to women's empowerment, compliance and desistance (Appendix 2). Continually redefining the tentatively formulated *a priori* themes meant that the research could avoid taking a blinkered approach (King). Moreover, using existing literature strengthened the eclectic approach to gather and analyse empirical data from a new setting whereby women's contact with empowering interventions formed part of a court order.

Promoting women's empowerment

Empowerment is defined and applied inconsistently (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; Hedderman *et al.*, 2011; Pollack, 2000). Interventions predominantly prioritise the '*psychological quality*' whereby '*practitioner skills*' are applied to empower women to exercise control in their lives (Pollack, 2000, p.76, *emphasis in original*). Less attention is given to the radical socio-political dimension which challenges oppression and encourages women to share experiences and raise their consciousness through 'collective action and advocacy' (*ibid.*, p.76). However, this differentiation between approaches is unhelpful since both aspects are 'intimately related' within a 'dynamic and reciprocal' relationship (*ibid.*, p.77).

Approaches that aim to improve women's self-esteem prioritise psychological dimensions and create the potential for individuals to be, 'further pathologised [and] deemed "unempowerable"' (Clarke, 2004, p.30; CJI, 2011; Home Office, 2007; SETF, 2009). These interventions pinpoint low self-esteem as a 'criminogenic need', namely as the underlying cause of offending, and therefore sustain disempowering labels (Pollack, 2000, p.80).

Baroness Corston highlights that labelling convicted women:

...serves only to sustain the perception of the public, staff and the women themselves that they are second-class citizens, undeserving of care and compassion and treatment as individual people and impervious to change (Home Office, 2007, p.15).

As an alternative, Baroness Corston defines three categories of 'vulnerabilities':

First, domestic circumstances and problems...[domestic violence, or lone parenting]; second, personal circumstances such as...low self-esteem...; and third, socio-economic factors such as poverty, isolation and unemployment. When women are experiencing a combination of factors from each of these three types of vulnerabilities, it is likely to lead to a crisis point...[leading to imprisonment]. It is these underlying issues that must be addressed by helping women develop resilience, life skills and emotional literacy (*ibid.*, p.15).

Exploring empowerment within this context highlights that multi-faceted strategies are needed to overcome discourses which, 'decontextualizes women from the social and political parameters of their lives' (Pollack, 2000, p.79; Worrall, 2002). Women are socially constructed as citizens with certain social, psychological and democratic expectations and 'the discourses of empowerment are learned' in order to control those citizens who 'fall short' (such as women who offend) through self-regulation (Cruikshank, 1999, p.123). Women who offend are considered 'doubly deviant' because they have broken both the law and the 'gender contract' (McIvor, Murray & Jamieson, 2008, p.195; Worrall, 2002). There is an underlying assumption that society operates equally and within a meritocracy whereby everyone has the inherent freedom to make their own choices and pursue equal opportunities (Pollack, 2004; Rumgay, 2004).

Important as enhanced thinking skills and anger management undoubtedly are, they can only be, at best, a prerequisite to empowering women to make better choices, if the choices genuinely exist. At worst, they become an end in themselves and a means, albeit implicitly, of persuading women to accept the limitations on genuine choice (Worrall, 2002, p.144).

Feminist critics blame the *myth* of empowerment within western society for masking oppression, marginalisation and poverty (Becker, 2005; Cruikshank, 1999). As such, the seemingly innocuous *will to empower* masks the exercise of power and control to uphold women's oppression. Giving women a therapeutic feeling of empowerment is ineffective if the, 'many interpersonal, systemic and structural obstacles that impede women's abilities to function as agents in their lives' remain unchallenged (Pollack, 2000, p.82). Attention must also turn to the social, economic, political and cultural factors that can promote women's equality (Mitra & Singh, 2007).

Individual women must recognise and believe in their capacity for change and develop their confidence to access opportunities and resources (Hedderman *et al.*, 2011; Rumgay, 2004). A gradual process of encouragement can enable individuals to improve their control over personal circumstances (Thompson, 2001). Vulnerable women's past oppressive experiences impact on their confidence to accept help (Hedderman *et al.*, 2011). Thus, empowerment that raises self-esteem and confidence must also build women's trust in the services available to overcome wider social difficulties.

However, it has been found that one-size-fits-all approaches can have a disempowering effect for women who may be 'wary or mistrustful' or lack faith in the 'help' offered by statutory services (Anderson, 2011, p.11; Clarke, 2004; Pollack, 2000). Equally, there may be no 'incentive to engage' with services where women feel unable to 'exercise choice and control over their package of support' (SETF, 2009, p.5). Creating such feelings of helplessness is contrary to critical desistance factors such as self-determination and self-efficacy (Maruna, 2001; Shapland, Bottoms, Farrall, McNeill, Priede & Robinson, n.d.).

Promoting women's compliance

Practitioners acknowledge the potential for enforced contact with empowering provisions to 'be unhelpful and ultimately ineffective' (Hedderman *et al.*, 2008, p.iii). The major concern is the negative impact on the working relationship with service-users (*ibid.*). Furthermore, it is considered that robbing women of their choice may not 'inspire genuine compliance' even if attendance increases (*ibid.*, p.iii). Indeed, problems have been identified within probation practice whereby the focus on enforcement undermines the ability to genuinely motivate and engage women (Clarke, 2004; CJI, 2011).

There is a distinction between short-term and long-term compliance (Robinson & McNeill, 2008). The former relates to abiding by restrictions within court sanctions, but the longer-term aim is to internalise change within a law-abiding commitment (*ibid.*). Along the journey from short to long-term compliance, formal interventions must follow collaboratively agreed, individualised goals that build on the individuals' strengths and capacity to lead a conventional lifestyle (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Therefore, practitioners should empower individuals to actively commit to and have hope in the self-change process (*ibid.*).

The User Voice (2011) consultation within London Probation concludes that positive relationships with practitioners do not automatically lead offenders to experience interventions as helpful. The unhelpfulness relates to the limited resources and powers available to offender managers, which means that structural problems remain unchanged (User Voice, 2011). Likewise, women in the joint inspection acknowledged that their offender managers were easy to talk to, but reported that these were superficial interactions:

Many of the women offenders...were less positive about their relationship with their offender manager than the offender manager might have wanted or expected...[and] appeared to be "going through the motions" with their offender managers (CJI, 2011, p.68).

The probation relationship is experienced as primarily punitive since there is a lack of trust and rapport (Clarke, 2004; CJI, 2011; User Voice, 2011). The absence of communications nuanced to women's particular needs can lead to confused expectations that leave women feeling anxious (Easton *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, women may disengage or not realise the opportunities available due to negative experiences of sentencing (Policis, 2009). A further barrier to engagement is the lack of assistance provided for women to keep appointments in the context of chaotic lifestyles, limited funds, or inadequate childcare (*ibid.*).

Interestingly, women often express preference for voluntary access to women's centre that take informal, supportive approaches (CJI, 2011). Provisions such as the Together Women

project fill important gaps, but availability is patchy (Hedderman *et al.*, 2008). Women's centre staff develop responsive relationships to boost service-users' confidence and offer interventions to address their problems holistically (Anderson, 2011; Hedderman *et al.*, 2011; Rice *et al.*, 2011). By contrast, criminal justice interventions are, 'often insufficiently designed to fully identify and address the complex and interrelated needs associated with social exclusion' that are at the heart of women's offending (SETF, 2009, p.5; NOMS, 2010c). The support needed therefore must be holistic, intensive and multi-dimensional to be effective (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; Home Office, 2007; Policis, 2009). Additionally, women's centres have been found to assist in promoting women's compliance with probation and provide longer-term avenues to access community provisions beyond short-lived enforced contact (CJI, 2011).

Promoting women's desistance

It is widely acknowledged that much cessation of offending occurs outside of criminal justice interventions (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Moreover, an extensive review of provisions for women highlights that:

Effective work is empowering and emphasises positive pathways out of offending, rather than focusing exclusively on the list of "criminogenic needs" derived from evaluations of offending programmes designed for men (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007, p.8).

National probation Offender Assessment System (OASys) descriptive statistics show the existence of a, 'particularly high need, high cost' cluster of women (SETF, 2009, p.16). Despite being the youngest age profile, these women have the highest likelihood of re-offending, the most drugs misuse, very poor relationships and significant emotional wellbeing needs, including self-harm. These individuals, 'may have been failed by services long before they hit the criminal justice system' and they face the highest rates of imprisonment (*ibid.*, p.16). At the opposite end of the scale are 'low need, low harm' women with the fewest previous convictions and lowest rate of re-offending despite having the oldest age profile (*ibid.*, p.16).

McIvor and colleagues (2008) identify that older (aged 18 to 25) persistent offenders were more pessimistic about their prospects of desisting from crime. Whereas, those who had resisted or desisted from offending over a prolonged period displayed higher self-esteem. Girls referred to a sense of shame about their impact on others and this improved empathy is significant as young women mature and grow out of crime (McIvor *et al.*, 2008). Sommers and colleagues (2004) identified that the increasing threat of punishment as women got older triggered their desire to, 're-establish links with conventional society and sever association with subcultural street elements' (p.330). Giving up crime and exiting a deviant lifestyle forms part of, 'a pragmatically constructed project of action created by the

individual within a given social context' (Sommers *et al.*, 2004, p.331). Experiencing crisis or hitting rock bottom leads women to evaluate their lives in the context of being anxious, dissatisfied or uneasy about their lifestyles.

Individuals who are seeking to reform utilise several opportunities for change, although women may experience ambivalence when attempts to stop, 'are thwarted by experiences of powerlessness' (Rumgay, 2004, p.407; Maruna, 2001). Women must *recognise* the opportunity to be *available* and *accessible* within their social context (Rumgay, 2004). Women have to also *value* the opportunity as a favoured alternative to their current situation (*ibid.*). Furthermore, expectations surrounding a non-offending identity may be met with limitations and the way women tackle such barriers impacts on their hopefulness, self-efficacy and expectation (McNeill & Weaver, 2010). Therein, life transitions and milestones, such as becoming a parent, have a cumulative effect. The culturally determined aspects of motherhood impact significantly on women and fear of losing children or being separated due to imprisonment often feature in women's accounts (McIvor *et al.*, 2008).

Rumgay (2004) highlights that skeleton scripts can assist individuals to adopt conventionally recognised roles and routines. Women must believe in their capacity to master the required skills to meet these real world responsibilities. Moreover, having made public announcements of their decision to desist from offending, women must have their achievements recognised by onlookers. This is often a challenge for women who no longer have meaningful relationships and ties with non-offending peers. Thus, there is a prerequisite to seek out or rebuild fractured connections with significant others. To establish such positive relationships and maintain a conventional lifestyle, women must be integrated into pro-social networks. This social integration also needs to improve the individual's capacity to exercise autonomy and self-determination within her daily routines (Maruna, 2001; Pollack, 2000). Therein, validation from onlookers empowers women to overcome the negative labels and stigmatisation within society at large (Burnett & Maruna, 2006; Rumgay, 2004). Consequently, making positive contributions to families, the community and wider society provide crucial opportunities for personal redemption (Maruna, 2001; McNeill & Weaver, 2010; Rumgay, 2004).

Equally, building resilience to cope requires considerable degrees of resourcefulness. However, some strategies that women apply could backfire, such as the isolation and loneliness that result when women distance themselves from associates or detach from anti-social activities within their locality (Rumgay, 2004; User Voice, 2011). Therefore, providing women-only, non-intimidating, welcoming environments are particularly valuable for service-users to begin to overcome these multiple vulnerabilities (Hedderman *et al.*, 2008). Women value the opportunity to work with professionals who treat them with respect and show genuine interest in them as individuals (Anderson, 2011; Easton *et al.*, 2010; Hedderman *et al.*, 2008; Hedderman *et al.*, 2011).

Women must, 'survive the...material deprivation, social exclusion and psychological vulnerability that dominate' their lifestyles (Rumgay, 2004, p.406; Home Office, 2007). Thus, practical support and assistance is needed to overcome barriers in everyday life (Anderson, 2011; Shapland *et al.*, n.d.). McNeill and Weaver (2010) draw attention to the fact that, '[h]ope, expectation and confidence fade quickly on an empty stomach' (p.6). Women tend to hold a 'default expectation...of failure and disappointment' or express 'feelings that they [do] not deserve a normal life' (Policis, 2009, p.4). When these low expectations are continually met with a lack of opportunities, women lose their self-esteem and may consider themselves undeserving of help (*ibid.*; Hedderman *et al.*, 2008; Home Office, 2007). Moreover, they may be unaware that help is available, or be suspicious of what is being offered (Anderson, 2011; Clarke, 2004).

Rumgay (2004) calls for 'normal-smiths' who are persistent in supporting women to realise their pro-social capabilities and who explicitly endorse their conventional identity (p.413). Sommers and colleagues (2004) found that successful treatment groups promoted independent living by connecting women to conventional societal structures that provide on-going support. Integrating with mainstream services that include non-offenders can normalise the experiences for women who offend (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007). These settings provide a supportive learning environment with avenues for peer mentoring and women have the option to return for longer term 'top up' support (*ibid.*, p.8). Such approaches are likely to make a difference for women who struggle to overcome their default expectations that they will fail in their quest for a normal life (Policis, 2009). Indeed, the desistance perspective draws attention to the value of informal approaches that reduce stigma and increase social integration (McNeill & Weaver, 2010). Policis (2009) identify that the critical factors to effectively support women involve:

...empathetic, non-judgemental but focused and realistic support workers, intensive support to address both addiction and underlying issues, effective help...[to] break [away] from their lifestyle...[including] housing and facilitation of access to benefits (Policis, 2009, p.12).

Farrall (2008) highlights that, "'traditional" one-to-one probation supervision...experienced only limited success in helping probationers to desist...because...such interventions are unable to' effectively tackle underlying problems (p.71). Instead, probation practitioners should be advocates of empowerment and take on a strengths-based approach (Burnett & Maruna, 2006; Maruna & LeBel, 2003). Such interventions must mediate the tensions inherent to the dominant risk-based narratives and create real-life opportunities for women (Maruna & LeBel, 2003; McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler & Maruna, 2012; Shapland *et al.*, n.d.). Work to promote desistance, 'should not focus solely on "fixing" individual shortcomings', but actively improve wider communities by developing 'a broader infrastructure of support' that provides an easily accessible network (Rumgay, 2004, p.415).

Methods

This qualitative study actively sought women's perspectives, because they are the experts on desistance (McNeill & Weaver, 2010; Rungay, 2004; Ward & Maruna, 2007).

The procedures

NOMS and London Probation were the formal gatekeepers and granted access to the research sites and participants (Reeves, 2010) (Appendix 3). The London School of Economics Research Ethics Committee independently reviewed the project's ethical safeguards (British Society of Criminology, 2006; British Sociological Association, 2004) (Appendix 4).

The Jagonari support workers and probation offender managers acted as informal gatekeepers, to approach women on their caseloads who had been sentenced between November 2010 and December 2011 (Appendix 5). The professionals did not approach vulnerable women in a state of crisis and the researcher was, 'wary of inadvertently disturbing the relationship between participants and gatekeepers' (British Sociological Association, 2004, p.7; Reeves, 2010). Practitioners informed eligible women about the research and sought permission for the researcher to have their contact details and initiate a first meeting (Appendix 6). Women who agreed to participate completed the informed consent form and questionnaire detailing their personal circumstances (Appendix 7; Appendix 8).

The focus groups and most interviews took place at the Jagonari centre. This location offered a comfortable women-only, child-friendly environment. This enabled two women to meet the researcher whilst children played in an adjoining area. Three others opted for meetings within probation offices closer to their homes. Another participant requested her meeting within her town hall café. This project was responsive to participants' needs to facilitate appropriate and comfortable interview locations³.

The participants' identities remain anonymous and pseudonyms are used throughout this report (see Table 4.2). To protect women's confidentiality, only the researcher had access to original audio recordings.

³ The only exemption was that no meetings occurred within women's homes, which prevented invasion on their privacy and upheld health and safety restrictions.

Sampling

The cross-sectional comparative design sampled women who are serving, or have recently completed the specified activity requirements (Flick, 2007). The research captures both snapshot and retrospective views of the women's experiences (ibid.). This approach was ethically and pragmatically more favourable than attempting a longitudinal study. Repeated interviewing over prolonged periods would increase the potential for psychological disturbance (British Sociological Association, 2004). Moreover, Hedderman and colleagues (2008) lament the 'somewhat artificial' timescales for their follow-up interviews with service-users 'which did not reflect reality' and yielded repetitive data (p.29). From a pragmatic standpoint a longitudinal design would not have been viable for this study since the active fieldwork lasted only 20 weeks from February to July 2012.

Sampling women sentenced in the earliest operational period raised the issue of privacy for individuals whose statutory supervision had ended and who may dislike further contact. Remarkably, all of the participants had been sentenced within the early implementation period and had completed or were close to completing their Orders. Jagonari encourages women to continue engaging with services after their order expires and had 10 such women on their caseload, as well as 17 others currently serving out their Orders (see Figure 4.1). The probation SSW delivery does not include voluntary contact after orders expire. This was an obstacle to identifying women with SSW, but one local probation data analyst identified two offender managers who held three eligible cases. The researcher drew these practitioners' attention to the study. However, two women were out of contact due to breach or imprisonment, and the only woman still in contact declined to participate (Table 3.1).

Eligible women who did not participate

Court Order	Reason	N
SSW	Breach & out of contact	1
	Whereabouts unknown following re-sentence to custody	1
	Decline	1
Jagonari	No further contact	1
	Ill-health	1
	Decline	1

Table 3.1: Eligible women who did not participate

Following expert panel advice, the eligibility period was widened to encourage offender managers to invite women with more recent SSW requirements (Gillham, 2005; King, Quality Checks). Sadly, there was no response and feedback from practitioners identified an absence of women to invite. This lack of SSW cases triggered adjustments to incorporate discussions with three local practitioners to examine why these women had been hard to reach (Clarke, 2004; Worrall, 2002). The resultant sample is greatly unbalanced since only one participant was subject to SSW compared to six with Jagonari requirements. This significantly weakens the study's ability to draw comparisons between women's experiences of these two activity requirements.

There were three further women with Jagonari sentences who did not participate (Table 3.1). One woman declined and two others agreed initially, but then encountered changes of circumstances.

A general descriptive account		
Variable		N
Gender	Female	7
Age	20s	3
	30s	2
	40s	2
Race/ethnicity	Asian-British Pakistani	1
	Black-African	1
	Black-British Caribbean	2
	Mixed-Other	1
	White-British	2
Employment status	Full-time paid	1
	JSA* & Volunteering	2
	Income Support	3
	Immigration restrictions	1
Domestic situation	Single with dependant(s)	7
Accommodation	Living with...	1
	Tenant	6

Table 3.2: A general descriptive account of the project sample

* Jobseeker's Allowance (unemployment state benefit)

The sample is opportunistic and relied upon who was both available and willing to participate. However, the seven cases selected after introductions from gatekeepers provided the opportunity to construct a body of empirical data to which the *a priori* themes could be applied and tested (Flick, 2007; King).

The six Jagonari participants represent over a fifth of the available (27) cases currently in contact with the Centre. Moreover, the participants invited by the gatekeepers included *typical* cases in relation to the types of offences accommodated within that particular community sentence (see Table 4.1), as well as characteristics identified within the existing literature (Flick, 2007). For example, all of the women identified themselves as single with dependants and the majority were not in paid employment (Table 3.2). These are typical features of domestic and socio-economic vulnerabilities (Home Office, 2007). Comparisons can be drawn due to the heterogeneity of age groups and ethnicity since women bring a 'variety of experiences and concerns' and have differences between their offences and previous convictions (see Table 4.2) (Flick, 2007, p.29). Of course, having only one participant with an SSW requirement limits the scope for in-depth comparison between the different provisions.

The research focuses on compliance so the participants' experiences of enforcement are *critical* factors in case selection (Flick, 2007). Those who had successfully completed the specified activity or who were continuing to comply are critical cases. Sadly, the opposite feature of breach and non-compliance remain unrepresented since these individuals were harder to reach, although some insight is provided in Afia's case due to her breach of her new community sentence.

The inclusion of one case with immigration-related issues provides an interesting variant that incorporates *intensity* factors (Flick, 2007). This is particularly enlightening in relation to conceptualising women's experience of empowerment. The immigration dimension added analytical depth from a perspective of extreme deprivation and hardship.

Data gathering

The human voices have been captured through multiple interview methods (Gillham, 2005) (Table 3.3). Methodological triangulation between individual and group interviews provides 'complementary' data to contextualise the accounts (ibid., p.165). The primary data collection methods were the semi-structured interviews and first focus group, which were recorded and transcribed to improve coding and analysis reliability (ibid.). The researcher made field notes from the unstructured follow-up interactions and conversations.

Methods of data collection	Who participated
Preliminary one-to-one meeting with questionnaire	Abi, Afia, Chantel, Emma, Kim, Susan, Tunde ($n = 7$)
One-to-one semi-structured interview	Abi, Chantel, Emma, Kim, Susan, Tunde ($n = 6$)
Focus group 1	Chantel, Kim, Tunde ($n = 3$)
Focus group 2	Chantel, Emma, Kim, Tunde ($n = 4$)
Follow-up one-to-one (unstructured) meeting	Chantel, Emma, Kim, Susan, Tunde ($n = 5$)

Table 3.3: Respondents who participated in the data collection methods

The *a priori* themes and guidance from existing interview instruments informed the interview schedule (Easton *et al.*, 2010; Hedderman *et al.*, 2008) (Appendix 8). The consent form, questionnaire and interview schedule were piloted with Kim and revisions made before interviewing other women. The open-ended questions facilitated use of the 'more subtle and less intrusive' 'reflecting' technique to sensitively respond to the women's self-narratives (Gillham, 2005, p.36).

The focus group topic guide was revised several times to ensure that questions were clear and jargon-free (Krueger, 1998) (Appendix 9). All seven participants were invited to the first group, because it was not possible to convene separate groups since only Emma had an SSW requirement. Emma was unable to attend the first group due to her employment, but attended the second. Three participants, including the pilot volunteer, Kim, attended the first group (Table 3.3). However, it is acceptable to convene a focus group comprising three respondents where sensitive issues need to be discussed (Cronin, 2006). Kim had been supported to take on a co-moderator role and her willingness to share her personal story put the other women at ease and facilitated a positive group dynamic (Barbour, 2007).

The researcher presented preliminary findings within the final focus group to seek 'respondent feedback' (King, Quality Checks, p.3; Barbour, 2007; Flick, 2007). This quality check technique highlights the importance of and inherent validity in what the women say. Participants could immediately see how their feedback and recommendations were being interpreted since these were recorded directly onto a flipchart. This group session also sought to reinforce to the participants that their voices are at the forefront of the analysis. The researcher discharged wider ethical duties by confirming respondents' on-going informed consent before writing up and disseminating the study⁴ (British Sociological Association, 2004).

⁴ These issues were addressed individually with the three participants who did not attend the group.

Thematic analysis strategy

The process of consciously formulating research questions and identifying *a priori* themes began with the literature review (King) (Figure 3.1). Thus, themes and issues well-documented within existing studies were explicit from the outset. An 'audit trail' of the analytical decisions taken is set out within a research journal, raw data charts and the final template (Gillham, 2005, p.162; King).

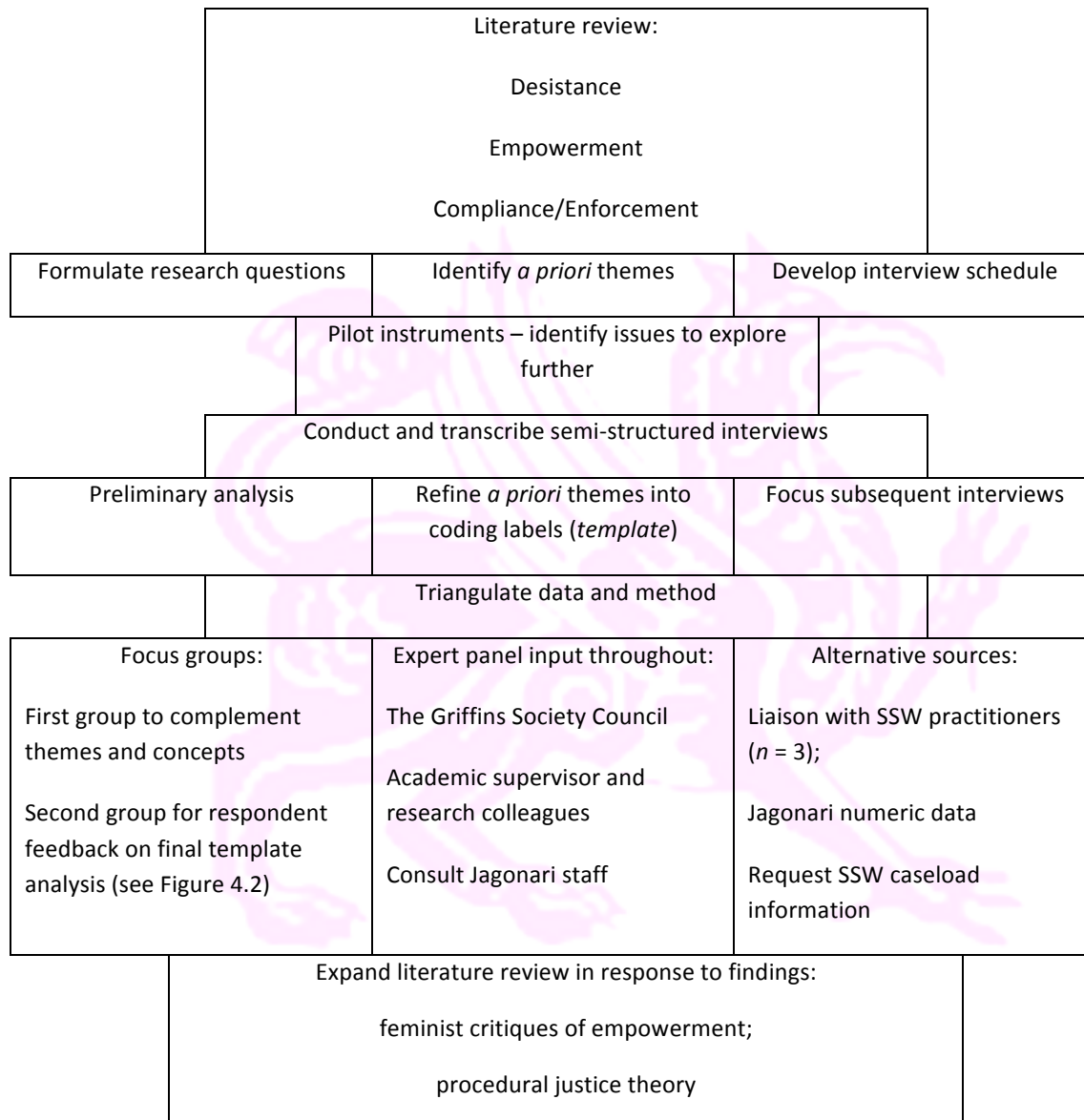


Figure 3.1: Data analysis process

In analysing interview data, we are, 'inevitably making some kind of interpretive construction' of the participants' narratives, who are themselves 'constructing' their identity as they speak (Gillham, 2005, p.6). This, '[i]nter-subjectivity is at the heart of all social relations' and demands that analysis is systematic and rigorous (ibid., p.6). The researcher reflected upon and remained aware of the selections being made from the transcripts in order to use the data responsibly, 'in an even-handed fashion' (ibid., p.9). In fact, the

template analysis technique was chosen in an effort to mediate interpretive bias and following advice from the expert panel (King).

Regular Griffins Society meetings and academic supervision provided guidance on next steps, which reflects King's advice that expert input is most useful in preliminary stages to develop the initial template. There was no avenue for statistically calculating inter-scorer agreement since the researcher worked alone. This shortfall was amongst the considerations why a conservative coding system, such as Maruna (2001) applied, would have been unworkable. Moreover, King highlights that aiming for inter-scorer reliability, 'flies in the face of the notion that texts are always open to a variety of readings' (King, Quality Checks, p.2).

The piloting process and respondent feedback allows for further quality checks. It was noted that power relations could potentially lead participants to feel uneasy or consider it unhelpful to criticise or disagree. However, the second focus group feedback session emboldened participants to dictate to the researcher how the final template analysis should be represented. The end product is located at Figure 4.2. Jagonari practitioners were also consulted for comments on this final analysis. Given the inter-subjectivity of all social relations, no-one can claim to objectively interpret verbal utterances since this would miss the, 'unique power of interview data' (Gillham, 2005, p.8; King).

Results and Discussion

Putting the Specified Activity Requirements (SAR) into context

Jagonari managed 48 SARs between November 2010 and early April 2012. On average, the Orders specified 18 sessions, but ranged between six and 30, which exceeds the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for 20 maximum sessions. The overall compliance is impressive with almost three quarters of the women either successfully completing or continuing to comply (Figure 4.1).

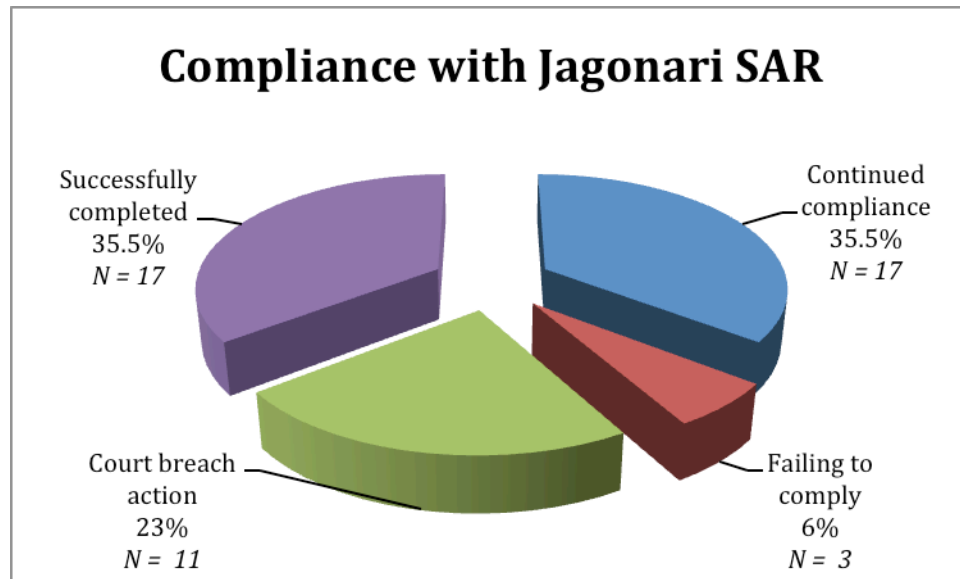


Figure 4.1 Compliance with the Jagonari Specified Activity Requirement from November 2010 to 2 April 2012

The majority of the women who had failed to comply were returned to court for breach action. Two women within this poor compliance group⁵ have histories of poor compliance having received the SAR for breach of previous orders (Table 4.1). By contrast, two others brought back to court for breach actually continued voluntary contact with Jagonari after their SARs expired. This demonstrates women's willingness to voluntarily access resources even after the negativity of enforcement action. This preference for self-referral and access on women's own terms is well documented (Clarke, 2004; CJI, 2011; Easton *et al.*, 2010). In fact, eight of the 17 women who completed their SAR continue with Jagonari voluntarily.

Jagonari ratified the SLA with one probation borough. However, the support workers took six "out of area" court referrals for women living in two neighbouring boroughs. These women were fully complying, but problems could arise if enforcement action is required since the offender managers do not have a SLA with Jagonari. In these instances, Jagonari made arrangements with individual officers, but received no additional funds from the two

⁵ One was returned to court for breach action and the other was recorded as 'not complying'

boroughs. Accepting women outside their official SLA illustrates Jagonari's eagerness to provide a credible alternative to custody. This includes one research participant who resides outside the SLA borough, but received Jagonari as a suspended prison sentence. Furthermore, support workers had been involved with six other women for several months prior to any court order being imposed.

Offence	Number
Violence (common assault, assault Police, ABH [*] , GBH [^] , racially aggravated Public Order Act, having blade)	12
Theft (shoplifting, handling stolen goods, burglary)	9
Fraud (benefit, immigration, possession of article)	4
Breach Court Order (Community Order, ASBO ⁺)	2
Dangerous dogs	1
Drink drive	1
Drug cultivation	1
Unknown	18

Table 4.1 Offences leading to the Jagonari Specified Activity Requirement

* Actual Bodily Harm; ^Grievous Bodily Harm; +Anti-Social Behaviour Order

The Jagonari SAR was imposed for a range of offences, with violence, theft and fraud predominating (Table 4.1). In this regard, the Jagonari research participants provide a good representation of typical offences, because two fall within the violence, two within theft and one within fraud (Table 4.2).

Comparable SSW figures were requested from London Probation, but were not made available. As an alternative, the researcher liaised with three SSW practitioners to gain a snapshot of their experiences delivering this requirement. These discussions highlighted that typical offences include low-level assault, fraud and false representation and previous breaches. The feedback suggests that women on SSW usually have more entrenched offending histories, including experience of previous community sentences.

What women say about their experiences

The participants gave up considerable time and indicated their desire to make a difference for other women in similar circumstances. The remaining sections present the individual and group interview template analysis to make connections between this new empirical data and the existing literature.

What factors do women identify as important for desistance?

Each woman was asked about re-offending and less than half self-reported committing new offences (Table 4.2). Obviously, this is not a sophisticated reconviction study and so cannot be generalised. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the two women with the most extensive offending history deny any re-offending (Abi and Chantel). Both participants are young women who match the Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF, 2009) high-need profile with previous offending linked to alcohol-fuelled violence, criminal associations and a lack of positive social ties. For one, she had grown up in local authority care and the other had been excluded from school aged just 13. Both found themselves relying on the company of older, male and female, anti-social peers and report being caught up in a lifestyle whereby they felt there were no alternatives.

Respondent	Age	Offence	Previous convictions	Re-offended (self-report)	Order imposed
Abi	23	Assault x2 & Criminal Damage	10+	No	Jagonari, Curfew, Suspended Sentence
Afia	20	Burglary x3; Breach	4	Yes	Jagonari, Supervision, ETE*
Chantel	20	Assault & Threatening words	7	No	Jagonari
Emma	37	Drink Drive	1	Yes	SSW, Supervision
Kim	43	Theft by employee	1	No	Referred to Jagonari within licence supervision
Susan	34	Dangerous Dogs Act	None	Yes	Jagonari
Tunde	40s	Immigration Act fraud	None [Police caution]	No	Jagonari Suspended Sentence

Table 4.2: The respondents' pseudonyms, age, offence, previous convictions, re-offending and Order imposed.

* ETE is a specified activity to access Education, Training and Employment advice.

Chantel is furthest along her desistance journey having already had a five-year gap in her criminal record, which she attributes to her unplanned teenage pregnancy. She recounts how she grew up fast:

I had to, you got no choice...I'm out of that life now, so it was brilliant (Chantel).

Abi also identifies motherhood as her turning point, but this came a significant while after having her child and centred on feeling “disgusted” after re-evaluating her lifestyle:

Rather than just go out and get drunk and cause havoc and get arrested...You've got to think of a young person...that's following you and looking up to you. So, if I'm going out getting in trouble then my little boy thinks that's good and it's not...I want him to have a better life than what I did...do better than what I did (Abi).

Both young women came to their decision based on emotional connection to their roles as a “young mum”. Their self-identity and confidence in their ability to fulfil the role involved a course of actions after making the decision to turn their life around (Figure 4.2; Maruna, 2001; Rungay, 2004; Sommers *et al.*, 2004).

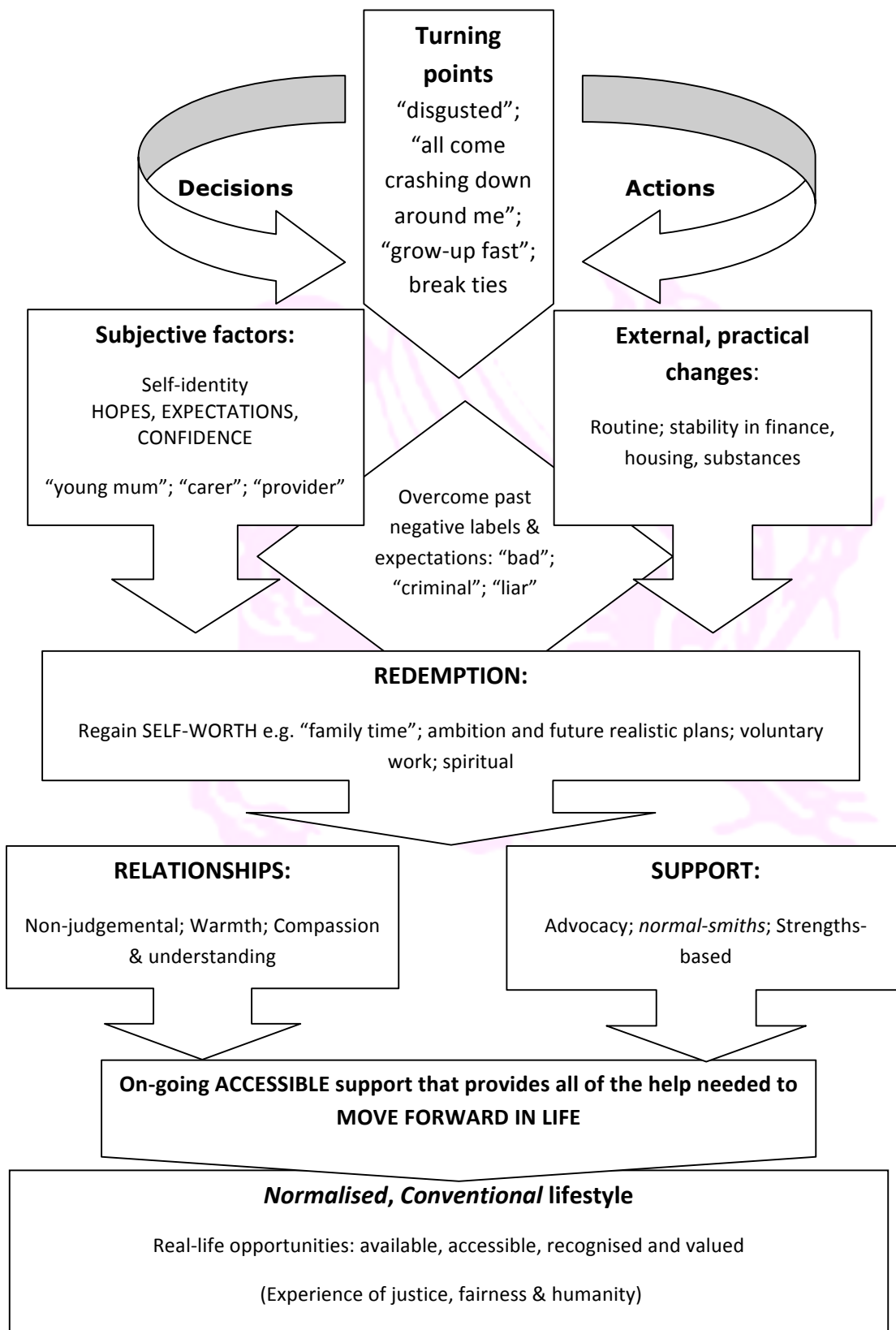
Chantel chose to isolate herself early on from the “children’s home gang”, but found loneliness in a situation that involved domestic abuse. She felt somewhat trapped and spoke of her relieve when she found Jagonari, albeit as a result of re-offending. The supportive environment enabled her to build up strength to move on from her abusive relationship and access practical support for housing and debts.

Abi made changes to her routine and publicly announced her decision to avoid offending by breaking ties with her anti-social peers, which enabled her to avoid binge drinking. She declares:

My life has changed...I've got ambition now. I want to go out and do something...I want to get up in the morning and see the day (Abi).

This exemplifies McIvor and colleagues’ (2008) finding that older (18-25 year-old) girls who had resisted or desisted had greater confidence and hope in their ability to move forward in life.

Figure 4.2: This final template analysis was developed based on the participants' description of their desistance journeys. Women's experiences involve on-going decisions and actions that take place over time with the support of people within their social context (issues similarly found in Maruna, 2001; Runggay, 2004; and Sommers *et al.*, 2004).



The participants in their 30s and 40s all had smaller offending histories and conform to the 'low need, low harm' profile (SETF, 2009, p.16). The issues differed for these women, but the desistance journey required a similar, 'pragmatically constructed project' of decisions and actions (Sommers *et al.*, 2004, p.331) (Figure 4.2). Tunde has to manage the need to "make two ends meet" to provide for her children in the face of immigration restrictions. Kim has to cope with the consequences of over-spending triggered by her deteriorating mental health and eagerness to maintain an illusion of being in control. Emma has on-going struggles with her alcohol misuse which increased when she experienced bereavement and loss. Susan experiences isolation from her surroundings and has to deal with the insecurity of poverty after losing her well-paid job and "comfortable" lifestyle.

When asked about their chances of re-offending, all of the participants asserted they would not. This included the two women interviewed who had actually re-offended. Afia was not interviewed since crisis surrounding her accommodation and breach action on her new sentence (that was the result of the re-offending) took priority. Interestingly, both Emma and Susan expressed the view that their new convictions were miscarriages in justice and related their confidence about not re-offending to the fact that they "would not intentionally" break the law (Susan). Emma felt that she was standing up for her rights in the new public order offence. Susan felt a sense of injustice about her first conviction, which triggered the animal ban that she subsequently breached. Both cases highlight how perceptions of fairness and legitimacy impact on individual's commitment to longer-term compliance with the law (Robinson & McNeill, 2008; Tyler, 2006).

The focus group unanimous response to, "what helps women on their journey to stop offending?" referred to finding underlying causes and seeking effective support.

Listening to them and finding out the reason why they done it. Just helping them (Chantel, Focus Group 1).

Participants identified that support to implement practical changes must address multiple factors. The women recounted being assisted with finances, in relation to budgeting and debt advice, as well as more basic needs such as accessing a food bank. They had received housing support to deal with threats of eviction, obtain community care grants for furniture, and appeal local authority decisions to withhold long-term tenancies. Childcare was identified as a significant area that stopped women pursuing their plans. Therefore, accessing childcare provisions alongside parenting support were valuable. Participants also valued education and employment input to pursue their ambitions and become self-sufficient. This was the most common focus for women's desire to obtain a conventional identity and lead a 'normal life' (Policis, 2009, p.4; Sommers *et al.*, 2004). The two participants involved in volunteer work were eager to demonstrate their "work ethic" (Susan) and show their children the value of employment (see Table 3.2).

And even though I'm not PAID, I'm showing [my son] responsibility that I get up and I have to go to work (Susan).

Kim volunteered to support mentally disordered prisoners. Emma was the only participant in paid employment, but had previously worked voluntarily to provide information and support to defendants' families at court. Both women felt they could use their own experiences of the criminal justice system to make a difference for others. Susan was more pragmatic and her volunteer work with various charities was to develop her work experience ahead of securing paid employment. All three women referred to the lack of value that the Job Centre attributed to their contribution in these roles. They all felt that volunteering provided opportunities for redemption to demonstrate and regain their self-worth (Maruna, 2001).

For Tunde, immigration restrictions means she is not entitled to work and so feels robbed of a crucial part of her self-identity as the provider for her children.

...my children were looking forward to see that mummy is going to be a nurse, so it's like a challenge, they want to do better too in life. But [now I am prevented from working]... what future have these two children got? (Tunde)

She laments the generational impact that unemployment has, which leads many children's lives to "go down the drain". Tunde actively maintains her non-offending identity in church for fear her peers would judge her. Besides, she finds spiritual strength and sanctuary in a setting where she remains her "old self" prior to being convicted:

When you see me in church you won't even know I've got any problems, because when I'm there...I find peace...joy and...hope (Tunde).

Women referred to the stabilising routines that improve their ability to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. In this regard, the majority considered that attending within women-only environments provide crucial holistic support. By contrast, the two younger participants spoke of feeling safe in mixed settings and referred to their own "tomboy" tendencies due to growing up and offending alongside boys. Crucially, when asked if they felt that Jagonari should have mixed settings, these young women unanimously, and independently, concluded that this would have a detrimental impact on their feelings of comfort to speak and act freely.

Every Jagonari participant spoke positively of the Wednesday drop-in service and valued the companionship, access to support and ability to voluntarily engage.

I know it's only a Wednesday, but that one day in a week is something for you to look forward to and it does make a big difference (Chantel).

These issues were echoed in the Jagonari evaluation where women suggested extending the provision to meet the increasing demand (Rice *et al.*, 2011). Many women were surprised

about the availability of the service and felt that this should remain open to all women and not just those on court orders. Women also recognised the value of the routine to attend on a Wednesday as well as having the confidence in the service existing should they need intervention in the future. Interestingly, Emma was also aware of Jagonari's drop-in provision as a means to access on-going support at the end of her SSW one-to-one programme.

What is empowerment?

Within each individual interview women were asked, "what does 'empowerment' mean to you?" Some women seemed intimidated by this question with an extended period of silence or outbursts of nervous laughter. One of the young women stated:

...you know women are just women. (Chantel)

Feminist scholars warn that empowerment may encourage individuals to internalise the myth that they alone have the power to change their circumstances (Becker, 2005). Indeed, when alone, women tended to focus on psychological dimensions of empowerment. Emma, the only SSW participant, expressed an individual understanding:

...strength, power, courage. Empowering yourself, believing in yourself. (Emma)

She also used cognitive-behavioural terminology to describe her circumstances, such as having an "unhealthy relationship" with her son's father (who was abusive and now fails to support his son). Emma considered that the "CBT" (cognitive-behavioural therapy, in her words) was useful. However, she separated her practical difficulties from her thinking processes. She had, independently, accessed bereavement counselling, alcohol support and found volunteer work and then paid employment. Emma felt alone on her quest for change, but draws strength from her spirituality:

I've set my mind to say "do you know what, God is stronger". I'm blessed, I'm not bitter....And you need to be happy with your lot. Yeah, and I am (Emma).

Susan echoes the idea that she has to accept her circumstances and remain positive since "there is always someone worse off". These expressions of "accepting your lot" bring to life the dangers that Worrall (2002) and Pollack (2000) highlight. Focusing on self-esteem and cognitive-deficits de-contextualises the struggles that women face. Moreover, this triggers a failure to recognise that psychological and socio-political dimensions of empowerment are inter-related (Pollack, 2000).

Indeed, other women offered a combined view, whereby they recognise the need for social support. However, their accounts still emphasise individual responsibility:

What it means to me is taking ownership of my own problems, my own issues. But, having someone to back you up as well – that was what was needed (Kim).

The women in their 30s and 40s provided more polished responses, which may be related to their life experience and previous roles as professionals (in nursing, finance and management). For example, Susan, whilst recognising the multiple definitions, settles on empowerment as a means to achieve personal goals:

...everyone's got their different meanings...the way I look at it, empowerment is giving us the tools and the help that we need so that we don't commit crime again...Empowerment is to help women who were struggling, like me, to fulfil our dreams and to get a job (Susan).

However, we cannot assume that all women consider "self-development" a positive step. Susan demonstrated her apprehension about the Jagonari "courses like 'finding your inner strength'". She considered it a threat that staff would "try to pick into my head" and force her to disclose personal information. Clarke (2004) warns that women who refuse to engage with empowerment could be deemed problematic or lost causes.

It is noteworthy that Tunde, who has faced acute oppression and discrimination, individually highlighted that structural barriers cannot be changed by focussing on personal strength and confidence:

They...empower us, but after the empowerment, what [else]? They empower us and we go back home....Yeah...the strength is there, the emotional support is there, but I don't want all that if I can't feed my children! Let me just...be down, let me be depressed...I even prefer that...which mother would see her children suffering! (Tunde).

She remains largely powerless, even in the face of her children being hungry, to challenge the underlying structural restrictions based on her immigration status, whereby she has no access to public funds and cannot work to earn money. This case exemplifies McNeill and Weaver's (2010) reminder that unless basic human needs are addressed ex-offenders will struggle to maintain hope, confidence and expectations.

The majority of participants, including Tunde, were positive about Jagonari's self-development support. Kim was especially positive about the help to re-build her self-esteem through relaxation breathing techniques and tips on body language. It is noteworthy that women with diagnosed depression linked the emotional support to their improved ability to cope with their low mood and anxiety, as well as feelings of loneliness and isolation. Interestingly, women who had no history of mental health issues also valued the stress reduction sessions:

Stress is a big part of people's lives. Learning to deal with it was really good (Abi).

Crucially, Abi recounted her fear of groups, but had been supported to engage in many workshops at Jagonari. This brings attention to the social, peer support aspect of the women's centre services. All Jagonari participants, including Susan who was initially sceptical, spoke of feeling comfortable and protected due to the trust engendered within the setting. As Chantel explained:

Here everyone has their own opinions and everyone is accepting of everyone's opinion (Chantel).

Thus, there is no pressure to fit a mould and individuals who initially mistrust the empowerment ethos are gradually won over. Susan happily asserts that she takes what she wants from workshops and fits it to her own circumstances.

The group discussion initially elicited psychological empowerment explanations. However, wider social aspects emerged as women shared their experiences to overcome isolation, loneliness and abuse. The women exemplify the efforts needed to cope with default expectations of disappointment and failure highlighted within the Policis (2009) study.

Chantel: Being at the highest of the highs. Feeling like you are on top of the world...not better than anyone else, but you feel like you can do anything just as good as anyone else.

...

Tunde: Yeah...feeling the strength

...

Kim: And that is it for me. All those years to go through what I've been through and still come out the other end. There were times when I just wanted to end it all.

Chantel: Definitely...some people wouldn't even be here now!

Tunde: Yeah!

Chantel: If they'd gone through what we've all gone through.

Tunde: Yeah!

Chantel: We are all really strong

Kim: That's right

Chantel: Being here today and smiling...That just shows...that we have got power in ourselves and we are strong...

Kim: Yeah, I think for me the empowerment is someone, people having that faith and trust in you and giving you that support

Tunde: Definitely

Kim: To make you believe in yourself

Chantel: Definitely

Kim: That's how I feel about it

Chantel: Not making you feel bad

Kim: That's right, we've had enough of that, haven't we?!

Chantel: Yeah!

Kim: over the years! Suddenly, someone is saying, "you can do it" and "you are a good person".

(Focus Group 1)

This exchange demonstrates how valuable consciousness raising can be, especially since Chantel had struggled to articulate her feelings about empowerment during her individual interview (Pollack, 2004; Thompson, 2001).

Two-thirds of the women disclosed previous abusive relationships and spoke of the strength and courage gained from confidence-building support. This assisted them to regain control over their lives and realise that they "have a choice" (Chantel) and "have rights" (Tunde). Domestic violence workshops, peer support and consciousness-raising about inter-personal relationships enable women to overcome loneliness and isolation. Conversely, Susan complained that she was forced to disclose her experience of domestic violence during the fast delivery court report interview. She did not appreciate this invasion and was infuriated by the misrepresentation within the report, which she felt presented her as a "hopeless victim" contrary to her self-identity (Pollack, 2000).

In summary, empowerment is an on-going and relational process (Pollack, 2000). Empowering women to feel confident and strong must be accompanied by holistic support. If the world women are being encouraged to "take on" lacks opportunities then individual empowerment will be wasted. Interventions must challenge the structural and cultural oppression that women face and recognise that there is no 'innocent place' for empowerment (Pollack, 2004, p.704; Becker, 2005; Cruikshank, 1999). As Clarke (2004) and Worrall (2002) warn, expecting women to obediently comply with provision can have

negative consequences. Therefore, empowerment requires long-term commitment and is not just a technique for practitioners to apply periodically (Thompson, 2001).

Is being empowered an important part of desistance?

Emma's account suggests that her desire to assert her personal strength triggered her re-offending. She was involved in an altercation and convicted of using threatening words and behaviour.

I stood up for my rights, like Rosa Parks⁶. At the Post Office where I live they are racists (Emma).

Viewing Emma's action within the one-dimensional cognitive-deficit model would pathologise her actions as aggression mistaken for assertiveness (Pollack, 2000; Worrall, 2002). However, her behaviour must be seen in the context of the oppression and marginalisation she faces as a Black woman. Furthermore, she recounted being subject to sexual discrimination at the hands of her male boss at work. For her, demonstrating assertiveness and high self-esteem are resilience factors and a means of survival within her social context (Rumgay, 2004; SETF, 2009). Crucially, Emma is eager not to be perceived as a victim and she identified how losing her mother had forced her to put all other experiences into perspective. Thus, this is a case that exemplifies Pollack's (2000) argument that women act as agents under oppression. Furthermore, women's identities are not exclusively linked to their experiences of victimisation (Pollack, 2000; 2004).

Upon concluding the individual interviews, it was clear that women's perspectives about empowerment and desistance needed further examination. Hence, the question "is being empowered a way to stay out of trouble?" was included in the focus group, which triggered initial responses in the affirmative.

Being empowered should make you go out and get a job...If you feel empowered, you feel like you can do anything, so why would you go and commit crime if you are empowered? (Chantel, Focus Group 1)

However, a different dimension emerged as respondents' discussed experiences of rejection, suffering and the lack of opportunities (Policis, 2009; Rumgay, 2004).

Tunde: So even though you are empowered, that doesn't mean that you can't commit crime - it can still happen. Because you go to all those that are supposed to be helpful and open but they are still closed - no help, no assistance, nothing...

⁶ Rosa Parks was an African-American woman who was arrested and convicted after refusing to give up her seat for a white man on a segregated bus in 1955. Her actions triggered the Montgomery Bus Boycott and marked a significant turning point within the Black Civil Rights Movement in the USA.

Chantel: The empowerment is getting taken away from you, isn't it?

Tunde: Yes and so...you just break and you don't have the strength, it just happens....

Kim: It's down to the powers that be. Whilst we can become empowered and we can feel confident, if the help isn't out there it makes it impossible for us...[agreement from Tunde and Chantel]...We can only do so much...we need the help out there still.

(Focus Group 1)

Respondents conclude that women need support and help alongside individual empowerment. This fits Pollack's (2000) proposition that psychological and social aspects are dynamically interrelated.

Participants identified several structural barriers that limit genuine choices and opportunities (Rumgay, 2004; Worrall, 2002), including the benefits system administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) barrier to employment. The procedural justice framework shed light on women's accounts of the lack of dignity and humanity in the way DWP authorities treat them (Jackson, Tyler, Bradford, Taylor & Shiner, 2010). Expectations are not reciprocated, such as the demand to submit papers within certain timeframes or else lose benefits. Yet, women reported that the DWP often lost paperwork or failed to record notifications, but face no consequences. The CRB system prevents women from entering many professional positions because of the way conviction disclosures are categorised (NACRO, n.d.). This is a widely debated issue as set out in NACRO's *change the record* campaign to amend the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (NACRO, n.d; Lunn, n.d; User Voice, 2011).

Participants experienced a lack of control over their socio-political context that hampers their ability to move forward in life. Throughout the first and second focus groups, respondents lamented the inhumanity, unfairness and injustices that left them feeling powerless, even if they had previously been empowered and strengthened psychologically. Women's roles and the expectations placed upon them means that they must survive many pressures whilst providing for their dependants:

Chantel: Us women try to be...strong, don't we?

Kim: Everything for all people:...mums, wives, girlfriends...Everyone else can be putting on you

Chantel: Yeah

Kim: And you have to just take it all. And then you buckle.

(Focus Group 1)

Therein, the participants vividly illustrate the warning from feminist commentators that empowerment forces women to internalise their oppression (Becker, 2005; Cruikshank, 1999). Respondents had daily experience of the interpersonal, political, economic and structural barriers that remain unchanged (Pollack, 2000; Worrall, 2002):

Tunde: There's nothing to be empowered about!...You can't see your children feeling hungry and say you are empowered! Empowered to do what? You can't feed them! What kind of mother are you? It's hard, it's emotional, it's really tough!

(Focus Group 1)

Does enforced contact with interventions empower women, or does a court order undermine empowerment?

The focus group identify the impact being convicted can have on self-confidence in the face of judgement from others.

Kim: once you've hit the criminal justice [system]...you lose your –

Chantel: Self-dignity

Kim: Yeah!

Tunde: Yeah!

Kim: And what you could do normally and you were quite confident before, suddenly it's gone.

Tunde: As soon as people see that you've got a criminal record, they judge.

(Focus Group 1)

All participants reported being unaware of Jagonari prior to sentencing and also lacked awareness of any similar provisions elsewhere. Most respondents (including the SSW participant) expressed apprehension about their initial contact within their court order. This included the women who had no previous experience of community sentences. Susan's preconceived ideas about being forced to attend Jagonari sessions led her to declare:

I don't want to be sat around a table gossiping – not my cup of tea at all! (Susan)

With the benefit of experience, however, Susan radically changed:

I love it here [but] actually I can't even say [that I would have attended before] if I'd known about this Centre without coming through the justice system. Personally I don't think I would have actually come here (Susan).

Thus, her assumptions about “women's groups” would have been a barrier to her voluntary attendance prior to the enforced contact. Conversely, some women with previous

experiences of community sanctions pointed out that attending Jagonari presented a preferable alternative to probation offices:

I would definitely pick this place, because it's not like I'm a criminal...I feel so comfortable here...this would be my choice (Chantel).

This sentiment was echoed across the age ranges and women identified the usefulness of knowing they can access Jagonari for future back up support, as found by Gelsthorpe and colleagues (2007):

...sometimes you just need that place where you can go and talk about your problems and someone says to you...“let's sort that out and let's work through” (Kim).

Equally, women valued being able to access intensive and ongoing support to deal with difficulties, as identified by the Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF, 2009):

They [Jagonari support workers] wouldn't give up...they will still try [to assist with obstacles set by immigration restrictions]...and so by the time I've finished and I'm on my way home I feel a bit relieved, I say “yeah, ok that's another day, let's keep on fighting” (Tunde).

Conversely, a minority of women emphasise their desire to avoid too much intrusion. Susan challenges the assumption that she must be “open” and “emotional” due to her gender:

I am a woman...but I'm very private on certain parts of my life (Susan).

She therefore felt the need to approach her initial contacts with Jagonari staff cautiously as she felt uncomfortable about potentially being forced to disclose personal information.

Crucially, all respondents valued the practical assistance provided once they made Jagonari's workers aware of their immediate concerns, including threat of eviction, debts, seeking childcare, or finding volunteer work. However, some women also pointed out that the input from probation offender managers facilitated their engagement with Jagonari services. In Tunde's case, her lack of funds means she was only able to travel across London boroughs to attend Jagonari thanks to her offender manager providing daily travel-cards. This involved her walking from home to the nearby probation office to collect the ticket before making the journey, which had to fit around collecting her children from two different schools. Had it not been for this practical, financial assistance, she would have ended up in breach due to failure to attend, as well as missing out on the support provided at Jagonari.

These multiple accounts of how women engage with interventions, highlights that a one-size-fits-all approach would be ineffective (NOMS, 2010a). Furthermore, women who choose not to seek out such services should not be unduly judged as being unresponsive

(Clarke, 2004). If and when reluctant women come into contact with provisions, energy needs to be spent building their trust and confidence to engage (Policis, 2009). It has been demonstrated that focussing on the immediate concerns articulated by women themselves fosters trust and has a stabilising effect (CJJI, 2011; SETF, 2009).

Moreover, the focus group concluded that reserving support for those on a court order sends the wrong message to women.

Chantel: So what are they [service providers and commissioners] saying to us: for us to get help, we have to go out and commit a crime?

Tunde: For help

Chantel: And I think that's disgusting! So, I really think that they should...keep it for anyone to come. I don't think that you should have to get a court order to get help. You should be able to get help BEFORE you get in that situation of getting in trouble and getting a criminal record.

(Focus Group 1)

In order to prevent women from hitting crisis point, holistic support is needed to build resilience and gain practical assistance for domestic, personal and socio-economic vulnerabilities (Home Office, 2007; SETF, 2009). Every participant praised Jagonari for facilitating their access to mainstream services that assisted them with a wide range of difficulties. The list includes the pragmatic aspects already mentioned such as maintaining tenancies, but women also pointed out the interpersonal value of gaining companionship and peer support to overcome isolation and loneliness.

What contributes to women's decisions about engagement and compliance?

First and foremost, every participant (both Jagonari and SSW) appreciated being treated as individuals who are deserving of recognition and respect (Hedderman *et al.*, 2008; Hedderman *et al.*, 2011; Rice *et al.*, 2011). The relationships women described with Jagonari staff resembled that of Rungay's (2004) 'normal-smiths', whereby workers persistently support and recognise individuals' strengths. Women spoke of experiencing Jagonari's humanising, welcoming approach:

It was...laid back and the people aren't so "you're a criminal" kind of thing...They don't judge you. They just treat you as someone who has just walked in off the road and just meet you and say "hello"...that's really nice (Chantel).

So too, women at Jagonari are encouraged to take ownership of the environment, through "house meetings" whereby they can make comments and suggestions for the centre.

Participants also recount being invited to attend when local Members of Parliament and government officials visit, and all had contributed to plans for future services. The social milieu of peer support was resoundingly appreciated, including by individuals who preferred more privacy. All Jagonari respondents acknowledged the fact that everyone was welcomed, accepted and respected by both staff and peers.

The experiences prior to starting their order impacted significantly on women's compliance decisions. Susan's negative experiences of the criminal justice system as a "first time offender" marred her initial compliance. This phenomenon is identifiable within the moral performance literature (Jackson *et al.*, 2010; McNeill, 2012b). She recounts feeling that her sentence lacked legitimacy due to being "lied to every step of the way". She felt that the Police "tricked her" with an improper warrant then led her to the station under "false pretences". She felt that the probation fast delivery court report (FDR) was filled with misrepresentations and her solicitor failed to pay any attention to her at court. Therefore, she feels that she was not provided with an opportunity to give her account to the sentencing Judge. The Joint Inspection found poor quality FDRs completed on women, which did not set a sound basis for compliance on community sentences (CJI, 2011). Furthermore, the NOMS Women and Equalities Group (2012) calls for more time to be allotted for women's court reports.

By contrast, Tunde, also a "first time offender", spoke positively of her sentencing experience. She felt that the FDR author had taken time to find out about her. Furthermore, the Judge listened to her story, having also read her character references (from which he quoted about her "being an asset to society"). This account of feeling that authority figures exercise humanity in decision-making, which is experienced as leniency, is also identified within the moral performance literature (McNeill, 2012b). Therefore, despite receiving a suspended sentence, Tunde felt that her treatment was lenient and fair within the confines of the law. This fuelled her eagerness to engage with Jagonari as she expected that the support would provide much-needed assistance to cope with her material deprivation.

Women with previous or recent experiences of community sentences delivered by probation and the Youth Offending Team were less eager to engage with further criminal justice provisions. Afia, whose crisis meant that she only met with the researcher once, recounted that she felt her offender manager was non-responsive to her immediate struggles and was too quick to enforce her order. Jagonari had stepped in to assist with practical difficulties, despite the fact that her SAR had expired several months earlier. Breaching the new probation order meant that Afia was no longer entitled to ongoing supervision. The breach court revoked the probation requirement and deferred re-sentencing to enable Afia to engage voluntarily with Jagonari. Therein rests the reason women expressed preference for the mainstream, normalised access to Jagonari – it is not

short-lived or linked solely to a court order. The women viewed and experiences a significant contrast to probation, as Abi explains:

[You] go and report to someone and say...“Hello, how are you?” “Yeah, I'm fine” [so they say]...“See you later”. That's basically what probation is. You just have to report, it's like reporting to the Police station...But with [Jagonari I can keep coming even though]...I'm finished now...there's the drop-in on a Wednesday...you can come in, meet people, have lunch, so it's quite social...this is so close to my son's school, I don't mind. I drop him off then go and speak to whoever I need to speak to (Abi).

Chantel also contrasts the criminalising experience of probation supervision to the help available at Jagonari:

I feel that there is a difference between a “criminal” as in doing bad stuff constantly and someone that...has a blip in their lives. And to send someone that had a blip in their lives to proper probation, I think is really intimidating. It makes...someone feel a bit low and...like they are a criminal when really in truth, they are not. So sending them to Jagonari is...perfect...it helps you in life...You're not just classed as a criminal (Chantel).

Although only one respondent was sentenced to SSW (Emma), three others had active involvement from an offender manager, due to a separate supervision requirement (Kim and Afia) or because of additional support needs (Tunde). All, except Afia, described qualities that made their interactions meaningful based on practitioner characteristics of “compassion”, “understanding”, “flexibility” and an active interest in securing their access to resources and support. It is noteworthy that no participants expressed a preference for the gender of their offender managers. Women felt it more important that practitioners demonstrate sensitivity to their individual needs and provide a positive role model to move them in a ‘desisting direction’ (Shapland *et al.*, n.d., p.6). Participants expect offender managers to invest genuine interest in their needs and exercise influence to advocate on their behalf (CJJI, 2011; User Voice, 2011).

With only one woman subject to an SSW requirement, gaining information from three SSW practitioners highlighted some pertinent issues surrounding service delivery. These probation staff recounted that the model of specialist women’s offender managers had proven unworkable within their borough due to “limited resources and challenges with caseloads” (to quote one senior frontline staff). Rather, the expectation is that both male and female offender managers develop skills and knowledge to work with women, including delivering SSW and being aware of the woman-specific services. Indeed, practitioners all need to be sensitive to women’s needs, work to build trusting relationships and develop knowledge of available provisions (Easton *et al.*, 2010; SETF, 2009). Furthermore, these SSW practitioners recognised a trend whereby successful compliance comes about when the

women's self-reported concerns are addressed through additional resources ahead of commencement on the one-to-one structured programme (CJJI, 2011).

Indeed, women have been found to willingly engage with additional resources if it is clear that this will assist them to move forward (ibid.). Unfortunately, women with Jagonari or SSW requirements are not meant to have the resource intensity of supervision. This restriction impacts on officers' ability to invest additional time:

Ian⁷ has been such a help, I wish I could see him more...maybe it's because I've met Ian before I went to Court [he completed FDR]...So he knew my background, he knew about everything that I've been through. So he is...more concerned about moving forward. And Ian is...more concerned about me not going back to bad ways of committing another crime. So he's always looking for ways to help, what he can do. How to get the Council or the Job Centre or his manager, [but] he's so busy, there's so many things (Tunde).

There are limits to the power and influence that practitioners have, which undermines the ability to improve women's material circumstances and opportunities (Farrall, 2008; Rungay, 2004). Some participants identify a "boundary" that limits what can be achieved even when they comply fully:

It's helpful in a way: emotionally they [Jagonari support workers] are there for you, when you feel down, when you need somebody to talk to you...And they [workers]...try their best. But, it's just unfortunate that they haven't got enough funds to help people like me...They wish, because they feel our pain, they see how we feel. We open to them. They know everything...but no matter what they feel, there's a limit to what they can do (Tunde).

Significantly, every woman appreciated being able to access on-going support to deal with the many obstacles they face:

This is...somewhere [Jagonari WERC] that you get the help that you need. And...there's always someone around to help you and explain things, guide you, point you in the right direction. And they [Jagonari support workers] help you with absolutely everything. I've been helped with so much while I've been here. Where there's so much other stuff that I need help with, instead of me just leaving the Jagonari Centre and being stuck [without help]...I choose to come...[because the]...people that work here help you through what you need to do (Abi).

⁷ This is a pseudonym for Tunde's (male) Probation Officer.

Conclusions

This study gathered qualitative data to explore women's experiences of interventions within community sentences. The practice environment whereby probation and a third sector provider deliver two woman-specific sentences brings to life findings from existing literature regarding empowerment, compliance and desistance. This empirical data reflects the complexity surrounding women's multiple vulnerabilities and the multiplicity of their lived realities, which in turn demand eclectic theories and methodologies (Farrall & Bowling, 1999; Home Office, 2007; Pollack, 2000; Rumgay, 2004; Sommers *et al.*, 2004).

Research aims and objectives: strengths and weaknesses

Every participant's desistance focussed on "moving forward" and the respondent feedback unanimously agreed that this title encapsulates the research findings. The work draws attention to the relational, personal and social approaches that support women along their desistance journey (Pollack, 2000). This strengthens the case against pursuing narrowly defined searches for magic bullets and panacea (Clarke, 2004; Hedderman *et al.*, 2011).

Immeasurable perspectives and voices remain hidden. The initial plan to interview ten participants with an equal split between Jagonari and SSW sentences had to be abandoned when only seven out of the 13 eligible women agreed to participate. Only one woman with SSW participated, so the study is unable to develop a comparative picture of the two requirements. Consequently, less was learnt about women's experiences on SSW, although SSW practitioner input provided some information.

Moreover, the study cannot claim to be representative given the low overall numbers and opportunistic sampling. Nonetheless, the sample is diverse and includes typical, critical and intensity features (Flick, 2007) (Table 3.2). Typical factors within the participant characteristics are representative when compared to offences accommodated within all Jagonari SARs (Tables 4.1 and 4.2) and the vulnerabilities women who offend face, such as single parenting or unemployment (Home Office, 2007). Critical factors related to women's compliance with the court order and intensity was incorporated with the inclusion of a woman subject to immigration restrictions. This analysis is grounded in a wealth of data captured through repeated interactions with the participants (Table 3.3). The findings unequivocally endorse the validity of what women say and highlights the importance of gaining service-users' perspectives.

Different characteristics may emerge elsewhere since Jagonari and the east London region are specific localities. The project does not claim to make new discoveries that can be generalised to all women. However, utilising the rigorous template analysis technique

facilitated comprehensive interpretations that are grounded within existing research (King). Indeed, the implications for policy and practice are previously well documented within research and good practice guidance (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; Ministry of Justice, 2008b).

Further research

There remains an unacceptable gap between knowledge and practice about effectively supporting women's desistance. Rumgay (2004) puts the 'hiatus' down to the 'current dominance of interest' in the 'cognitive deficit model' (p.405). Empirical studies about promoting women's desistance should examine the role for broadening the community infrastructure of resources (McNeill *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, attention to empowerment should highlight wider societal definitions and contextualise women's law-breaking (Becker, 2005; Cruikshank, 1999; Pollack, 2000).

Procedural justice was not an *a priori* theme, but respondents referred to legitimacy, fairness and the quality of their interpersonal experience with authority figures (Jackson *et al.*, 2010; Frazer, 2007; Tyler, 2006). There was consensus within the second focus group that a procedural justice approach could improve women's encounters with criminal justice and statutory bodies, such as the DWP. Thus, further research might usefully explore the impact that authority figures' moral performance could have on women's compliance and desistance (McNeill, 2012b).

Practice implications, recommendations and ways forward

It serves well here to issue a further caveat about this study's limitations. Significantly, the small sample and imbalance between participants with Jagonari and SSW requirements significantly impact on the ability to draw comparisons between the types of provision. Moreover, in spite of the richness of the qualitative data gained from engaging directly with service-users about their experiences, the research does not claim to be representative of all women who offend. Nonetheless, the multifaceted problems that women face must be recognised in order to improve the responses and available solutions both within and outside of criminal justice.

The lack of sustained funding is a longstanding obstacle facing woman-specific services (Clarke, 2004; Worrall, 2002). Under-funding during the current economic downturn and competing priorities generates fierce competition for the limited grants available. Although the government renewed its commitment to fund most women's services, the levels have been reduced and control will devolve to local commissioners in 2013/14 (Women In Prison, 2012). Thereafter, small voluntary organisations, such as Jagonari, will face greater battles to secure investments. Moreover, smaller organisations often struggle to demonstrate their success as they lack evaluative tools to endorse funding applications (Jolliffe *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, it is recommended that local service commissioners **commit to long-term funding to develop an infrastructure of sustainable provisions that can support women to desist from offending.**

Partnership arrangements to build on existing commissioning pathways and joint provisions within mainstream services could improve longevity (CJJI, 2011). Indeed, the Jagonari evaluation advises against service duplication or a narrow focus on criminal justice funding for investment prospects (Rice *et al.*, 2011). Additional resources are slow to follow increased caseloads, meaning that localised women's projects risk becoming victims of their own success. The ethos of providing open, welcoming services that never turn women away is unsustainable if funding is short-term. Participants were acutely aware of the provision shortage and appealed for Jagonari to be "kept alive" (Kim, Focus Group 1). For them, this lack of commitment from commissioners undermines their confidence in the provision. This shortage means women have limited 'top up' support options should they wish to return in the future (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007, p.8).

The Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF, 2009) presents the economic case for early intervention to prevent women coming to costly criminal justice attention. Similar savings would be gained by sustaining support to prevent women's offending from escalating. Most respondents were unfamiliar with local provision and said they wished they knew how to access one-stop-shop provisions prior to their criminal conviction. Indeed, the availability of women's centres is patchy across the country despite Baroness Corston's recommendations to normalise this approach (Home Office, 2007; Women In Prison, 2012). Thus, it is recommended that commissioners and service providers **coordinate and advertise local women-only services to counteract negative perceptions, improve engagement with services, and increase the avenues for women to access early intervention.**

Silos exist between criminal justice and community resources that create practical difficulties when women attempt to access assistance in the longer term (SETF, 2009). Providing accessible services enables people to change their lives whilst promoting community integration (Frazer, 2007; LPT, 2012). However, such services should not be 'colonised' by criminal justice interventions, because this could undermine effectiveness (Clarke, 2004, p.30). Instead, provisions led by the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector should remain autonomous in order to promote the normalised social milieu in which women remain entitled whether or not they are subject to a court order (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; Maguire, n.d.; NOMS, 2010c). Participants found it invaluable that they were able to access support beyond a short-lived court order. Furthermore, the individually-tailored support provides conventional social networks and relationships that improve women's social capital and assists them to pursue legitimate opportunities (Farrall, 2008; McNeill *et al.*, 2012; Shapland *et al.*, n.d.; Sommers *et al.*, 2004). Jagonari provides a welcoming, non-judgemental environment within their weekly drop-in service to facilitate

women's routes into services for the first time or as repeat service-users. Therefore, it is recommended that **services are funded and promoted to facilitate self-referral or drop-in for women to gain swift access to top-up, stabilising support, in recognition of the lapses and relapses within the desistance journey.**

The Judiciary are more confident if probation endorses women's centres, because this improves the provision's credibility (Jolliffe *et al.*, 2011; Women and Equalities Group NOMS, 2012). However, it was recently found that some Sentencers question the appropriateness of mixing offenders with non-offenders or of imposing orders to access services that are available to the whole community (Jolliffe *et al.*, 2011). Placing emphasis on the value gained from normalised support that continues after women's orders expire is therefore necessary when promoting such community sanctions (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; SETF, 2009). A range of SARs that can be individually tailored should be available and brought to the Judiciary's attention within probation court reports (Ministry of Justice, 2008a; Women & Equalities Group NOMS, 2012). Therefore, it is recommended that probation trusts **continually identify and endorse effective provisions as specified activity requirements that inspire the Judiciary's confidence and address women's needs within mainstream community settings.**

The speed with which one participant was subject to a pre-sentence assessment led to misunderstandings about her circumstances that she felt disadvantaged her sentencing. By contrast, another participant felt that her report author took the time to communicate with her and so she began the community sentence feeling more positive (CJJI, 2011; User Voice, 2011). Indeed, court reports are 'critical tools' to communicate both with those to be sentenced and the Judiciary (Ministry of Justice, 2009, p.7). The NOMS Women and Equalities Group (2012) suggest that more time is needed for specialist assessments with women. A failure to identify women's needs appropriately at pre-sentence stage can be detrimental. Moreover, the good practice guide states that 'the use of fast delivery reports should be subject to careful consideration so as to ensure that complex and inter-related needs are not overlooked' (Ministry of Justice, 2008b, p.15). Thus, it is recommended that **the current policy on fast delivery court reports must be reconsidered to enable practitioners to invest more time to ensure that assessments are thorough and develop individually-tailored woman-specific sentencing proposals.**

Furthermore, in line with Baroness Corston's recommendations (Home Office, 2007), **probation trusts must take a radically different approach and encourage greater use of low-tariff sentencing options, deferred sentences or regular court reviews.** A conditional discharge or a financial penalty (which could be deemed as "time served" for those previously remanded into custody) would enable women to access community provisions voluntarily rather than within an enforced order. Indeed, the coalition government recognises that '[f]inancial penalties can be an effective punishment...[and] reparation' (Ministry of Justice, 2011, p.5).

In cases where lower tariff sentences are not available, suggesting deferred sentencing would allow women time to engage with mainstream services and could persuade Sentencers to impose a lower tariff, lower resource disposal. Probation Trusts could reduce their caseloads by encouraging greater use of low-tariff options. However, this approach would only be successful if mainstream provisions actually exist for conditionally discharged or deferred sentence women to attend.

Where a community order must be imposed, convincing Sentencers to hold court reviews whereby they are updated on each woman's progress could instil the Judiciary with greater confidence in the community sanction (Women & Equalities Group NOMS, 2012).

Moreover, having an authority figure invest interest in women's progress promotes both short and longer term compliance and implements procedural justice and strengths-based approaches (Burnett & Maruna, 2006; Frazer, 2007). Conversely, the success of more intensive oversight from court reviews has the potential to trigger a net-widening effect whereby all women could be considered eligible for this approach regardless of their individual situation (Easton *et al.*, 2010; Worrall, 2002).

Women should be supported as individuals with the capacity to contribute to society. There should be a 'clear delineation between "support" and "justice"', because punitive approaches that blame and label women for their failures as citizens do not promote desistance (SETF, 2009, p.34; Lunn, n.d; McNeill, 2012; Shapland *et al.*, n.d.; Worrall, 2002). The division of labour between Jagonari "support workers" and probation enforcement "offender managers" exemplifies the necessary separation in the working relationship. However, in order for women to access resources and time investments, the intensive community sentence requirements (such as drug rehabilitation or alcohol treatment) need to be used more effectively with eligible women (SETF, 2009).

Practitioners must work in a meaningful manner with an active purpose, determined collaboratively with women, in order to improve the quality of supervision (CJJI, 2011; McNeill *et al.*, 2012). Where women felt positive about their engagement with offender managers, this was linked to the active ways in which probation practitioners promoted their access to services and continually encouraged their efforts in a 'desisting direction' (Shapland *et al.*, n.d, p.6; Burnett & Maruna, 2006; Maruna & LeBel, 2003). There must also be a realistic approach to setbacks, lapses and relapses, and failures to comply (McNeill *et al.*, 2012; Robinson & McNeill, 2008). It is recommended that **probation trusts and practitioners must exercise their power and influence positively to continually advocate for women and tackle wider social and structural problems rather than focussing primarily on cognitive-behavioural factors and enforcement.**

Practitioners must be aware of women's rights to access mainstream community provisions where entitlement is not linked to their criminal justice status (for example, General Practitioner services or School Welfare Officers). The SSW practitioners enabled women to access practical help and support to overcome their immediate difficulties and made use of women's centres before starting the cognitive-behavioural programme. The Joint Inspection found this to be an effective way of securing women's compliance (CJI, 2011). Critically, pragmatic ways to support women to comply (such as helping with travel, childcare, appointment times or locations) are set out within the Ministry of Justice (2008b) guidance.

All participants valued Jagonari's women-only environment, especially compared to the intimidating probation offices, particularly waiting areas. The homely, welcoming environment improves service-users' experiences (see Appendix 1). The SSW design encourages flexibility with regards to the location for appointments (LPT, 2010a). The NOMS London commissioning plan calls for better use of women's centres in line with the Corston report and national service framework (Home Office, 2007; Ministry of Justice, 2008a; NOMS, 2010c). The respondents suggested that probation should promote women's safety by providing separate waiting areas or premises, such as using women's centres. However, given the patchy provisions, this approach would require more resources and staffing, as well as improved credibility to secure funding. Local areas should **explore and develop co-location arrangements to offer women the option of attending with offender managers for court report interviews or supervision in women-only community-based premises.**

Participants valued the peer support within the women's centre, which was integral to the organisational culture. Although all participants admit having initial reservations about attending within group settings, their apprehension was overcome as soon as they experienced the positive social milieu (Gelsthorpe *et al.*, 2007; Maguire n.d.; Pollack, 2000; User Voice, 2011). It was empowering for women to voluntarily access the provisions on offer, which they knew was mainstream and open to all women rather than focused on their criminal justice status. Ex-offenders are the experts on desistance and involving these women in supporting their peers provides further redemptive opportunities (Maruna, 2001; McNeill & Weaver, 2010; Ward & Maruna, 2007). **Service providers should utilise the potential for ex-offenders to provide peer support as advocates, mentors or group facilitators.**

Participants recounted their negative encounters with police and experiences of unfair treatment by the Job Centre. Respondents felt that these authority figures fail to recognise the far-reaching impact that their actions and decisions have on women's lives. These perceptions of a lack of procedural fairness severely undermine the legitimacy of authorities and do not engender women's long-term compliance (Jackson *et al.*, 2010; Tyler, 2006). Respondents also cite criminal record barriers to their opportunities to secure employment

or pursue their ambitions. The women felt stigmatised within society at large whereby the lack of respect for their humanity undermines opportunities to 'develop pro-social self-concepts and identity' (Burnett & Maruna, 2006, p.102). Taking a cognitive-deficit approach to empowerment fails to recognise these real-life limitations on women's opportunities and choices (Rumgay, 2004; Worrall, 2002). The structural inequalities that exist within society must be actively challenged at all levels, including legislative, strategic and policy (such as NACRO's *change the record* campaign; NACRO, n.d; Lunn, n.d; User Voice, 2011). Therefore, it is recommended that **socio-political and collective action challenges the oppressive systems and structures that undermine women's capacity to pursue real-life opportunities and self-determination.**

Baroness Corston emphasises the importance of humanising women's experiences (Home Office, 2007). Interventions must overturn the predominance of the psychological dimensions of empowerment in order to support women to overcome the multiply vulnerabilities they face. This requires an integrated approach that provides sustainable funding for long-term holistic services. Payment by results is fast becoming a reality for community sanctions and the Howard League's Andrew Neilson (2012) reminds us:

[P]eople going through the criminal justice system are just that: *people*. People are complicated. Those going through the criminal justice system...are particularly complicated. The routes to desistance from offending may defy the simple pathways that a payment by results model would seek to impose (p.1).

As such, **service delivery design must ensure that payment by results initiatives recognise women as people involved in complex pathways to desistance rather than focusing on simplified, binary measures of success.**

Research bears limited weight unless ensuing actions bring about improvements and changes in policy, commissioning and funding, and practice. Importantly, service commissioners and providers across all sectors must respond to women's demands for high quality provisions:

Support in so many ways (emotional, physical, financial) would help to stop women who are offending. What is the point in going to prison? You come out of prison; you don't have a house...money...[or] friends. Emotionally it's hard, it takes everything out of you...But, for that to stop then somebody [must]...say: "This woman is my daughter – she needs lots of support" (Tunde with agreement from Chantel and Kim, Focus Group 1).

END

References

- Anderson, S. (2011). *A way through the woods: opening pathways to mental health care for women with multiple needs*. London: Revolving Doors Agency.
- Barbour, R. (2007). *Doing focus groups*. London: Sage Publications.
- Becker, D. (2005). *The myth of empowerment: women and the therapeutic culture in America*. New York: New York University Press.
- British Society of Criminology. (2006). *Code of ethics for researchers in the field of criminology*. Retrieved 21 February 2010, from <http://www.britisoccrim.org/ethical.htm>
- British Sociological Association. (2004). *Statement of ethical practice for the British Sociological Association*. Durham: British Sociological Association.
- Burnett, R., & Maruna, S. (2006). The kindness of prisoners: Strengths-based resettlement in theory and in action. *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 6, 83-106.
- Clarke, R. (2004). "What Works?" for women who offend: a service user's perspective. *Exploring the synthesis between what women want & what women get*. London: The Griffins Society.
- CJJI. (2011). *Thematic Inspection Report: Equal but different? An inspection of the use of alternatives to custody for women offenders*. London: HM Inspectorate of Probation Criminal Justice Joint Inspection.
- Cronin, A. (2006). Focus groups. In N. Gilbert, *Researching social life* (pp. 164-177). London: Sage Publications.
- Cruikshank, B. (1999). *The will to empower democratic citizens and other subjects*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Easton, H., Silvestri, M., Evans, K., Matthews, R., & Walklate, S. (2010). *Conditional cautions: Evaluation of the women specific condition pilot*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Farrall, S. (2008). Social capital and offender reintegration: making probation desistance focused. In S. Maruna, & R. Immarigeon, *After crime and punishment: pathways to offender reintegration* (pp. 57-82). Devon: Willan Publishing.
- Farrall, S., & Bowling, B. (1999). Structuration, human development and desistance from crime. *British Journal of Criminology* 39, 253-68.
- Flick, U. (2007). *Designing qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.

- Frazer, M. S. (2007). Examining defendant perceptions of fairness in the courtroom. *Judicature*, 91, 36-37.
- Gelsthorpe, L., Sharpe, G., & Roberts, J. (2007). *Provision for women offenders in the community*. London: Fawcett Society.
- Gillham, B. (2005). *Research interviewing: the range of techniques*. Maidenhead: Open Univeristy Press.
- Hedderman, C., Gunby, C., & Shelton, N. (2011). What women want: The importance of qualitative approaches in evaluating work with women offenders. *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 11, 3-19.
- Hedderman, C., Palmer, E., & Hollin, C. (2008). *Implementing services for women offenders and those 'at risk' of offending: action research with Together Women*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Home Office. (2007). *The Corston Report: a report by Baroness Jean Corston of a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system*. London: Home Office.
- Iqbal, J. (2006). *Ms Shila Thakor*. Retrieved 2 July 2012 from Swadhinata Trust - The Oral History Project Interviews:
http://www.swadhinata.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=169&Itemid=201
- Jackson, J., Tyler, T. R., Bradford, B., Taylor, D., & Shiner, M. (2010). Legitimacy and procedural justice in prisons. *Prison Service Journal*, 191, 4-10.
- Jolliffe, D., Hedderman, C., Palmer, E., & Hollin, C. (2011). *Re-offending analysis of women offenders referred to Together Women (TW) and the scope to divert from custody*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- King, N. (n.d.). *Interpretation*. Retrieved 2 July 2012, from University of Huddersfield Template Analysis:
http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/research/template_analysis/technique/interpretation.htm
- King, N. (n.d.). *Quality checks*. Retrieved 2 July 2012, from University of Huddersfield Template Analysis:
http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/research/template_analysis/technique/qualityreflexivity.htm
- King, N. (n.d.). *The technique*. Retrieved 6 October 2011, from University of Huddersfield Template Analysis:
http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/research/template_analysis/technique/technique.htm

King, N. (n.d.). *What is template analysis*. Retrieved 6 October 2011, from University of Huddersfield Template Analysis:

http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/research/template_analysis/whatis.htm

Krueger, R. A. (1998). *Developing questions for focus groups*. London: Sage Publications.

LPT. (2011). *Bench guide to community sentences*. London: London Probation Trust.

LPT. (2010a). Best practice update for London Probation Trust: focus on women offenders. *Inspire*, pp. 1-4.

LPT. (2010b). Best practice update for London Probation Trust: demand management. *Inspire*, Issue 6.

LPT. (2012). Heart of the community. *LPToday*, p.4.

Lunn, R. (n.d.). *Challenging the perceptions of identity, equality and citizenship of ex-offenders in society*. Retrieved 1 August 2012, from Ex-offender.co.uk: <http://www.ex-offender.co.uk/about-ex-offender/>

Maguire, M. (n.d.). Mentoring, engagement and offender management: harnessing the skills of the VCS. *Offender Engagement Research Bulletin*, pp. 1-2.

Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: how ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Maruna, S., & LeBel, T. P. (2003). Welcome home? Examining the "Reentry Court" concept from a strengths-based perspective. *Western Criminology Review* 4, 91-107.

McIvor, G., Murray, C., & Jamieson, J. (2008). Desistance from crime: is it different for women and girls? In S. Maruna, & R. Immarigeon, *After crime and punishment: pathways to offender reintegration* (pp. 181-197). Devon: Willan Publishing.

McNeill, F. (2012a). 'Ex-offenders' or 'Re-citz'? Retrieved 1 August 2012, from Discovering Desistance: an ESRC Knowledge Exchange Project:

<http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/2012/06/29/ex-offenders-or-re-citz/>

McNeill, F. (2012b). *Moral performance and supervision*. Retrieved 20 June 2012, from Discovering Desistance: an ESRC Knowledge Exchange Project:

<http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/2012/04/04/moral-performance-and-supervision/>

McNeill, F., & Weaver, B. (2010). *Changing lives? Desistance research and offender management*. Glasgow: Glasgow School of Social Work & Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research.

McNeill, F., Farrall, S., Lightowler, C., & Maruna, S. (2012). How and why people stop offending: discovering desistance. *Insights evidence summaries to support social services in Scotland*, 15, 1-12.

Ministry of Justice. (2011). *Breaking the cycle: government response*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice. (2009). *A report on the government's strategy for diverting women away from crime*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice. (2008a). *National Service Framework for women offenders*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice. (2008b). *The offender management guide to working with women offenders*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Mitra, A., & Singh, P. (2007). Human capital attainment and gender empowerment: The Kerala paradox. *Social Science Quarterly*, 88, 1227-1242.

NACRO. (n.d.). *Change the record*. Retrieved 1 August 2012, from NACRO changing lives reducing crime: <http://www.nacro.org.uk/policy/change-the-record/>

Nazrul, K. (n.d.). *Rise Up, Women - Rise Up Like the Flaming Fire (Jago Nari Jago Banhishikha)*. Retrieved 15 July 2012, from Translation by Sajed Kamal: http://www.nazrul.org/nazrul_works/s-kamal/song_rise_woman.htm

Neilson, A. (2012). *Payment by results is no panacea*. Retrieved 13 October 2012, from Public Finance Opinion: <http://opinion.publicfinance.co.uk/2012/04/payment-by-results-is-no-panacea/>

NOMS. (2010a). *Offender engagement programme news*. London: Ministry of Justice.

NOMS. (2010b). Research applications. Probation Instruction 12/2010.

NOMS. (2010c). *NOMS London strategic commissioning plan 2010-2013*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Policis. (2009). *Women offenders: summary of qualitative research findings*. London: Cabinet Office.

Pollack, S. (2004). Anti-oppressive social work practice with women in prison: discursive reconstructions and alternative practices. *British Journal of Social Work* 34, 693-707.

Pollack, S. (2000). Reconceptualizing women's agency and empowerment: challenges to self-esteem discourse and women's lawbreaking. *Women & Criminal Justice* 12, 75-89.

Reeves, C. L. (2010). A difficult negotiation: fieldwork relations with gatekeepers. *Qualitative Research* 10, 315-331.

Rice, B., Ahmad, E., & Caldwell, S. (2011). *Jagonari Women's Educational Resource Centre evaluation of the Women Ahead project*. London: Jagonari.

Robinson, G., & McNeill, F. (2008). Exploring the dynamics of compliance with community penalties. *Theoretical Criminology*, 12, 431-449.

Rumgay, J. (2004). Scripts for safer survival: pathways out of female crime. *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43, 405-419.

SETF. (2009). *Short study on women offenders*. London: Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force.

Shapland, J., Bottoms, A., Farrall, S., McNeill, F., Priede, C., & Robinson, G. (n.d.). The quality of probation supervision - a literature review: summary of key messages. *Offender Engagement Research Bulletin*, 1-6.

Sommers, I., Baskin, D. R., & Fagan, J. (2004). Getting out of the life: crime desistance by female street offenders. In M. Pogrebin, *About criminals: a view of the offender's world* (pp. 322-332). London: Sage Publications.

Susan Field Limited. (2010). *Jagonari Women's Educational Resource Centre: report and accounts*. London: Level Business Limited.

Thompson, N. (2001). *Anti-discriminatory practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Thornburn, N., Durrance, P., & Hosking, N. (2009). *London Probation Structured Supervision Programme evaluation report*. London: London Probation.

Tyler, T. R. (2006). Psychological perspectives on legitimacy and legitimation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57, 375-400.

User Voice. (2011). *Improving the probation journey: A User Voice consultation for the London Probation Trust*. London: User Voice and London Probation Trust.

Ward, T., & Maruna, S. (2007). *Rehabilitation: beyond the risk paradigm*. London: Routledge.

Women & Equalities Group NOMS. (2012). *Judicial engagement: women in the CJS. A briefing for Probation Trusts*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Women In Prison. (2012). *Corston Report 5 Years On: how far have the government got on the road to reform of the criminal justice system for women?* London: Women In Prison.

Worrall, A. (2002). Missed opportunities? The probation service and women offenders. In D. Ward, J. Scott, & M. Lacey, *Probation working for justice* (pp. 134-148). Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Detailed description of the Jagonari Women's Education and Resource Centre (WERC)

I visited and experienced the Jagonari WERC over a significant period. Attending the Centre on a regular basis to meet with the manager, support workers and women for the purposes of this research opened my eyes to aspects that had escaped my notice when I previously visited in my professional capacity as a local Probation Officer.

The building has a 'safe haven' appeal and the calmness when you enter contrasts with the hustle and bustle that is outside the centre. The high street is filled with the sights, sounds and smells from street market traders, shops and lots of people. There are fish mongers, bakeries and several cafes, as well as express supermarkets. The area is filled with diversity; as people chatter you hear many languages, and the clothes shops are adorned with garments from around the world. Exotic fruits and vegetables sit comfortably alongside more modest offerings of apples, pears and potatoes. The busy main road is filled with buses, cars, delivery vans and the occasional ambulance for the nearby hospital. You have to cross small roads, pass an underground train station and run the obstacle course of various road works and men in high visibility jackets in their little cordoned off sections of the pavement.

As you enter into Jagonari, there is a definite change of pace with a reception area, sofa, leaflets and magazines to greet you. The Children's Centre can be heard at the back of the building and if you arrive at home time, you are surrounded by toddlers relaxing in their buggies or chattering as they excitedly report on their day's adventures. There is a lift to the upper floors and a discreet stairway through which you access adult learning courses and group sessions. A curiously named "yellow room" also houses a couple of computers for service-users to access the internet (it's curious because there is no yellow in sight, although I'm told there used to be a yellow carpet!).

The faces you see beyond this point are all female and very friendly. The main attraction for the purposes of the Women Ahead project is the kitchen, open to all who drop by for a cup of whatever refreshment you wish to make. If you arrive on a Wednesday lunch-time, there is a high chance you will be greeted by a cheery person offering to dish you up a plate of whatever meal was prepared for the day.

Tiny rooms each side of the kitchen conceal staff workstations. For those who are unfamiliar with the individual faces, there is no way to immediately tell who is a "worker" or "service-user", let alone "Court ordered" or "voluntary". This is the beauty of the centre: you go in and feel instantly at ease and welcomed. In fact, you may find yourself washing up some cups at the sink as you would at home. It is shocking when you realise that there is no hot water from the taps in the building (except inside the Children's Centre, which has a

separate boiler). I'm informed by one worker that Jagonari has had to survive "in the red for some time" and money is needed for more vital services for the vulnerable women. Therefore, tap water is heated in an urn first thing every morning. This limited supply of hot water is rationed throughout the day for vital use only (apparently everyone has become accustomed to cold hand washing). In winter, everyone knows to wear extra layers for that cold period when you first arrive in the building whilst you wait for the very small radiators to warm up the big space.

The hub of the centre is a relatively large multi-purpose room with chairs, tables, a display fridge, artwork, books, toys and a host of other treasures. You may find yourself gazing at some intricate artwork only to discover upon closer inspection that it is made entirely out of dried pulses. This room takes on a different character depending on the activity to take place. When it is relaxation exercise or self discovery sessions, it takes on a tranquil demeanour as the blinds are closed for peace, quiet and privacy. The privacy aspect is primary if support workers need a secluded place to meet with women who have come in unexpectedly due to crisis and need intensive support. The staff members also host various professional meetings in this space. The most eye-opening change is the surprisingly large number of women that can be squeezed into what is actually not such a big space during Wednesday 'drop-in' sessions. There is a 'buzz' and so much is going on, but all seem fully immersed in whatever they have chosen to do. The activities vary with workshops for CV writing or interview skills, housing or financial advice, health awareness, poetry writing, gardening, and so on.

As you leave the Centre, skyscrapers, and new build offices and apartments take your attention when you glance in the opposite direction. There is also a minaret of a local mosque in the distance. The local hospital takes up large sections of the opposite block. There is a sense of collision between different worlds. It's busy with market sellers, mums pushing buggies, elderly people taking it slow, and office workers rushing during their breaks. There are also some real wooden benches occupied by street drinkers with their cans of high strength lager or cider. You definitely feel that you are back into the hustle and bustle after the sanctuary that was the Jagonari Centre and you wonder what will be on offer or which faces will be around next time you visit. Once you have left, you feel a sense that you would indeed be welcomed back should you wish to visit "Women Ahead" again.

Appendix 2: Literature search strategy

Search terms and sources of information were initially identified through discussions with professionals who have expertise working with vulnerable women. I accessed a guide to publications relating to the government strategy for diverting women away from crime through the London Probation staff intranet (*London i* and *EPIC*). Pursuing these references led to various reports from the Ministry of Justice, Cabinet Office and independent bodies, such as the Fawcett Society. The Social Care Online and Google Scholar search engines as well as the London School of Economics (LSE) library catalogue were used to locate references found within these reports. The search terms (Box 1) were entered into the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) and the initial search identified over 1,000 results. These were filtered down within IBSS using the terms “women”, “crime” and “offender”. Interestingly, four of the resulting nine journal articles had already been located using the initial sources.

desistance OR strengths-based
AND enforcement OR compliance
OR empowerment OR engagement
AND women OR probation supervision

Box 1: search terms applied within IBSS

Appendix 3: NOMS and LPT Research permission letter



UNCLASSIFIED

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Shelly-Ann McDermott
London Probation Trust
50 Mornington Grove
London E3 4NS

151 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9SZ
Tel 0300 048 0000
Fax 0300 048 0297

9th March 2012

Dear Shelly-Ann

This is to confirm that you have permission from LPT to carry out the research outlined in your recent IRAS submission.

Whilst we appreciate that this is some time in the future, we would like to draw your attention to the stipulation that LPT should not be identified in your final report and that results will not be published in any external arena without LPT's written permission. Could you please sign the copy of this letter and return it to me at the above address in order to confirm that you agree to this.

Could we take this opportunity to wish you good luck with your research

Yours sincerely

Pauline Durrance
Senior Research Officer

cc Catherine Askew

Signed for LPT: Pauline Durrance Date: 9/3/2012

Signed by the researcher: Shelly-Ann McDermott Date: 12-03-12



LetterEtc/Letter-0611

www.london-probation.org.uk
Chief Executive: Heather Munro

UNCLASSIFIED

Appendix 4: LSE Ethical approval letter



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE

Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE
United Kingdom
tel: +44 (0)20 7955 7607
fax: +44 (0)20 7825 3630
email: s.e.corbridge@lse.ac.uk
www.lse.ac.uk

Professor Stuart Corbridge
Pro Director

Ms Shelly-Ann McDermott
Probation Officer, Thames Magistrates' Court Team
London Probation Trust
50, Mornington Grove,
Bow,
London. E3 4NS

24 January 2012

Dear Ms McDermott,

Re: Exploring how a court order to engage with structured supervision or a community project might empower women as they embark on their desistance journeys.

I am writing with reference to the above research proposal and can confirm that the application has been independently reviewed by members of the School's Research Ethics Committee who concluded that the appropriate ethical safeguards would be in place for this project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Corbridge', written over a horizontal line.

Professor Stuart Corbridge
Chair of Research Ethics Committee

cc. Dr Jonathan Jackson, Methodology Institute
Michael Nelson, Research Division

The London School of Economics is a
School of the University of London. It
is a charity and is incorporated in
England as a company limited by
guarantee under the Companies Acts
(Reg. No 70527)

Appendix 5: Eligibility criteria for gatekeepers

(Original document was presented on Griffins Society headed paper)

Eligibility criteria: (the following cases are eligible)

Women sentenced to a Community or Suspended Sentence Order with at least one specified activity to attend the **Jagonari Women's Centre** or to engage with **Structured Supervision for Women**. *If the Order includes other requirements women are still eligible.*

The women must be managed within the London Borough of **XXX probation local delivery unit**.

Any woman who has been **in breach of these requirements** – either in the past and now re-sentenced, or if there are current breach proceedings.

Ideally, women **sentenced within the period from November 2010 to December 2011**. If the Order has expired, but the woman remains in contact (either due to a new Order or ongoing voluntary engagement) the woman is still eligible. *However, there is some degree of flexibility given the lapse of time.*

Women need to have had at least one previous criminal conviction or Police caution/warning/reprimand.

Exclusions: (the following cases should not be approached)

Women who are **vulnerable and unable to provide their own informed consent** by virtue of mental health difficulties, bereavement or other losses, or based on the offender manager or Link Worker assessment.

The contact process:

To respect women's privacy and confidentiality, the initial contact must be made by the Jagonari Link Workers or Probation Offender Managers, who will be asked to hand out the attached information sheet.

Women who are interested can call the researcher directly on **07XXX** or ask the member of staff to make contact on their behalf. In this latter instance, the women could either ask for the researcher to attend their next session (at the Jagonari Centre or probation office, as

appropriate) or agree for the researcher to have their contact details so that an appropriate meeting is arranged.

Once women have met with the researcher for further information about the study, they can decide whether or not to sign the consent form. However, women will be encouraged to wait until they are absolutely sure before signing the consent form, so this may require one or more days.

The consent form needs to be signed in advance of the date for the interview or focus group. On the date of the focus group or one-to-one interview, women will be given a further opportunity to change their minds in order to check their on-going voluntary consent before commencing on the study.

In practice, it is likely that potential participants will have at least one week between receiving the information and meeting the researcher. After meeting the researcher, women will be encouraged to consider their decision before signing the consent form. Therefore, **no woman should feel under pressure to make a decision when they first find out about this study.**

Reimbursements: The researcher has obtained clearance from the Ethics Committee to offer participants up to £10 (voucher or cash to be confirmed) to cover costs due to their involvement in the study, such as travel and refreshments. This is a **reimbursement payment** and can only be offered to women after their participation in either a focus group or one-to-one interview. Participants will be entitled to reimbursements for each completed session (whether one-to-one or group) but not for the arrangement meetings. For example, a woman who meets the researcher twice to discuss the consent form and participates on one focus group is entitled to a £10 reimbursement. If she later also attends a one-to-one interview, she will qualify for a further £10 reimbursement.

Shelly-Ann McDermott

Griffins Research Fellowship Programme

February 2012

Appendix 6: Information sheet

(Original document was presented on Griffins Society headed paper)

Information to take part in a research project exploring women's experiences during court orders to attend the Structured Supervision for Women programme or the Jagonari Women's Centre

I am inviting you to take part in an important research study. The following information tells you more about it and what will happen if you decide to participate. It is very important that you understand what is in this leaflet before agreeing to take part.

It is YOUR choice whether or not you take part.

What is the research about?

Shelly-Ann McDermott works part-time as a Probation Officer, but is now doing some research for The Griffins Society Research Fellowship Programme. This is separate from her role with the probation service. The research aims to find out more about women's experiences during two specified activity requirements: the Structured Supervision for Women one-to-one programme; and the "Women Ahead" at Jagonari Women's Centre. The purpose of the study is to ask women how they feel about these court orders and whether these help them to make changes in their lives.

What would I need to do?

If you have current or previous experience of one of these sentences then I would like to speak with you. There are three ways you could volunteer. I would like to interview individual women about their personal experiences during the court orders. I would also like to organise for two small groups of women to talk about their opinions. You can agree to take part in the one-to-one interview, or in one or two group discussions, or you can do all three. It is up to you to decide. You can stop the interview/group discussions at any time and you don't have to answer a question if you don't want to. You are FREE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND at any time during the project.

Are there are potential risks for me taking part in the study?

No. Your access to help and support will not be affected in any way if you take part in this study. I will not be able to offer you advice, guidance or counselling. If you would like any help with difficulties, I would have to direct you back to staff within probation or at the Jagonari Centre.

What happens to the information I provide?

The information you give me will only be used for the research. Nothing you say will be shown to workers in Probation or at the Jagonari Centre. Anything you say will be completely anonymous – no one will know your name or be able to identify who you are.

What happens if I want more information about the study?

You can ask me any questions at any time. If you want to get in touch, you can call me directly on **07XXX**, or if you prefer you could ask your Jagonari Link Worker or Probation Offender Manager to contact me on your behalf.

You also can find out more about The Griffins Society at <http://www.thegriffinssociety.org/>



Appendix 7: Informed consent

(Original document was presented on Griffins Society headed paper)

Consent form for women participating in the research project exploring women's experiences during court orders to attend the Structured Supervision for Women programme or the Jagonari Women's Centre

FOCUS GROUP: 1 []

2 []

INTERVIEW NUMBER:.....

[All statements will be read out loud by the researcher. Additional explanations will be given if needed. The researcher may ask the interviewee questions to make sure that she understands the nature and purpose of the research, the confidentiality of the information, and the right of the interviewee to withdraw at any time. A full signature and printed name is required at the end to indicate full and informed consent to participate. The form will then be kept by Shelly-Ann McDermott for one year. The interviewee's name will not be recorded on the focus group or interview transcripts by the researcher and will be kept separate from any other information on each participant.]

I have just read/been read the attached information sheet and understand that this research project is to find out more about women's experiences during the two specified activity requirements.

I agree to be audio recorded during the focus group discussion(s) and/or interview. The original recordings will be deleted after being transcribed within six months. The researcher will make sure I cannot be identified in any way. All information about me will remain anonymous and confidential.

I understand that I am not being given any advice, counselling or treatment during the focus groups or interview.

I understand that nothing I say will be shown to the women's centre or Probation.

I understand if I provide detailed information about undetected criminal offences or plans to cause harm to an identifiable person this may require that the researcher share this information with the appropriate professionals.

I understand that I can stop the interview/group discussions at any point for any reason if I do not want to continue. I can also choose not to answer any questions.

I give my full consent to participate in this study.

Full signature:

Print name:

Contact telephone no.:

(Only provide a number if you agree for Shelly-Ann McDermott, the researcher, to contact you by telephone during the period of research).

Monitoring information

This research project aims to promote diversity and challenge discrimination. Please complete this form so that diversity and equality information can be included in the study.

What is your race and ethnicity?

Asian or Asian British: ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ ☐ Indian ☐ ☐ Pakistani ☐ ☐ Other ☐

Black or Black British: ☐ African ☐ ☐ Caribbean ☐ ☐ Other ☐

Mixed: Other ☐; White & Asian ☐; ☐ White & Black African ☐; White & Black Caribbean ☐

White: British ☐; Irish ☐; Other ☐

Chinese ☐; Other Ethnic Group ☐; Refusal ☐

Do you require an interpreter? No ☐;

Yes ☐, language required:.....

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? No ☐;

Yes ☐, any possible ways of removing or lessening actual or potential barriers?.....

What is your religion or belief?.....

Do you have any religious requirements that the researcher should know about?.....

What is your age? Prefer not to say ☐

Personal circumstances

This information will enable the researcher to provide a general descriptive account of the circumstances that research participants face.

Accommodation:

Tenant ☐; Owner occupier ☐; B&B/Lodgings/Hotel; Hostel ☐; Living with... ☐; No Fixed Abode ☐; Other ☐

Domestic:

Single/Div/Sep ☐; Single/Div/Sep with Dependants ☐; Married/Partner ☐; Married/Partner with Dependants ☐; Other ☐.....

Employment:

Unemployed ☐; Casual/Seasonal ☐; Employed part-time ☐; Employed full-time ☐; Education/Training ☐; Not Avail/Retired ☐; Other ☐.....

Convictions:

None ☐; 1-4 ☐; 5-9 ☐; 10⁺ ☐ (or any cautions/warnings/reprimands:.....)

Most recent offence:

Appendix 8: Exploring the ethical issues further

The researcher is guided by the criminological and sociological codes of ethics (British Society of Criminology, 2006; British Sociological Association, 2004).

Finances

This research is funded by a grant from the Griffins Society and the researcher conducted the project alongside part-time employment as a probation officer within London Probation Trust. There are no conflicts of interest which could compromise the integrity or independence of the research. The Griffins Society is an independent charity working to promote research and effective practice with women within the criminal justice system. The research fellowship programme lasts one year and a final report must be submitted by October 2012.

No incentives are being offered to participants, so they will not accrue any financial benefit from the study. However, to ensure that the women also do not accrue a loss, reasonable expenses for their attendance will be offered. This was calculated as £10 (comprising £7.30 for travel within the London Transport “Oyster card” daily price cap and £2.70 for refreshments) to be provided in either cash or a supermarket voucher.

Informed consent

The participants were given information about the research in both written and oral format. Explanations were provided in terms that are meaningful to the women to take account of literacy and language issues. It was made clear that women could feel free to raise queries at any time. Crucially, the participants’ consent to take part in the study was informed, voluntary and continuing. Thus, information was provided at least a day in advance of the focus group or in-depth interview. The women’s understanding was always checked again immediately before commencing the focus group or interview and they were asked to give consent in writing whilst also confirming that they have received, read and understood the information about the study.

Potential volunteers were reassured that there would be no adverse consequences if they declined to participate. They were reminded of their freedom to withdraw at any point without disadvantage. The refusal to participate or a decision to withdraw from the study could be given at any time without reasons and without affecting their rights or access to services.

Design issues

The group dynamics within the focus groups was carefully monitored so that any vulnerable or less vocal members of the group were not disadvantaged in such a setting. The gatekeepers were pivotal in identifying if the group work setting may not be appropriate for any individual women. The peer co-moderator for the first focus group facilitated a group agreement of ground rules which set the tone for the ensuing positive communication. Her presence within the group also put the women at ease and improved rapport.

The second focus group took place at the end of the fieldwork to feedback the research findings to women. The participants were consulted to ascertain how accurately these represent their experiences. They had the opportunity to provide input on the final report recommendations. It is hoped that this final collaborative communication reinforced to the women that their participation on the project was worthwhile. Finally, this last face-to-face encounter in the field allowed the researcher to discharge wider ethical duties in relation to final checks that the women still provide their informed consent and do not wish to withdraw ahead of the study being written up and disseminated. Arrangements were also agreed with each woman about how she wished to receive a copy of the final research report. Each woman was also given an information card with the details of The Griffins Society website where the report will be published.

Minimising harm

This study will not induce unacceptable psychological stress or anxiety. The concern about the impact of repeated interviewing over a long period of time (as well as the one year limit of the project funding) was instrumental in taking the 'snapshot' design approach. This study sought participants to engage with two focus groups and/or an interview. The volunteers were free to participate in none, only one or all three methods of data collection. The interviews and focus groups were conducted as a collaborative process between the researcher and participants. Nonetheless, it is a fact that participation in research can be a disturbing experience due to the self realisation that can result from talking about oneself (British Sociological Association, 2004). This disturbance was minimised by ensuring that probing questions are sensitive and responsive to the women and the 'reflecting' approach was taken since it is less intrusive (Gillham, 2005, p. 36).

Women were reminded that the researcher is not a source of support or help, and were directed to appropriate provisions through the women's centre or with their probation practitioner. The practitioner gatekeepers were pivotal to ensuring that women were not in a vulnerable state or at a crisis point at the time of interview. It would be insensitive to intrude into women's lives or expect them to engage with the research project at the face of such difficulty. One member of the Jagonari sample, Afia, faced such crisis and it was

mutually agreed that she could not continue after the preliminary meeting, although she continues to consent for her data to be included in the study.

The researcher also remained mindful of the potential that for the experience of the research process to affect the relationship between the women and their key worker. In this regard, one must be 'wary of inadvertently disturbing the relationship between participants and gatekeepers since that will continue long after' the research has ended (British Sociological Association, 2004, p. 7). Where there are any potential for role conflicts or tensions, the researcher took appropriate steps immediately to ensure that the situation did not jeopardise the working relationship. Considerable flexibility was required in the field in order to respond sensitively to the participants and practitioners. Hence, the period of practical research spanned 20 weeks from February to July 2012.

Confidentiality

The participants' privacy has been respected and their identities remain anonymous so that pseudonyms are used throughout this report. Only the researcher will have access to the original data recordings of focus groups and interviews. These have been deleted immediately after transcription. Identifying features were removed from the transcribed data, which has been stored securely and coded to protect the anonymity of participants further.

The researcher continues to honour the guarantees of privacy given to participants and the arrangements to preserve confidentiality have been within the legal parameters of the Data Protection Act and the obligations set out within the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) research permission conditions. Namely, participants were notified that the researcher would be required to disclose any information pertaining to details of an unreported or a planned offence or where an identifiable person will be harmed (NOMS, 2010b).

Dissemination

The final focus group with participants sought 'respondent feedback' in relation to the research findings, which should improve the quality of the data analysis (King, Quality Checks, p. 3). This feedback process also served to reassure women that their identities are indeed anonymous within the analysis. However, the women had the opportunity to withdraw informed consent at this final stage if they were not entirely satisfied and comfortable with the study.

The researcher liaised with practitioners from the women's centre and London Probation Trust and conducted research briefings to feedback to staff in the field. The Griffins Society Fellowship programme included regular meetings (in February, April, July and October 2012) at which the researcher provided progress updates and gained advice from an expert panel (Gillham, 2005; King, Quality Checks). Finally the completed research paper and a written summary will be provided London Probation Trust (on behalf of NOMS) in line with the conditions of approval (NOMS, 2010b).



Appendix 9: Interview schedule**Interview Schedule – exploring women’s experiences during court orders to attend the Structured Supervision for Women programme or the Jagonari Women’s Centre**

Interview Date:

Interview Location:

Interview Number:

Just to remind you, I’m doing some research to find out about women’s experiences on two specified activity requirements. Because you’ve been sentenced to this kind of requirement I’d like to talk with you about your experiences.

I would like to ask your permission to audio record the interview so that I can listen to your comments again and maybe use some of them in a report. Your name will never be attached to the recordings or interview and any quotes I use will not contain any information that will identify you. Nothing you say will be shown to the women’s centre or to Probation.

You can stop the interview at any time for any reason, including if you need a break or if you want to stop completely. Point out use of clock to check length so not too tiring (if need a second time then can arrange).

Remind reimbursement of £10 gift card.

Do you have any questions?

Background

- What led to you having the Court order to attend Jagonari/SSW? (establish how long ago)
- Invite women to detail what they feel led them to get into trouble (financial/substances/victimisation experience)

Desistance

- Any problems with police/courts in last 12 months
 - Do you think it is likely that you will commit the same offence again? Y/N
 - Do you think it is likely that you will commit another different offence? Y/N
 - If not, what have been the most important factors to prevent you getting into trouble?
 - Reasons for decision to change/stop: crisis point/shock/fear/dissatisfaction/senselessness

Current situation

- Tell me how you feel about your current situation
 - Identify any **indications of dis/empowerment** & probe
 - How does this compare to (however long) ago when started this Order?

Community sentences/supervision now & in past

- How did you first hear about Jagonari/SSW?
 - What were your expectations? *Probe* – have these been met?
 - What did you hope to gain?
 - How would you prefer contact?
 - How do you feel about the consequences of failing to comply?
 - Identify any **indications of dis/empowerment** & probe
- Do you have any previous experience of other community sentences or probation supervision? *Probe: any breach – reasons*
- How do you think Jagonari/SSW has helped you change?
 - Identify any **indications of dis/empowerment** & probe: *aspects of your life that may have changed*: accommodation; domestic and sexual violence/personal safety; education, training and employment; mental health; physical health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefits and debt; children and families (parenting and relationships/preventing family breakdown); attitudes, thinking and behaviour; and life skills*

(Which parts of the process have been most helpful to you? Why?)

Plans for future

- How do you see yourself in
 - 6 months
 - 1 year
 - 2 years
 - Longer?

(Conventional identity/lifestyle/relationships with significant others; Social status/roles/routines/situations/scripts)

- How do you feel about the future?
 - Identify any **indications of dis/empowerment** & probe: *in control/empowered, hopes and expectations, self-esteem and confidence, offending behaviour, lifestyles and opportunities*

Access to community provisions

- Have you accessed similar services elsewhere? If yes, where and how? And how do they compare?
 - Identify any **indications of dis/empowerment** (choice and freedom to choose)

Conclusion

- What is your opinion about Jagonari/SSW? For example, what would you say to other women about it? *Probe*
- My research is focussing on asking about women's empowerment during these SARs – would you like to say anything about what 'empowerment' means for/to you?
 - *if cues needed then refer to the suggestions from focus group discussions/pilot interviews*

Is there anything you would like to add?

Do you have any questions for me about the research?

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research

*Taken from:

Easton, H., Silvestri, M., Evans, K., Matthews, R., & Walklate, S. (2010). *Conditional cautions: Evaluation of the women specific condition pilot*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice. (2009). *A report on the government's strategy for diverting women away from crime*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Appendix 10: Focus group topic guides

Research project exploring women's experiences during court orders to attend the Jagonari Women's Centre

FOCUS GROUP 1: Thursday 24th May, 1.15 to 2.30pm @WERC

Researcher (keep brief!!!):

Introductions: myself & 'Kim' – co-moderate

- Check ongoing informed consent (form signed prior to start).
- Not therapeutic group – no need for personal disclosures
- Provide opportunity for any women to change their mind before begin
- Remind that discussion will be audio recorded – deleted after researcher transcribes and everyone will be anonymous
- Agree format: **END at 2.15pm** for refreshments

Introductions by participants to SAY NAME, how many sessions within Court Order & CONFIRM CONSENT to participate & being recorded

'Kim' facilitate group agreement of 'ground rules': respect, listening, confidentiality, etc.

Topics for discussion (flash cards): 'Kim' introduce by giving personal account of her journey:

1. **This project asks what helps women on their journey to stop offending – what do you think is important?**
2. **What does 'EMPOWERMENT' mean to you?**
 - a. Is being 'empowered' a way to stay out of trouble?
 - b. Can a Court Order provide 'empowerment'?
3. **How can services support women to stay out of trouble with the Police and Courts?**
(If only Jagonari and/or Probation mentioned - is the help available anywhere else?)

Researcher – conclusions:

Is there anything else anyone would like to add?

De-brief – to see Link Worker to discuss any sensitive issues brought up in group

Do you have any questions about the research? (For anyone not yet interviewed) please let me know if you would like to take part in a one-to-one interview to talk about your personal experiences.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this group discussion. Issue £10 gift card reimbursement!

Research project exploring women's experiences during court orders to attend the Structured Supervision for Women programme or the Jagonari Women's Centre

FOCUS GROUP 2: Tuesday 10th July, 12.30 to 2pm, WERC

Information about the study and check ongoing informed consent (form signed prior to start).

Provide opportunity for any women to change their mind before begin

Agree that discussion points will be recorded onto Flipchart (no audio)

Introductions: SAY NAME & CONFIRM CONSENT to participate

Group agreement of 'ground rules': respect, listening, confidentiality, and so on

The second focus group at end of the fieldwork will enable the researcher to provide feedback about findings and gain women's further input for recommendations in the final report.

Provide details of where final report can be found:

The Griffins Society after October 2012 <http://www.thegriffinsociety.org/>

Notify women of arrangements to provide access copies, for example via the Jagonari centre or Probation offices

Conclusions:

Is there anything else anyone would like to add?

Do you have any questions for me about the research?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project.

Issue £10 gift card reimbursement AND personal 'Thank you' card!