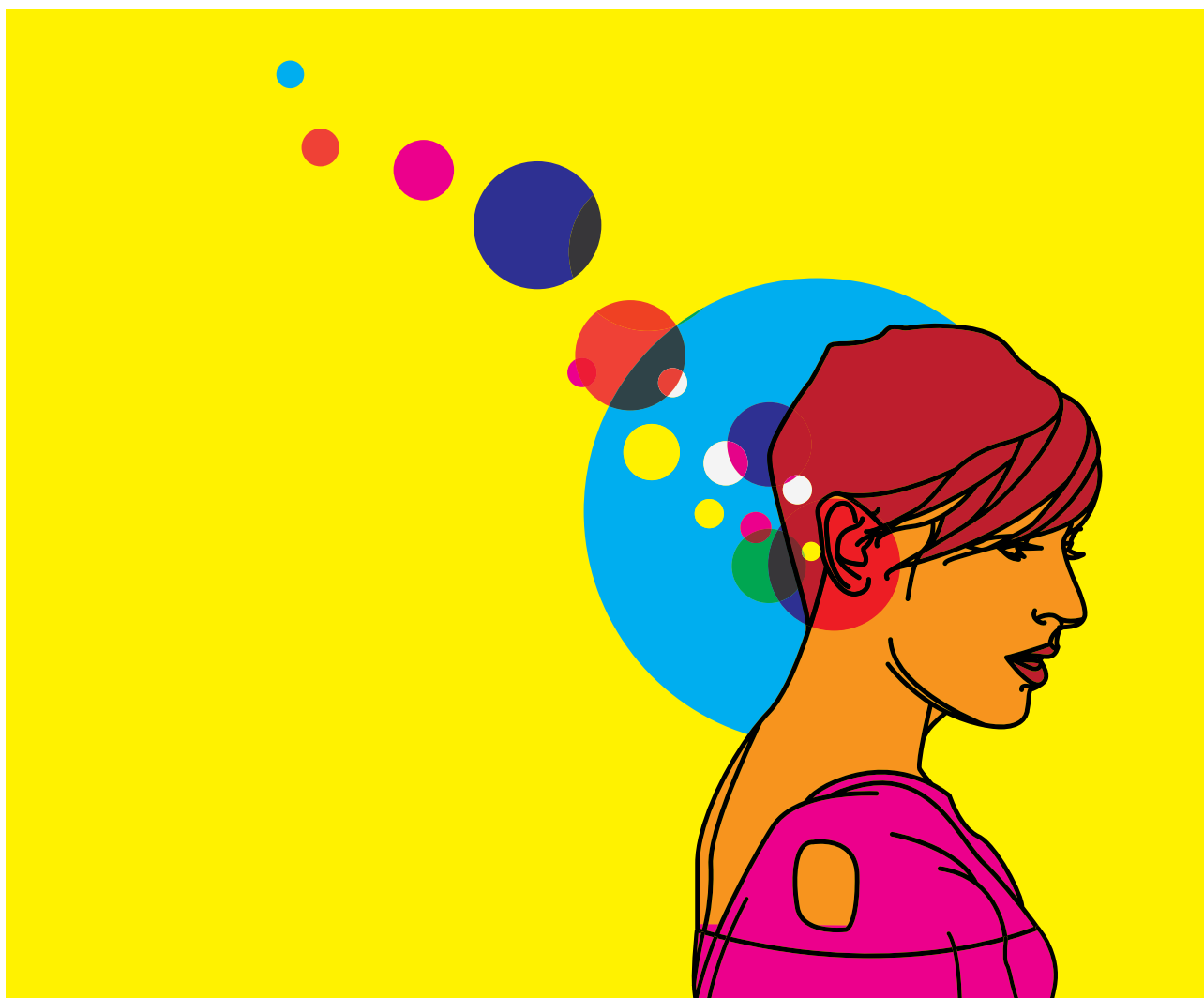

Hear and Now

**Women in the
criminal justice
system making
changes in
their lives...**



Vision, mission & how Women in Prison works

Women in Prison believes that women-only support is necessary to provide a positive and empowering response...

Vision

Women in Prison has a vision of a criminal justice system that addresses the root causes that bring women into the criminal justice system; that invests heavily in prevention and that offers support at a local and community level to meet the specific needs of women and their families and breaks the intergenerational cycle of re-offending.

Mission

To prevent the marginalisation of women in the penal system and limit the damage and disruption already present in their lives and further exacerbated by their contact with the criminal justice system, Women in Prison:

- Campaigns for a system which is gender-aware and responds to the specific needs of the women who come into contact with it to effectively stop the cycle of re-offending and offer opportunities for women to fulfil their potential.
- Campaigns for radical community alternatives to prison for the majority of women.
- Provides specialist support services delivered by women for women, enabling them to make informed choices in both custody and the community.
- Promotes effective, properly evaluated and costed alternatives to custody and encourages the spread of best practice.

Support Model

Women in Prison's support services use a gender-specific, relational approach, influenced by person-centred and narrative therapeutic theories. Women in Prison 'works with' a woman rather than 'does to,' recognising each individual woman's strengths and goals. Women in Prison offers support with persistent consistency, working with a woman in prison and in the community, in a constructive partnership for as long as is necessary to help a woman establish a new course in life – and continues to offer support even if a woman disengages.

Why Women Only?

Women in Prison is a women only organisation. This means that all staff and volunteers are women. Women in Prison believes that women-only support is necessary to provide a positive and empowering response to the discrimination and inequality women experience in the criminal justice system and throughout their lives.

Key outcomes

In the year to March 2011, Women in Prison worked with 4,137 women, 1,004 of whom accessed long-term support.

81% of women reported feeling less stressed, and 90% reported feeling more in control after receiving support from WPAIS.

Women Prisoners Advice and Information Service

For every £1 spent on the London Project there was a gross saving of £3.62 to society.

London Project

It was great as an Offender Manager because I simply don't have the time to deal with so many extra issues women have. It was helpful to both me and the service user as she could easily have gone back to prison in her particular case. She needed that intense support and she got it.

Statutory Partner, WomenMATTER

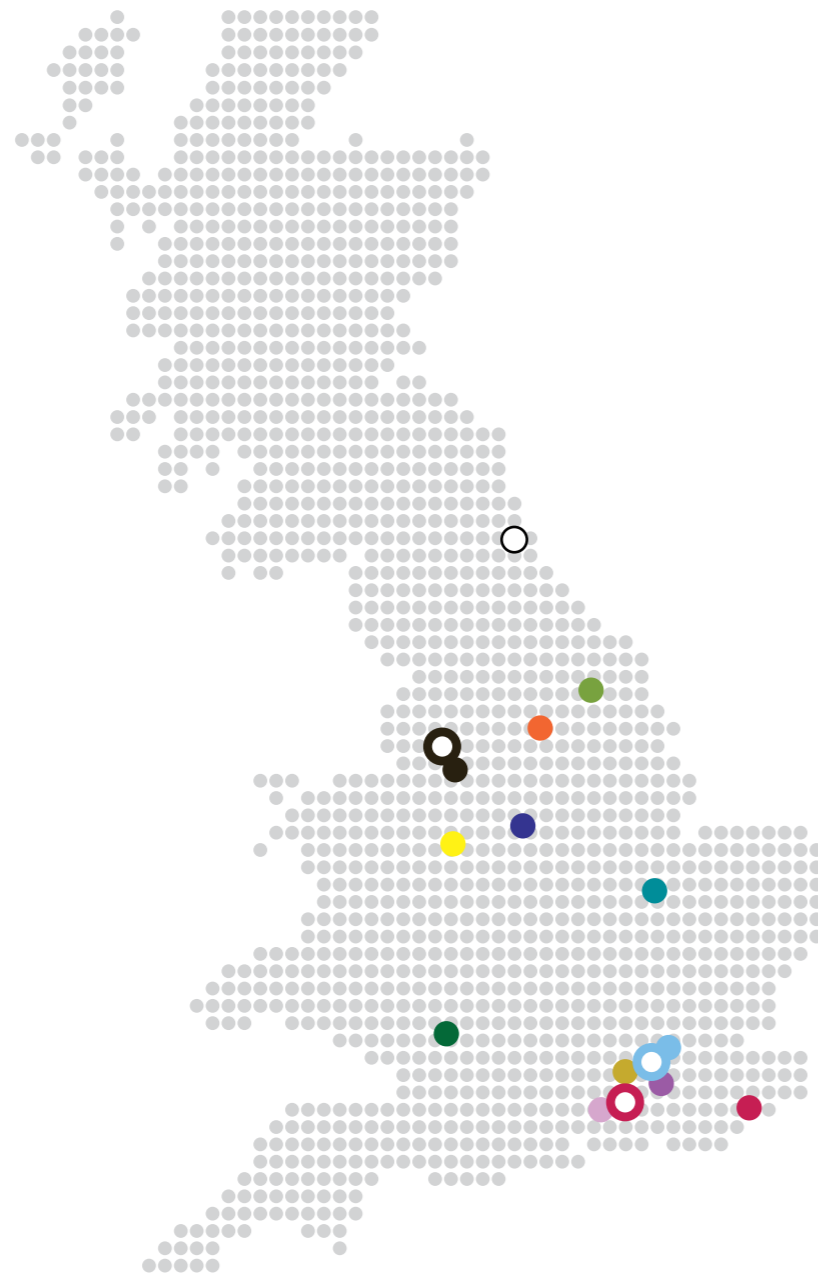
Map of services

Women In Prison offices

- Manchester
- London
- Woking (Surrey)

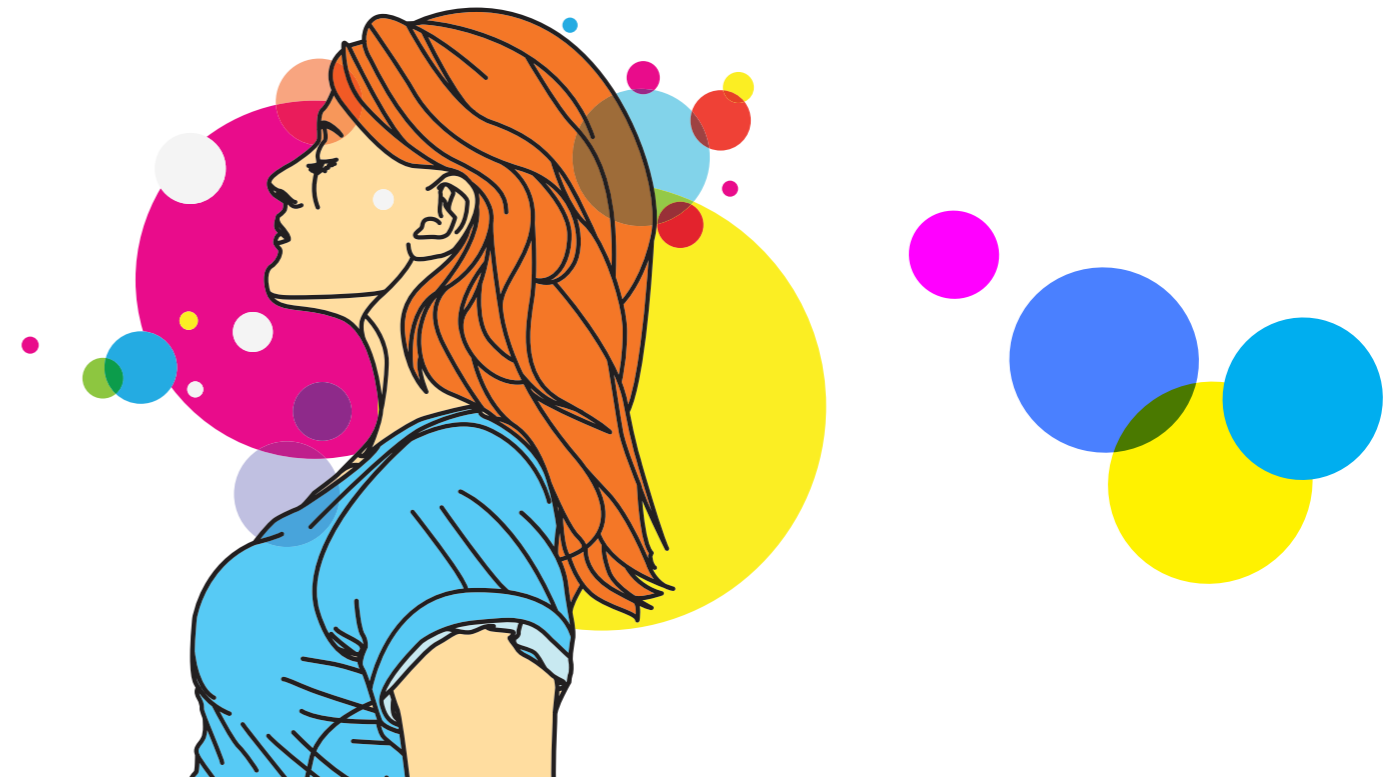
HMP offices

- HMP Low Newton – near Durham
- HMP Askham Grange – near York
- HMP New Hall – near Wakefield
- HMP Foston Hall – near Derby
- HMP Styal – Near Manchester
- HMP Drake Hall – Ecceshall – Staffordshire
- HMP Peterborough
- HMP Eastwood Park – near Wales and Bristol
- HMP Holloway
- HMP Send – Woking
- HMP Downview – Sutton
- HMP Bronzefield – Ashford (Surrey)
- HMP East Sutton Park – Maidstone (Kent)



Contents

What Women in Prison does	06
Foreword from Deborah Coles	07
Evaluation	09
Women in Prison advice	10
London Project	12
WomenMATTER	14
Outcomes from other projects	17
Analysis and next steps	20
Thanks	22
Contacts and referrals	23



What Women in Prison does



Support Services

Women in Prison Advice

Advice and information on all aspects of prison life and life after release are provided to women in all 13 women's prisons in England. Advice is provided in person and by freephone and freepost. Women in Prison's advisors offer one-to-one advice sessions, advice surgeries and workshops. Specialist advisors provide education, training and employment advice. The advice service includes Choices, a four-week, closed-group, workshop programme for women in prison covering healthy relationships, relapse prevention and goal setting. Women in Prison manages a small Emergency Grant of up to £25 for women prisoners in financial need.

Through the Gate

The Through the Gate service supports women prior to release from prison and in the community on release. Through the Gate workers meet with women three months before release, developing an individual action plan based on what each woman identifies as her primary concerns. Women are met at the gate and offered advocacy together with emotional and practical support until they are confident to navigate life outside prison alone. Specialist support is available to black, Asian and minority ethnic women, young women, older women and women with diagnosed mental health conditions or histories of trauma. The Through the Gate service includes counselling in the community for women ex-prisoners.

CARE

Women in Prison provides the independent advocacy support for women participating in the Prison Service's CARE Programme. CARE (Choices, Actions, Relationships, Emotions) is a 10 week therapeutic programme for women who have committed serious or violent offences. It is the only women-specific intervention accredited by the prison service and is currently delivered in HMP Foston Hall. Independent advocacy support is available through the gate for up to two years after completion of the programme.

Community Support and Diversion

In addition to community-based support offered from Women in Prison's London base, Women in Prison has two community support and diversion centres which provide holistic support to women at risk of offending, women at risk of custodial sentences and women released from prison.

WomenMATTER

A partnership with the Pankhurst Centre, WomenMATTER covers Manchester and Trafford. Its provision includes one-to-one advocacy support, workshops and a weekly drop-in at the Pankhurst women's centre.

Women's Support Centre, Surrey

Operating an assertive outreach service on a hub and spoke model, the Women's Support Centre works with women across the county and offers group support from women's centres and community centres in key locations throughout the county.

No woman should be in prison as prison exists today...

Campaigns

Women in Prison believes that no woman should be in prison as prison exists today. Women in Prison campaigns for a radical reduction in the women's prison population and the replacement of the current women's prison estate with small custodial units for the handful of women for whom custody is judged appropriate.

Women Moving Forward

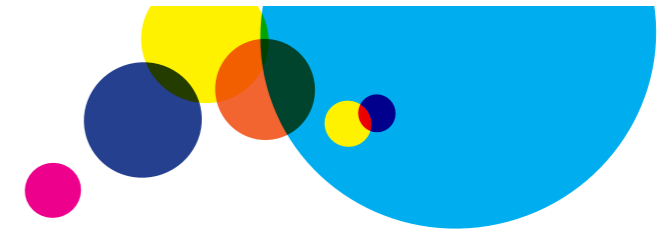
Women in Prison facilitates Women Moving Forward to provide a platform for women with experience of the criminal justice system to campaign for change.

Training

Women in Prison's training programme aims to improve responses to women in the criminal justice system by training the professionals they come into contact with. All training packages are designed and delivered by Women in Prison's front-line staff. In addition to regular training courses, tailored in-house training is available on request. Women in Prison has delivered this training to several Probation Trusts, to Islington police as well as to voluntary sector organisations.

Foreword

from **Deborah Coles**,
Chair of the Board
of Trustees



This 'Hear and Now' report brings together two core strands of Women in Prison's work.

Firstly, hearing the women we support, listening to their views on the services they want, where they want them and how they are delivered. Secondly, meeting women where they are now, not waiting for them to meet certain criteria to access our services and not waiting for them to be ready to come and seek us out.

The project evaluations used in this report show that what Women in Prison does is working, but also that systemic change is still urgently needed. Women in Prison works with women others sometimes struggle to support because of the complexity in their lives and the fact that women in the criminal justice system remain one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society. We see the value, dignity and potential in all the women we work with. The evaluations also show that these are challenging projects to deliver and that this work rarely yields 'quick wins'. Women in Prison is stronger for taking on these challenges and proud to share our experiences and expertise.

The evaluations cover two of our community support and diversion projects, a new area of work for Women in Prison although one we have always recognised as necessary. As our founder, Chris Tchaikovsky said 'The only sensible way to reduce crime is to switch the emphasis in courts from punishing past events to influencing future events.' WomenMATTER

and the London Project meant we could work with women who hadn't yet been in prison – trying to prevent them coming into contact with the criminal justice system in the first place.

The work we do directly with women in the criminal justice system informs our campaigning and policy work. The daily contact we have with women means we see the damaging and dangerous consequences of imprisoning women. The statistics on shockingly high levels of self harm, numbers of self-inflicted deaths and reports on the mental and physical ill health of women in prison indicate the scale of the problems but also hide the individual stories and harm each woman experiences. This report uses statistics to show what we have achieved but we have included quotes from the women we work with so you can read how it feels for them. Women in Prison works with women as individuals, tailoring the support we provide to what women want in their own lives, not seeing them merely as statistics nor shoe-horning them into services that don't fit their individual circumstances.

Listening to what women want and what is happening to them means being guided by their experiences and we know that services like the projects profiled in this report can make a significant impact on women's lives. Building and maintaining trust with the women we work with also means maintaining our independence from the system that punishes women. This is a challenging time for all charities; Women in Prison is no exception and our services are seriously threatened. Despite making a commitment to implement

the recommendations of the Corston report (for which Women in prison and I were on the reference group) women in the criminal justice system are falling off this government's agenda and the number of women in prison has been rising again since hitting an 8-year low in January of this year. Our fears are that with women bearing the brunt of government cuts and with cuts to front line social and health services, more women are likely to be drawn into the criminal justice system. Women in Prison's challenge is to ensure women in the criminal justice system are placed firmly on the political agenda and the analysis at the end of this report outlines how we can achieve that.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the team of staff, volunteers and trustees who are so passionate about their work and whose hard work and commitment are so positively reflected in the evaluations. Thanks must also go to women behind the prison walls whose stories are so important in informing our work.

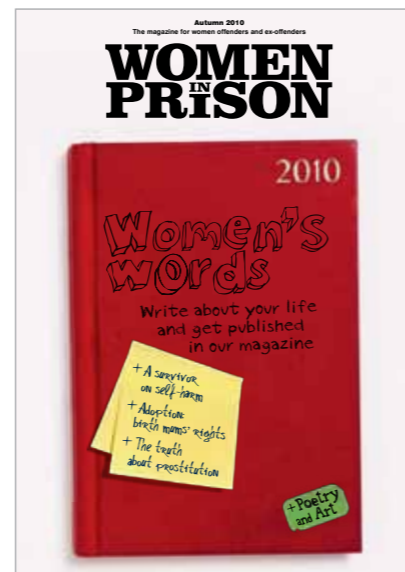
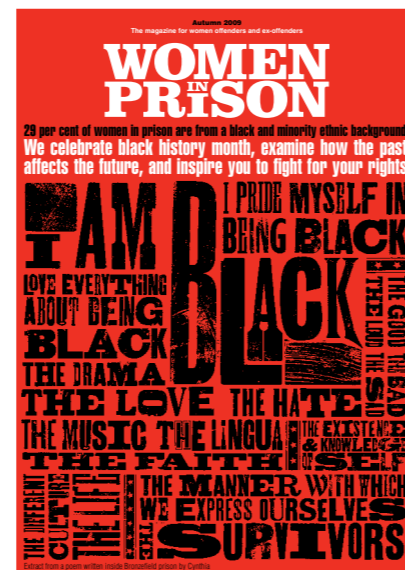
Deborah Coles

Women in Prison Chair

Women in Prison Magazine

SWAN

Women in Prison's magazine is being re-designed and re-launched. Swan – the magazine for women transforming their lives – will be available in January 2012.



Evaluation



Evaluation Key Findings

Women in Prison believes that the value of external evaluation of services is three-fold:

- To ensure that we are delivering services that are effective for the women concerned, that meet set outcomes and more and that are value-for-money in delivery.
- To ensure that learning from services delivered is captured and fed into the design of new services so that the support offered is the most innovative and effective it can be.
- To contribute to the growing body of evidence on what works in supporting women in the criminal justice system to make the changes they want in their own lives. External evaluations were carried out on three of Women in Prison's projects in 2011. The projects evaluated include the core Women Prisoners Advice and Information Service, covering all women's prisons in England, and two diversion projects, the London Project and WomenMATTA (covering Manchester and Trafford). The extracts in this section are all drawn directly from the evaluation reports.

The evaluations all included input from women supported by the projects – hearing what they have to say about the support provided – and all provide data on recent projects – capturing evidence of women's needs now.

Women in Prison advice



Women in Prison advice continued



Duration:
2007-2010

Funder:
Big Lottery Fund – Advice Plus

Evaluated by:
Baker Brown Associates

Number of women who accessed the project:
1,401

Key Findings

The demand for the WPAIS has far surpassed initial predictions.

There was a clear rationale behind the Women Prisoner's Advice and Information Project (WPAIS). Project development and delivery were informed by government research and policy, including the Corston Report, reports by the Social Exclusion Task Force and the National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan, in addition to the extensive experience of Women in Prison.

The Women Prisoners Advice and Information Service comprises a holistic, women only, advice and information service covering all 'vulnerabilities', an up-to-date, locally relevant, advice and information service via letter, phone, or one-to-one advice surgeries in all women's prisons. It also includes 'through the gate' support upon release from custody (to ensure better access to community services, emotional support, and a reduction in re-offending) and the production of a 'glossy' magazine contributed to by – and aimed at – women in custody. Further services comprise a free phone advice line for women and the development and maintenance of a database designed to incorporate national support services for women (ex)offenders.

Women leaving prison face discrimination and difficulty in accessing support services. The 'through the gate' service within the WPAIS supported 284 women to find accommodation upon release, 157 women to keep their tenancies; 93 women accessed support around parental rights, 66 women around sexual or domestic abuse, and 354 women accessed specialist support, including

counselling in relation to mental health, domestic violence, or prostitution. 90 women were supported in relation to their care and treatment in custody through the Women in Prison Advisor.

On average 81% of women reported feeling less stressed, and 90% reported feeling more in control after receiving support from WPAIS.

Over the lifetime of the project 1,401 women have accessed the project (37.8% by letter, 49.6% face to face, 11.7% by phone, and 0.86% by email). The contact monitoring database means it is possible to track each of these requests, and importantly allows Women in Prison to identify what action has been taken with regard to every request.

As the estimated cost of the WPAIS is £349 per service user, at a time of reduced public expenditure, the benefits of re-funding such projects are clearly evident. The cost of imprisoning one woman is around £38,000 per year¹. The cost to the NHS of a serious wounding resulting from a domestic violence incident is around £9,000² and the cost of keeping one child in a care home due to his/her mother's imprisonment is around £2,428 per week³.

Providing holistic support intended to prevent recidivism and address women's needs makes financial sense. The ability of projects such as the WPAIS to provide a 'virtual one stop shop' of holistic services to women in custody or the community is vital in ensuring re-offending, and its social and financial costs, are reduced. Crucially, the women who have provided feedback on the WPAIS are hugely supportive, and feel the service has had at times, a life changing impact.

¹Travis & Sparrow, The Guardian, June 2010. It should be noted that more recently the cost of imprisoning a woman has been reported to be on average £51,000 per year in 2010 (including juveniles). Ministry of Justice (2011) National Offender Management Service Annual Report 2009/10: Management Information Addendum.

²Howarth, D., Stimpson, L., Barran, D. & Robinson, A. (2009) 'Safety in Numbers, Summary of Findings and Recommendations from a Multi-site Evaluation of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors', The Hestia Fund.

³Care Costs For Children are Higher than Eton Fees, Founder of the Big Issue, The Telegraph, December 2010.

Please keep in contact regularly. I think a lot of women feel 'unworthy'. It's very important to have help to build some confidence and self worth. It helps when someone sticks around for a while and doesn't disappear. Some organisations come and go and this feels like you've been abandoned, forgotten and not very valuable. I like Women in Prison because they have always been there, right throughout my whole sentence.

Women Prisoners Advice and Information service user

When I got out this time I was met at the gate by the Women in Prison worker – I was not sure about it but I am so glad now, they got me housing, helped me with my benefits and even argued with the housing officer for me. I can ring any time and my worker is always there – my life is different now for the first time.

Women Prisoners Advice and Information Through the Gate service user

Please continue as you are – continue to inspire and give support to other prisoners like me. Since meeting the Through the Gate worker, I have peace of mind.

Women Prisoners Advice and Information service user

The London Project

Duration:
**August 2009-
March 2011**

Funder:
Ministry of Justice

Evaluated by:
**WCL and the London
Metropolitan
University**

Number of women
accessing the project:
256

Key Findings

Women in Prison was appointed to deliver a two year specialist, community-based outreach, engagement and support service to:

- Women released into the community after serving custodial sentences of less than six months. Women released from court back into the community following a period on remand (both untried and convicted unsentenced).
- Women attending court for breaching bail conditions.
- Women attending court or received into prison for breaching their community orders.
- Women recalled to prison for breaching their licence conditions.

The project used a three stage approach:

- 1: Assertive outreach and one-to-one support.
- 2: Group support and skills building.
- 3: Community inclusion and participation.

The London Project (LP) provided an effective provision to targeted women thanks to the following factors:

- Women in Prison delivers a much needed wrap-around service for women offenders in London and across the United Kingdom and has done so for the last 25 years.
- Women in Prison has historically been a service that supports women in prison back into the community – this is their 'Unique Selling Point' (USP).
- The project's success relied on Women in Prison's infrastructure and network in London communities – which, while limited due to its deep prison focus, continues to develop.

- Women in Prison managed to establish an inclusive project working across London and meeting the needs of a client group considered difficult to involve – engaging over 250 women (recorded).
- Most clients articulated how Women in Prison provided an effective emotional and life-supporting service to them – such that it changed their lives.

...these are the forgotten women of our society, the most chaotic, the most damaged and usually the most abused. They should not be in prison – they have sentences of less than six months, which means they are in a revolving door cycle. This is the problem that the London Project was trying to tackle.

WIP London Project team worker

The London Project
continued

I saw mainly two workers, one regarding looking for a job and one regarding finding housing. I have to say both of them were really good and friendly and I am proud to have obtained two jobs in the end.

London Project service user

General support coming out of prison. Came and met me at the gate. You feel better about it being met. Gave me money for travel.

London Project service user

100% useful. I loved the down to earth approach.

London Project service user

Benefits to clients

Clients felt that the LP offered a unique service. Common response themes included:

- The LP service was tailored to their individual needs.
- The service did not judge or stereotype the woman's position.
- The LP staff helped women get their essential needs met (e.g. housing, benefits, drug support) and move them to future opportunities (e.g. volunteering/paid employment).

Benefits to society

POTENTIAL BENEFIT	PROJECT EXPENDITURE	NET BENEFIT
£1.8m	£497k	c£1.3m

A rough assumption can be made that for every £1 spent on this project there was a gross saving of £3.62 to society.

We conclude from these (imperfect) estimates that the savings to society from clients not reoffending, across the selected 20 clients engaged on the programme are £1.83m. Despite the conservative nature of our estimations, it would be wise to attribute a global probability of success to the above result well below 100% (the £1.83m figure represents a 100% attribution).

Benefit to partners

A common thread among the partner agencies interviewed by the evaluators was that the LP and therefore Women in Prison, was one of a small number of specialist organisations which can connect with female offenders. Partners involved in commissioning the LP highlighted that they felt Women in Prison were particularly good at risk management and delivered their Exit Strategy in a very effective manner.

Women in Prison has established strong, enduring and honest relationships with its project funders. They are committed to trying to replicate this with any future project similar to the LP.

WomenMATTER



WomenMATTER
continued



Duration:
**January 2010-
March 2011 (this
project is on-going
thanks to continuation
funding from the
Ministry of Justice
and the Corston
Independent Funders
Coalition to
March 2012)**

Funder:
Ministry of Justice

Evaluated by:
**Greater Manchester
Probation Trust
(Research and
Development
Department)**

Number of women who
accessed the project:
637

Key Findings

In January 2010, Women in Prison and the Pankhurst Centre (PC) launched a Partnership project called WomenMATTER (Manchester and Trafford Taking Action). The aims of this project were to provide a comprehensive and holistic service provision for women offenders and women at risk of offending, that would: improve access to emotional and practical support; improve ability to form positive relationships; and reduce the risk of offending. The project is based at the Pankhurst Centre in Manchester city centre, which is a women-only community space.

The project incorporated a number of distinct elements of support, such as: drop-in support; one-to-one support; group support; family-based interventions; and peer mentoring support by trained mentors. These interventions aimed to provide information, advice and individual advocacy support across all nine Reducing Re-offending Pathways; skills building; a focus on enabling women to build self-confidence/self-esteem and learn new life skills; intensive practical and therapeutic support to women and their families; and, a focus on empowering women to sustain employment/education and uphold positive change.

637 women accessed the service from January 2010 – March 2011. This exceeded the target of 480 women (133%) set by the MoJ.

DESCRIPTION	TARGET AS SET BY MOJ	NUMBER OF WOMEN WHO ACCESSED SERVICE	PERCENTAGE EXCEEDED
THOSE ALLOCATED A KEYWORKER AND HAD A NEEDS ASSESSMENT CONDUCTED ⁴	240	278	116%
ONE-OFF CONTACTS OR THOSE ATTENDING DROP-IN / AD HOC	240	359	150%
THOSE ACCESSING SERVICE OVER A 6 MONTH PERIOD	180	250	139%
THOSE ACCESSING SERVICE OVER A 9 MONTH PERIOD	40	91	228%

The women interviewed saw the project as a rehabilitative opportunity, as well as a form of help and support. One woman described it as 'opening a door' for her. They expressed feeling like the reassurance they could access the assistance needed to change, or that of being supported to gain the confidence and courage to improve their personal circumstances through the support of a key worker. The women interviewed highlighted other provisions the project offers which are of value, such as the drop-in; workshops, courses and activities such as jewellery making; and participation in events such as the Manchester Pride Parade. The project also gave the women the opportunity to be educated in new areas, such as gardening and arts and crafts, as well receiving holistic treatments which they described as the 'nicest things that had happened in a long time'. Some of the women who access the project as service users have also had the opportunity to become volunteers. One of the women interviewed had become a volunteer and the impact of this on her confidence and outlook was profound.

Interviews with service users highlighted that the women were overwhelmingly satisfied with the service they had accessed. The main areas of the provision they found most useful were: intensive and flexible help; support and advice; referrals to appropriate agencies; advocacy in areas such as attending appointments; and encouragement to increase their self-belief. Importantly, the women felt the project was helping them 'get back on track'. They stated they were no longer 'alone' and felt 'part of somewhere' which felt 'good'. They expressed no longer feeling 'lost in the system'.

They've just helped me in so many ways I kind of wasn't expecting, like I can really talk to people now, you know look them in the eye and speak up and open up... I'm even helping other women out with that now.

Service user 2, interview

This flexibility in the service offered by WomenMATTER meant that front-line staff from Probation, Court and Police felt the project could only enhance and improve the work they already do with women offenders. Essentially they, particularly Offender Managers, often do not have sufficient time to deal with the myriad of complex issues women offenders tend to present them with (despite often wanting to). This is in part due to the often lower risk status of women within Probation caseload, and that resource allocation in this setting means resource follows risk. Therefore, having the WomenMATTER service provision working in tandem with other statutory services was deemed to be of enormous benefit not just for the women but for the staff involved too. This

approach was considered to both monitor and support the woman whilst also reducing her risk of re-offending, which in turn benefits the woman, her family and that community. Those interviewed felt this approach was the way forward to working with women offenders, based on the impact and evidence they had witnessed, i.e. positive changes in the women.

It was great as an Offender Manager because I simply don't have the time to deal with so many extra issues women have. It was helpful to both me and the service user as she could easily have gone back to prison in her particular case. She needed that intense support and she got it.

Statutory Partner 8, interview

For some service providers, the unique selling point of the project was the fact it was 'holistic' in its approach towards service provision for women. This was felt to set the project apart from any other provision available for female offenders in the community. The service has the ability to deal with more than one specific need, i.e. it does not focus singularly on one pathway, for example drugs or finance. Rather it approaches all the issues a woman may be experiencing in her life together, holistically.

I just don't know of any other comprehensive service for women.

Service provider 4, interview

The uniqueness of it was what Corston always wanted – the one point of referral... I suppose what I'd like to see is more services being brought in to deliver even more [at the Pankhurst Centre].

Strategic Lead 3, interview

The project data showed that key-worked service users received an estimated 4,873.5 contact hours through WomenMATTER⁵. This equated to 85.5% of all contact time, representing a total cost of £356,717.97 for key-worked women.

In total, ad hoc service users received an estimated 825 contact hours. This equated to 14.5% of all contact time, representing a total cost of £60,496.03 for ad hoc service users.

The average cost per service user (calculated using the estimated time allocations above) is greater for the 278 key-worked women (£1,283.16) compared to 359 ad hoc (£168.51).

The average hourly rate for all contacts (both ad hoc and key-worked) is £73.21.

By comparison, the NAO (2010) estimated a six weekly stay in prison to cost, on average, £4,500 (NAO, 2010: 12). The estimated cost of a typical one-year Community Order involving Probation supervision and drug treatment was £1,400 (ibid.). Combining the WomenMATTER intervention with a standard Community Order, to create a robust alternative in the community, is therefore (according to these crude estimations) cheaper than a short term custodial sentence.

⁴The data analysis provided throughout the report is therefore based on the information collected on women who have been assessed by a key worker and have had a needs assessment completed.

⁵The costings information was based on a number of assumptions, which are outlined in the full report.



Outcomes from other projects



In addition to having certain projects externally evaluated, Women in Prison monitors the outcomes of all its projects. This internal monitoring data has a value externally as it provides evidence of the needs of women in the criminal justice system (as identified by themselves) and documents the achievements made. This section of the report provides a snapshot of key outcomes from a selection of Women in Prison's other projects.



To provide a comparison to the outcomes reported, the average re-offending rate for women is 51% within one year. It is 62% for women serving a custodial sentence of under a year and for women who have served more than 10 previous custodial sentences the re-offending rate is 88%⁶.

However, reduction in re-offending and cost-saving are not the only valid measures of work with women in contact with the criminal justice system. Assessing projects solely on these measures fails to understand the complexity of women's lives and fails to recognise their strengths and the distance they travel. This section also includes outcomes related to emotional well being and progression towards social inclusion, which represent significant progress for the women involved.

⁶Ministry of Justice (2011), Adult reconvictions: results from the 2009 cohort, London: Ministry of Justice.



43 women received intensive one-to-one support from the BAME Trough the Gate work in the North between July 2010-June 2011. Of these 43, only one had re-offended by the end of the year. This is a re-offending rate of just 2%.

A key achievement of the London-based mental health project has been the partnership with HMP Holloway mental health in-reach team. Women in Prison's Mental Health Through the Gate worker provides an independent advocacy and support service for women who find it hard to maintain engagement with statutory services. The value of this service was noted in the Prison Inspectorate's report on HMP Holloway:

The community mental health team (CMHT) had a Women in Prison worker who met women known to the CMHT on release and escorted them to appointments in the community... Women with mental health issues were given excellent continuity of care on release⁷.

80% of the mothers accessing parenting support reported feeling less stressed more confident about their situation as a result of their engagement with the parenting service. Specifically, they valued gaining a clearer knowledge of child protection proceedings and a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities as a parent.

Of the 27 women accessing parenting support service in the community, not a single woman re-offended or breached her license conditions within the year period. This is a zero re-offending rate.

When the CARE programme pilots (for which Women in Prison provides independent advocacy) were assessed for accreditation only three of the 27 women who had completed the programme had been recalled to prison. In each case, the recall was for breach of license conditions (e.g. returning late to a hostel) and not for a new offence. This is a zero re-offending rate and just an 11% recall rate. On the Bridging the Gap partnership project with Clean Break 26% of women accessed voluntary work or work placements, providing them with essential experience, references, and building their confidence and self esteem within the work place.

93% of the women that accessed the Women's Support Centre, Surrey (May 2010-September 2011) presented substance misuse issues. Of these only 29% were engaged with specialist substance misuse services. Through intense one to one support and collaborative work, a further 58% engaged with drug and alcohol services within three months.

In the 12 months that the pilot Bail Support Project ran in Manchester, 563 women were seen (41% of the women scheduled to appear at Manchester Magistrates Court who were eligible). Of these 563 women, 109 had full needs assessments, 108 one off advice and 346 triage contact. Of the women who received a full needs assessment, only 7 received custodial sentences. Only 7% of the women provided with ongoing support received custodial sentences.

It's great to see a friendly face at the gate when your family and everyone in the community is against you.

BAME Through the Gate service user

I never knew my life could be different, I have been in and out of the nick all my life. I am not young anymore – well 47. I can have my preferred story, I love my preferred story – a flat, a home, a garden and for the first time I get it – I can do it without having a drink. I know my worker is not my friend 'cause she keeps telling me, but to me she is – no one has ever stuck by me and helped me even when I have messed it up – this is my new life now and I am keeping it.

CARE Project Service User

⁷HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2010) Report on a full unannounced inspection of HMP Holloway 15 – 23 April 2010.

Case study: Parenting Support

Cath, 21, was referred to the Women's Support Centre by Guildford Probation following her arrest for a serious assault. Cath required support around making changes to avoid a significant custodial sentence and the Senior Project Worker at the Women's Support Centre formed part of a 'crisis management team' comprising drug and alcohol services, health services, social services and the police Priority and Prolific Offending Team. Cath has two young children who were removed to local authority care following the assault. At the time of referral, Cath was drinking large quantities of alcohol daily and saw little point in changing her behaviour as she felt prison was inevitable. As a result of a team working with Cath, a plan was proposed to try to reduce the risk of her getting a custodial sentence.

The Women's Support Centre Worker saw Cath at least once a week to work on her motivation and to look at her attitudes towards her offending behaviour. During this period Cath has changed her lifestyle dramatically. She has attended every appointment with all of the professionals she is working with; she has stopped drinking completely and has been accepted onto the Princes Trust scheme. She has commented that having the right team of people working with her has helped to boost her motivation. Cath received a community sentence, including an Alcohol Treatment Requirement. Cath is still not drinking and is in full time education.

The Parenting Support worker has been working with Anna for 18 months. During this time, she has supported her through the extensive court proceedings relating to gaining custody of her son. This process included Anna having contact visits, overnight stays and eventually full custody of her son.

Once she had regained custody, Anna was very closely monitored by social services; she struggled with the constant observation. The Parenting Support Worker helped Anna to voice her concerns appropriately. Recognising the support provided by the Parenting Support Worker, social services decreased their involvement and handed over responsibility to the Women in Prison service.

Having been separated for a while, Anna initially experienced difficulties with her son, particularly around attachment. The Parenting Support Worker supported Anna emotionally and practically through the transition. Anna was supported to secure and move into independent accommodation within the Re-Unite project and to access doctors, address issues with the housing provider, and improve her parenting skills through activities and engagement with her son.

Anna established face-to-face contact with her two older children. She is currently in the process of gaining full custody of her middle child and her daughter, who is the oldest, has independently decided to have contact with her mother. Anna has been supported with communication, roles and boundaries setting, which has helped improve her relationships with her children. Contact and the court process with Anna's older son have been more difficult, as she found it reminiscent of the court process with her younger son – she has required intense support through this.

To enable Anna to have time for herself to further her employment skills, the Parenting Support Worker helped to secure a nursery place for her son.

Ongoing support has helped Anna build up her self esteem and improve her parenting skills. Recently Anna has moved

into permanent accommodation. This was a stressful period, as the first property that she was offered was inappropriate and in the wrong area. Together Anna and the parenting support worker successfully appealed the offer and better offer was accepted. Anna continues to engage with the parenting support project; her parenting skills have dramatically improved and she is providing all her children with healthy relationships.

Case Study: Grants for Training

Beth is 38 and has 2 children aged 18 and 2. She has received support from Women in Prison for three years, including in custody. When in prison, Beth had aspirations to start her own business, however, upon release; it took time to resettle back into the community. During this period, Women in Prison continued to support her until she was able to study a Beauty and Make-up Professional Course, funded by a BIS grant from Women in Prison. This course enabled Beth to pursue her long-held dream of running her own mobile beauty parlour. Whilst studying, with support from the BAME Project Worker, she wrote a business plan for her beauty business. On completion of the plan, she was encouraged to apply for funding with Start Up and was awarded funding for marketing, equipment, insurance and a portfolio. The training BIS funded through Women in Prison means Beth is now certified to provide beauty treatments.

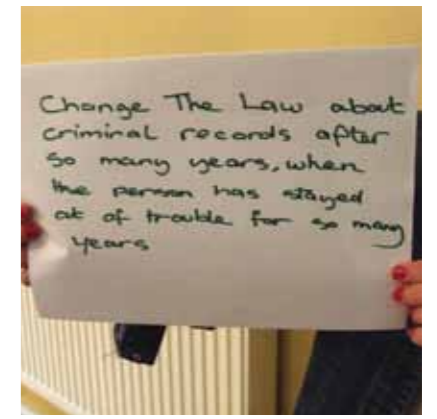
Beth's business has provided her with the means to support herself and her family and she continues to engage with services provided by Women in Prison. Beth has been successfully running her business for 4 months and has not re-offended since her release from prison in November 2008.

Analysis and next steps

Rachel Halford,
Director



Analysis and next steps
continued



What can be learned from the findings in this report and how should they inform service development and policy?

Key Lessons from these Evaluations and Outcomes

Persistent consistency and longevity of commitment

The projects covered in this report have reinforced our understanding of the need for longevity of support. Many of the women we work with will not turn their lives around in a matter of months. The London Project and work in Islington police custody suites in particular demonstrated this. The women we sought to support through these projects were stuck in a revolving door of imprisonment and release, which can be stopped, but only with time. Time is needed to build up trust with the support worker, confidence to make different choices and resilience to stick with changes despite the inevitable setbacks.

Women-specific, holistic support

These evaluations and outcomes provide yet more evidence of the value of women-specific, holistic services. The case for this has been made time and again. Yet this support is still not available in all areas of the country. What is clear from the evaluations, supported by our Mental Health Inclusion Project and the Women's Support Centre, Surrey, is the role of partnership and close, clearly defined relationships between agencies. Part of our work in striving to deliver the one-stop-shop approach is to get agencies working together as smoothly as possible so that women receive coherent support. Women in Prison is not a housing provider, nor a substance misuse agency but we can facilitate women's access to these services through clear multi-agency work.

Independence of support

There is a valuable role for the women's sector to play in supporting the delivery of women-specific criminal justice responses. Co-location and the delivery of elements of community orders by women's organisations may be preferable to the absence of statutory women-specific responses. However, there is a vital role for independent support for women in the criminal justice system, support that is clearly distinct from that system despite working closely alongside it. Whilst this was a struggle for the London Project, we have found the right balance in WomenMatta and the Surrey Women's Support Centre.

The recent joint Inspectorate report on alternatives to custody for women notes that the valuable role women's centres play in engaging with women that probation struggles to engage with, in addition to or distinct from provision in some centres of specified activity, is often overlooked⁸.

Diversion from future custody

All Women in Prison's work seeks to divert women from custody, either prior to them entering custody, or in the case of our prison-based work, diverting them from future custody. Mapping the time and number of meetings it took for some women to engage in the London Project indicates the need for diversion services in prison as well as in the community. A key strength of Women in Prison is our ability to provide continuity of support in prison and in the community. Our commitment to persistent consistency meant that support was offered to London Project clients each time they returned to prison even if the previous offer of support had been rejected. As the evaluation shows, our advice service provides a lifeline to women in prison, assisting them in navigating life in prison and enabling them to make informed choices about how to use their time in prison.

There are still far too many women in prison

The success of Women in Prison offers in reducing re-offending confirms our belief that the majority of incarcerated women should not be in prison. With better support in the community, many women could and do address the root causes of their offending behaviour without the need for incarceration. But this is not just about the 'vulnerable', the non-violent and the 'deserving'. Better support in prison to address the root causes of offending improves women's suitability for release, as the CARE Programme has shown. All women deserve a gender-aware criminal justice system that responds to the causes of their offending.

What Women in Prison Will Do

Data Collection and Information Sharing Women in Prison will continue to share knowledge through training and through reports like this. At present, much of our data collection is led by funder-reporting requirements. Therefore, many of our successes are not recorded in a way that makes it easy to share them or to draw conclusions across projects. We are improving our data collection systems to enable us to better analyse the needs of the women we work with and the effectiveness of our projects. This should enable us to read outcomes across projects and report on significantly larger numbers of women, rather than providing data project by project. We are also reviewing data analysis because we want to value what matters, and what matters to us is demonstrating the positive changes women can make in their lives with the right support, be that a reduction in offending, the formation of healthier relationships, or an increase in self-worth and emotional wellbeing.

We are currently working with Skills for Justice to explore the accreditation of our training package as National Occupational Standards.

Service Development

Times may be challenging financially, but there is no reduction in the need for our services. We will continue to seek to expand our core services – Women in Prison Advice, Through the Gate and Community Support and Diversion – and complement them with specialist support. We will take the learning from these evaluations and build it into the development of future services.

Campaigns

Women in Prison will continue to be a voice for women in criminal justice policy, campaign to end the unnecessary imprisonment of women and promote our vision of a gender-aware criminal justice system.

What Funders and Commissioners Can Do

There is a need for consistent, long-term funding for support services for women in the criminal justice system across the country. We call on those funding these services through grants, contracts or commissions to consider the following:

- Seek value for money not the lowest cost: work with women in the criminal justice system can mean support for women with complex needs, which requires small case loads and adequate back-office support.
- Understand women in the criminal justice system: they will take time to make changes to their lives and there will be setbacks along the way, longevity of projects builds trust and effectiveness.
- Recognise the danger of Payment by Results: small, specialist providers will be unable to bid for large contracts and their independence and particular ethos (often what makes them effective) is at risk as sub-contractees.
- Value independent support services: there is a need for criminal justice system responses to women's offending and a need for independent support services to sit alongside them.

What the Government Should Do

What we want from the government is action toward the vision it committed itself to when it accepted the recommendations of the Corston Report. Baroness Corston recommended the replacement of the women's prison estate with small custodial units within 10 years. Five years have passed already. To meet these commitments, the government needs a clear action plan and accountable leadership. As we laid out earlier this year in our response to the Ministry of Justice Green Paper Breaking the Cycle, this action plan should include:

- 1: A women-specific payment by results pilot, tailoring the approach
- 2: Women-specific drug rehabilitation pilots, in prison and in the community
- 3: A timetable for trialling localisation of women's incarceration (in small custodial units)
- 4: Maintaining effective support for women in the criminal justice system which is independent of the system that punishes them
- 5: Creation of a central driver, supported by the MOJ Criminal Justice Women's Policy Team, responsible for ensuring delivery across government.
- 6: A nationwide prison and community programme of prevention and support for women in the criminal justice system who have experienced domestic violence or sexual abuse
- 7: A specific action plan for women engaged in prostitution focussed on ending criminalisation and increasing exiting support
- 8: Piloting women-specific community sentences
- 9: Provision of specialist women-specific mental health liaison and diversion

What Others Can Do

To everyone else, we call on you to continue to fight to ensure that the women we work with are not ignored and not forgotten. You can keep believing that women's imprisonment matters and that women should not be trapped in a system that is unable to address the root causes of their offending. You can carry on to asking why women offend and why most of the women in prison today have been victims of crime before they have been perpetrators. You can fund, commission, deliver and campaign for services that provide women the support they want to make changes in their lives. You can help shape the steps on the path to ensuring that no woman is in prison as prison exists today.

We look forward to working with you to achieve this.

Rachel Halford,
Director, Women in Prison

⁸Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2011) Thematic Inspection Report: Equal but different? An inspection of the use of alternatives to custody for women offenders.

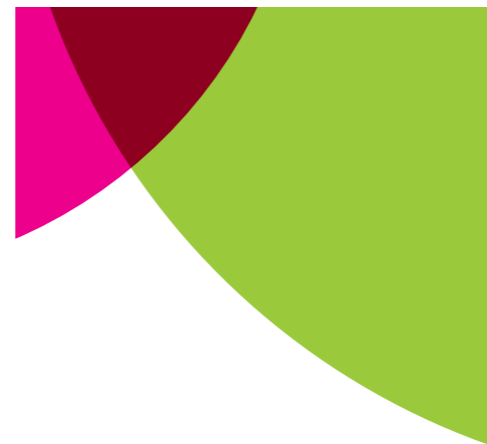
Thanks



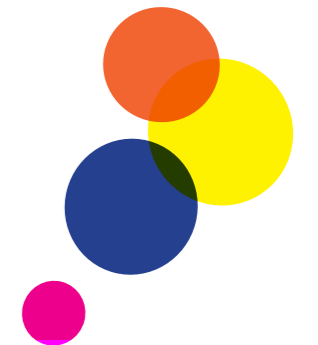
Women in Prison would like to thank the following funders for their support in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011:

- The Aldo Trust**
- Big Lottery Fund – Awards for All**
- Big Lottery Fund – Advice Plus**
- Black Rock Charitable Trust**
- Bridge House**
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**
- The Charles Hayward Foundation**
- Equality and Human Rights Commission**
- Esme Fairbairn**
- Garden Court Charity**
- Greater Manchester Police**
- The Henry Smith Charity**
- HMP Prison Service**
- London Councils**
- London Criminal Justice Partnership**
- NOM's/ESF – London Probation**
- NOM's/ESF – Leicestershire and Rutland Probation**
- Lloyds TSB Foundation**
- Matrix Chambers**
- Ministry of Justice**
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation**
- Pilgrim Trust**
- The Rank Foundation**
- The Rayne Foundation**
- Tudor Trust**
- Woking Borough Council**
- Wates Foundation**

Thanks also to the many individuals who donate each year to Women in Prison.



Contact



If you would like further information about Women in Prison's work please contact:

Women in Prison
Unit 10, The Ivories
6 Northampton Street
London N1 2HY

T: 020 7359 6674

www.womeninprison.org.uk



Taking the most hurt people out of society and punishing them in order to teach them how to live within society is, at best, futile. Whatever else a prisoner knows, she knows everything there is to know about punishment because that is exactly what she has grown up with. Whether it is childhood sexual abuse, indifference, neglect; punishment is most familiar to her.

Chris Tchaikovsky – Founder of Women in Prison

