



Female Sex Workers in the East Midlands

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1. Context

The overall aim of the National Offender Management Service Co-financing Organisation (NOMS CFO) programme is to improve offender education, training & employment opportunities and increase access to existing resettlement provision. Rather than deliver education and training programmes directly, the NOMS CFO Programme is designed to motivate participants and remove barriers that prevent them from progressing into mainstream provision delivered by other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus employment services, Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) funded provision or further education/training. Not all these services are directed specifically at offenders and NOMS CFO links into services in prison/community for offenders and those available to everyone. Effective engagement with offenders in custody or in the community will also more adequately prepare them for employment, training, education and other mainstream activities. The NOMS CFO provision enhances existing activity within prisons and the community by identifying the gaps in delivery for the harder to help groups, which includes prisoners serving short term sentences. NOMS CFO aims to complement existing delivery activity by bridging the service gaps experienced by offenders.

The Prime Provider for the CFO region of the East Midlands is Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust. Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust are using the current 2011 to 2014 NOMS CFO programme to run the REACH project. The REACH project brings together a myriad of authority organisations, outside agencies and charities to offer support to participants on the programme, in order to address a variety of needs. The REACH project is designed to help offenders by identifying their associated barriers to work, providing appropriate and quality support and helping them gain access to education, training and employment opportunities in their desired area of work. REACH also specifically targets those offender groups who have the highest needs and the greatest barriers to employment; like that of their specific hard-to-help sub-group, female sex workers.

The REACH project has sub-contracted Women in Prison and Changing Lives to help with the delivery of the provision for female sex workers. The provision is based in HMP Foston Hall and Women in Prison and Changing Lives both have specific roles. As identifying female sex workers is very difficult, the project uses a criteria based assessment to sign up participants. It is the role of the Women in Prison Case Worker to identify potential participants and then assess them according to set criteria to see whether they are at risk of becoming involved in the sex industry; if not already involved. The Women in Prison Case Worker will then offer tailored outcome-focused support until they feel that the participant is confident enough to join the group courses run by Changing Lives. Changing Lives run the Chrysalis, X-it and GOALS courses as part of their provision. The Chrysalis course was designed to help women offenders with a variety of issues they may face, including debt, domestic abuse and unemployment. The X-it course was designed specifically for female sex workers and teaches them about how get out of abusive relationships, how to identify potentially dangerous relationships and how to stop repeatable negative thoughts and



behaviours. Finally, the GOALS programme is a course designed to boost motivation and to identify suitable employment opportunities. Participants will still receive intensive one-to-one support from the Women in Prison Case Worker during their time on the courses. At the end of each course a three-way meeting will take place between the participant, Women in Prison Case Worker and the Changing Lives Programme Tutor in order to promote the progress the participant has made and then to identify the next steps for her.

The main findings of this report will focus on the following key research aims:-

- i. To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub project within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.
- ii. To explore differences in resettlement needs and how they have been addressed by the provider – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

2. Approach

The methodology of this report is designed to provide a balanced commentary on the overall implementation, delivery and sustainability of the project; analysing how impactful and effective the support offered is, what is working well and where are the areas for development, and finally what are the long term prospects of the project. The evaluation consists of a series of qualitative interviews with selected people involved in the design and delivery of the project supported by qualitative analysis of the sub group participant cohort taken from the Case Assessment and Tracking System (CATS). At the time this current report was being conducted the provision delivered in HMP Foston Hall had been halted though efforts were underway to re-establish the provision. However, as a result there were no participants of the sub-project available to interview.

Quantitative Data

The source of the quantitative data used in the report was the CATS database. It enabled an analysis of the demographics, needs and outcomes of the target sub-group cohort to a comparative offender cohort from the East Midlands CFO region. Using the CATS data a comparison was made between two female-only cohorts. 4 female sex worker participants were removed from the data as they had started outside the East Midlands. The data for the current report looks at 47 female sex workers who started on the project in HMP Foston Hall. The comparison was made with a control group who also started in HMP Foston Hall but were not recorded as being female sex workers. Further analysis was conducted to determine whether there was any statistical significance of the highlighted needs of the target sub-group and if they differed to that of the main cohort. These significance tests were carried out using Pearson's Chi-Squared test with Yate's Correction for Continuity.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was collected in the form of several face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with parties relevant to the design, implementation and delivery of the sub-project. In total, 3 interviews were conducted with 4 people linked to the Prime Provider Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust and their sub-contracted organisations, Women in Prison and



Changing Lives. The first interview was conducted with the Contracts Manager for Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust; he gave an overview of the project, how it was developed and how the sub-contractors became involved in delivery. The second interview was a joint interview with the Changing Lives Programmes Tutor and Centre Manager. The Programmes Tutor discussed the purpose of the courses and the content involved and the Centre Manager discussed how their women's specific provision was designed to help women offenders. The final interview was conducted with the Women in Prison Services Manager who outlined the role of their Case Manager and also discussed the specific barriers that female sex workers face.

In order to provide answers to the set research questions, the interviews were transcribed and then subsequently thematically analysed for recurring themes. The themes that were discovered will be reported on and discussed in full.

3. Results

This thematic report serves as an effective feedback mechanism to the provider, NOMS CFO and European Social Fund (ESF) that explores the delivery of the provision and the impact on participants. The central issue of this report is to determine whether the project is contributing to the change that it was designed to make, and to examine those aspects of the project that are contributing to or hampering its success; do these lie in the design or the implementation process.

This section provides the results of the evaluation to date by answering the following two research aims:-

- To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub project within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.
- To explore differences in resettlement needs and how they have been addressed by the provider – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

It should be noted that the sub-project in HMP Foston began in approximately August 2011 and the provision was in operation but suffered a series of stoppages due to extraneous circumstances. The current sub-project was being treated as a pilot programme to gain a greater understanding of the barriers that female sex workers face and what support is necessary. When the current report was being conducted there was another break however efforts were being made to restart provision in HMP Foston Hall.

The themes that are discussed firstly are in relation to answering set research aim one: To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub project within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.

'Difficulty of identification' and 'criteria-based selection'

The first lesson that was learnt from the sub-project was the difficulty of identifying female sex workers. In all interviews, this issue was highlighted. It was discussed that female sex workers are hard to target for a number of reasons. Firstly, they usually have a series of other offences and cannot be targeted by their index offence. The Women in Prison (WiP)



Services Manager stated that women who work in the sex industry are also highly unlikely to disclose that they have been involved to anyone. This is due to a number of reasons including a lack of trust in people and also a fear of reprisal if they should tell anyone. A series of focus groups were conducted as part of the development of the sub-project; it was found that female sex worker prisoners are more likely to be subjected to bullying from other prisoners if their involvement in the sex industry is known. There are also cases for some women that they do not acknowledge or consider themselves to be involved in sex work. Another reason why it is difficult to identify sex workers is because it is a very broad category, including everything from street prostitution to high market escorts to online sex work. Also, what the women receive in terms of payment may not be money. Some women may be forced to engage in sex work in exchange for drugs, accommodation or utilities. As the sex industry is very broad and women are very unwilling to disclose whether they have been sex workers, the REACH sub-project had to develop a method to identify potential participants based on the risk of entering into sex work it rather than actual involvement.

In order to identify participants for the sub-project, REACH, WiP and Changing Lives devised an assessment based on how vulnerable they are and how likely they are to become engaged in sex work. They created a list of vulnerabilities that the women might be suffering from; these included such things as a lack of housing, poor relationships, poor mental health, experience of some form of abuse and a substance misuse problem. During the one-to-one with the WiP Case Worker, the potential participant will be assessed as to whether they are exhibiting or have a history of any of the select criteria; if they match a certain number then they are considered to be at risk of entering sex work, if not already involved in it (see Appendix A). They are also considered to be at risk of not entering sex work voluntarily and have a high chance of being exploited by others. If they match 5 or more of the criteria, they are signed up to the REACH project and are worked with on an individual basis until the WiP Case Worker feels that the participant is confident enough to join the group courses run by Changing Lives. By assessing potential participants based on criteria, it protects the identity of the women and avoids labelling women who are already vulnerable enough; if they are known to be sex workers their safety could possibly be compromised. This also stretches to the entirety of the sub-project in that it is not explicitly advertised as programme for female sex workers. REACH has ensured that participants are therefore protected whilst they are on the project.

‘Chaos’, ‘coercion’ and ‘empowering women’

Another topic that was consistently discussed within interviews was the chaotic lifestyles that female sex workers often have. The Changing Lives Programmes Tutor detailed that these women experience many difficulties such as a lack of finance, have maybe been sectioned for a mental health issue, have had their children taken in to care which subsequently may make their mental health issues worse; which then leads to the development of coping strategies which could include alcohol or drugs abuse or self-harming. A lot of these women have also suffered some form of abuse; either domestic, sexual or childhood abuse. The Corston Report published in 2007 highlighted 7 initial resettlement pathways for women. 2 more pathways focusing on domestic violence and sex work were then added acknowledging the needs that are pertinent to women and further cementing the requisite for women-specific provision. The WiP Services Manager stated that these women are doubly traumatised because they have come from a relationship where they have been controlled and coerced



and then they come in to prison where they are again disempowered and controlled. Then there's the chance that, without any help and support, they are released from prison and they go back to that abusive, controlling relationship because they know nothing else. This means that the support that REACH offers them can potentially be vital in breaking that chain and can help these women to rethink and show alternatives to their current lifestyle. In order to help with this, the REACH project took the approach to empower women with the support that they offer.

One aspect that is key to the REACH sub-project is that it gives the choice back to the women. These women suffer a lot of disempowerment and are controlled; they are often forced against their will or coerced to engage in activities such as sex work. Therefore REACH gives the choice of the support back to the participants. The WiP Services Manager praised the support for being incredibly empowering; saying that the one-to-one work takes in to account what the participants want, feels and fears. She said that if the participants feel that they are being valued, then it has a massive impact on their feelings of confidence and self-esteem. The programmes run by Changing Lives are also shaped by the participants; especially the Chrysalis programme which is designed for women offenders. There is a selection of 32 topics and it is decided by the participants as a group which ones they focus on. The Programme Tutor said that the course is tailored to the groups needs; anything they choose will be delivered and then there is the scope to do more if the participants wish to do so. The participants also get to choose whether they want to continue the course and can also receive support until release and after it as well; if they are released into the East Midlands CFO area. By giving the choice back to the women, it gives them a voice and a chance to express how they feel and what they want to do. The REACH sub-project strives to empower women with the work that they do and that increases self esteem and can hopefully give participants the confidence to make their own decisions and walk away from their previous lifestyle; if that is what they wish to do.

'Links between organisations and authorities'

One thing that was praised by all interviewees was the relationships between all the organisations involved in delivery; meaning the link between Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust, Women in Prison, Changing Lives and staff at HMP Foston Hall. The collaboration between the various organisations and authorities has meant that participants experience a high quality, sequential series of supportive courses as well as intensive, individual support which most importantly is gender-specific and designed for women. The WiP Services Manager discussed how it is imperative that all involved have a strategic understanding of what they expect of each other, what they offer as part of the sub-project and what they can do for each other. By ensuring that all organisations involved have a comprehensive knowledge of each other's specific roles, it means that the provision to participants does not suffer as a result of an error or miscommunication. For example, the WiP Case Worker has no experience of support with substance abuse or mental health issues so in order to help a participant with such need, she must know what services the prison offer and how the participant can go about accessing such services. It is these links between the agencies and authorities involved that means that participants are able to receive the necessary support they require to address their specific needs.



'Through-the-Gate'

An area that the sub-project could be developed is in regard to Through-the-Gate provision. All interviewees expressed the desire to extend this area of support. The Changing Lives Centre Manager discussed the potential for Changing Lives to collaborate with Women in Prison in order to create a package of Through-the-Gate support for the women. The Programme Tutor noted that such a package of care would mean that the participant is helped by the same person continuously, someone who the participant has come to trust, who can help them set the foundations for a stable life. As such, developing this could prove to be vital to the participants. The WiP Services Manager stated that the first 24 hour to 10 days are extremely turbulent for women coming out of prison and for female sex workers in particular; if they do not have any support they can easily fall back in to their previous lifestyle or return to an abusive, controlling relationship. Therefore, providing more Through-the-Gate work would mean that participants have the opportunity to avoid their previous lifestyle and work towards gaining stability. However, this would prove to be difficult in HMP Foston Hall as a lot of the women are released to the West Midlands instead. Nevertheless, the development of Through-the-Gate support could prove to be decisive in helping some women from returning to their previous lifestyle.

'Challenges faced at HMP Foston Hall'

An extraneous factor that has hampered provision was due to with issues with HMP Foston Hall. During the time that the sub-project has been in operation in the prison, there have been several changes in the Governor and Deputy Governor posts. This has meant that provision has had to be halted and the provider has to approach the new Governor or Deputy Governor to discuss the continuation of the support. With new managing staff, it has meant that the regime of prison has changed as well; this has meant on occasion that the sub-project has become more constrained and aspects that have been allowed previously are denied. There have also been changes in activities staff and training staff meaning that women might not get to do what they wish to do. All interviewees talked about the problems that have arisen as a consequence of the changing nature of the prison. The Contracts Manager stated that lessons have been learnt about running the sub-project in the prison and the sheer difficulty of trying to adapt the sub-project to the prison's changing regime. Also, there are difficulties in that a lot of women tend to be moved from one prison to another very suddenly; this has been the case for some participants. The WiP Services Manager discussed that through no fault of anyone's, provision has suffered because of the dynamic nature of HMP Foston Hall. Despite the difficulties, REACH, WiP and Changing Lives have continued to re-establish provision continuously to try to support the participants.

'Sourcing community provision'

Another issue is the sparse provision there is for women in the community. The Contracts Manager for Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust noted that there are very few women specific resources in the community and that these resources are insecure anyway. Women can fall back into their old lifestyle; due to a lack of provision after they are released. The WiP Services Manager discussed that their Case Worker needs to have knowledge of what services there are for women specifically for the West Midlands as well as East. This is so that when women are released in to the community, they can be directed to the local



women’s centre or other women’s specific support agency; even if they are not released in to the East Midlands CFO region. The Case Worker can also arrange for someone to meet them there and then tell the participant a little about the person they are meeting in advance in order to make sure they are comfortable and happy to continue. Development of Through-the-Gate and other such associated work for the sub-project could mean that on release, the participant can be linked in with housing agencies, community mental health provision and substance abuse support or what other advice and guidance they need. Development of this sub-project would provide a better understanding of what support these women need after they are released from prison and the means necessary to source such support in the community.

The next set of themes are pertinent to answering set research aim two: To explore differences in resettlement needs and how they have been addressed – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

The below table shows the identified resettlement needs specific to the female sex worker sub-group cohort compared to females in the main cohort on the East Midlands programme. The below statistics and all following statistics are accurate as of December 2013. As of December 2013, there have been a total of 51 female sex workers. However the current data is restricted to those who started on the project in HMP Foston Hall; of which there are 47.

Resettlement Need	Female Sex Worker Participants (n = 47)			Main Cohort Participants (n = 54)		
	Has Need	No Need	Percentage with Need	Has Need	No Need	Percentage with Need
Alcohol	24	23	51%	25	29	46%
Attitude & Life Skills	46	1	98%	52	2	96%
Drugs	37	10	79%	23	31	43%
Education	46	1	98%	51	3	94%
Employment & Training	47	0	100%	54	0	100%
Financial Status	24	23	51%	23	31	43%
Health	34	13	72%	33	21	61%
Housing	36	11	77%	31	23	57%
Relationships	43	4	91%	37	17	69%

As the table shows, the female sex worker participants have a very high degree of resettlement needs. The highest resettlement needs are that of Attitude and Life Skills, Education, Employment and Training and Relationships however all resettlement pathways have at least half of participants with that associated need. This supports the claims that female sex workers have very chaotic lifestyles and have a range of complex needs. Using Pearson’s Chi-Square significance test with Yate’s Correction for Continuity it was found that there was no significant difference in the majority of resettlement needs of female sex workers compared to that of the main cohort. However, significant findings were found for the



drugs and relationships resettlement needs suggesting a prominent issue specific to female sex workers; this is corroborated by interviewees who stated that these women often have drug misuse issues and have very negative relationships. The following results discuss how the REACH sub-project in HMP Foston Hall is working to remove major barriers that female sex workers have.

‘Relationships’

As identified in the table, female sex workers have a high relationship resettlement need; 91% of participants had an identified relationships issue. This corroborates what the WiP Services Manager discussed regarding the fact that female sex workers often have very poor familial relationships, have issues with children in care or are in abusive, controlling relationships. For female sex workers in particular there appears to be an overall lack of any supportive network. The core of the support offered on the REACH sub-project centres on this fact. The approach that the REACH sub-project takes to helping female sex workers is very much relational. When the WiP Case Worker is working one-to-one with any participant, she will always take in to account the participant’s needs and fears all the while never judging the woman. This approach enables the participant to build a positive working relationship with the Case Worker. The Programmes Tutor discussed that there were aspects of the Changing Lives courses that teach the participants about positive and negative relationships, how to build new relationships and how to identify the signs of possible negative relationships.

If the woman is in an abusive relationship that she wishes to leave, an exit plan is developed for her; she will be advised on how to look after herself and will be linked in with relevant organisations where she can be offered further support, counselling and alternative accommodation. Any leaflets or information packs are not branded so that the woman is not brought in to further danger. If she does not wish to leave the relationship, then an Action Plan is developed to ensure that she is protected and that contact can still be maintained to monitor her safety. With regards to associated relationship outcomes, 40% of participants on the sub-project received outcomes with regards to both parenting skills and domestic abuse advice. 45% of participants received an outcome for Life and Communication skills. The relational approach taken on the sub-project and the work done to help women improve their own personal relationships will ensure these women have the opportunity to lead more stable lifestyles.

‘Motivation’

Motivation is another issue for female sex worker participants. According to the CATS data, 85% of participants had red levels of motivation on start. The WiP Services Manager stated that these women are often reluctant to get involved in the support initially; this is usually due to low self-esteem, low levels of confidence or feeling that they are unworthy of help. In order to keep participants motivated and engaged in the provision, the WiP Case Worker will set small targets for the participant to achieve and then regularly review the progress she has made. This promotes a sense of achievement in the participant and gives them more self-belief and confidence. The Changing Lives courses also offer motivational aspects in order to increase the participant’s feelings of self-worth and confidence. The last of the courses that is offered to participants, the GOALS programme, focuses on sustaining participant’s levels of



motivation. The Programmes Tutor discussed how the changes in participant levels of motivation are observable; often women who were shy become more outspoken and more engaging in the group work. With regard to motivational associated outcomes, 21% of participants received an outcome for problem solving and for personal development. The motivational aspect of the sub-project is vital to negating the participant's feelings of worthlessness.

'Self-esteem and confidence building'

Female sex worker participants often have very low levels of self-esteem and confidence. The Changing Lives Centre Manager said that the female sex workers usually have a negative self perception and they struggle to identify any positive skills that they might have. As a result, interactions with other people may manifest as hostile or negative because these women put up barriers. These internal barriers mean that the women are reluctant to engage with services because they feel that they are unworthy or they are useless and beyond help. As part of the REACH sub-project, the very first steps for any participant are always focused on raising self-esteem and confidence. The WiP Services Manager discussed how their Case Worker will build a relationship with the participant, setting small achievable targets and then reviewing the success that the participant has had; this has a massive impact on the participant's feelings of self-worth. When the Case Worker feels that the participant's confidence has grown enough, they are then introduced to the courses. However, the very first steps must be centred on building confidence in order to remove the internal barriers that these women have; in order for them to feel happy enough to engage in the support.

'X-it course'

The X-it course is a programme ran by Changing Lives that is tailored specifically for female sex workers and follows on from the Chrysalis programme. It is not explicitly mentioned that the course is for female sex workers to avoid labelling participants and potentially having a harmful impact on them. The aim of the course is to give women the opportunity to reflect on their lives, to consider alternatives to their current coping mechanisms and to learn better self-management; it focuses on these to encourage women to make the choice to leave the sex industry. The course is ran over a series of weeks and looks at helping the women to identify repeated patterns of behaviours and thoughts, how to identify positive and negative relationships and how to recognise what help and resources they can access to deal with their barriers. The course is designed to highlight the women's strengths and positives in order to promote a feeling of self-worth. The Changing Lives Centre Manager said that the X-it programme had to be adapted in order for it to be delivered in the prison. The X-it course follows on so quick from the Chrysalis programme so that participants experience a continual flow through of provision to reinforce what they learn on each course.

'Employability'

There are aspects of employability support on the courses that are offered as part of provision. The GOALS programme, the last of the courses that participants experience, focuses on employability support. Also, one of the selectable modules on the Chrysalis programme centres on employability; looking at CV writing, interview techniques and opportunities that could be available to them. The employability support is offered as an



accredited, preparing for work module. Participants are taught how to identify their transferable skills, they are taught good interview techniques and they will be shown how to create and develop their own CV. However, all interviewees discussed how, in the majority of cases, there are several barriers in relation to social inclusion that must be addressed before the woman can consider gaining employment; finding full-time employment is the very last step for these women. These women often have difficulties with housing and usually have children in care; so these barriers must be dealt with first in order for the women to be stable enough to acquire full-time employment. In relation to outcomes for employability, 49% of participants received an outcome for CV preparation and 30% received an outcome for a mock interview or developing interview skills. Employability support is a very important aspect but for female sex workers there are a myriad of other barriers around social inclusion that come before employment can be considered.

'Individual support'

The individual support offered on the sub-project is vital in getting participants to engage. A relationship must be built between the participant and the WiP Case Worker in order that the participant feels confident enough to then participate in the group courses. The WiP Case Worker will provide non-judgemental, intensive assistance for as long as the participant requires. The WiP Case Worker discussed how the user-led, outcome-focused approach taken by the WiP Case Worker is vital to the individual support because it empowers the women and shows them how much progress they have made in a short space of time; instilling a sense of self-worth and confidence in the participant. However, as the WiP Case Worker is not a specialist in mental health or drugs services, she must know where to signpost the participant to if they are in need of that help. She must know where to direct the participants to relevant agencies for a range of needs. 66% of participants on the sub-project received an outcome related to signposting to specialist support referrals. It is this individual one-to-one support that ensures women's participation on the sub-project because they feel that they are genuinely respected and that their thoughts, feelings and fears are being taken in to consideration; this means that a positive supportive relationship is built between the WiP worker and the participant so the women feel happy to continue the support.

4. Conclusion

Despite a number of difficulties with the surrounding environment, the REACH project has done excellently to provide support to one of the hardest-to-help groups. Female sex workers present a very challenging group due to chaotic lifestyles and a myriad of barriers. One of the hardest aspects was the identification of female sex workers. As it is virtually impossible to explicitly define whether or not a woman is involved in sex work, REACH devised a criteria based assessment for signing up participants based on risk of entering sex work. This meant that women who were extremely vulnerable were offered support but avoiding branding them as sex workers. After participants agreed to be on the project, they received individual, non-judgemental, needs-based and outcome-focused support from the WiP Case Worker. This one-to-one work set the foundation of the work done on the sub-project and was designed to empower the women. This was done by allowing the participant to set short term goals based on what they wanted and then regularly review the progress made. As a result, the participant's feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are boosted; levels that are notoriously low in these women that makes them think that they are unworthy or beyond support. Once



that relationship has formed between the WiP Case Worker and the participant and that the participant has sufficiently grown in confidence, they are introduced to the group courses run by Changing Lives.

The courses are designed to give the choice back to the women. They choose what they want to learn based on what is relevant to them at that time. Participants can choose from a range of modules and anything they wish to know more on can be developed. The courses ensure that women reflect on their previous lifestyles; for example if they were in a negative relationship or whether they had developed inappropriate behaviours. They are then taught alternatives coping mechanisms and how to identify possible negative relationships. This is done with the hope that once they are released, they will have gained the confidence to not fall back in to their previous lifestyle. There is an area for development with regards to the Through-the-Gate work as a crisis time for women leaving prison is within the first few days of release and it is very easy for them to slip back in to old habits. Development of Through-the-Gate would mean more support for women in their time of need and a greater chance of them developing a stable life. With regards to the prison, there have been a number of difficulties that has hampered provision. As senior staff has changed, the sub-project has had to be stopped pending approval for restart. Nevertheless, the REACH project has done extremely well despite the challenging circumstances and delivered a project that has empowered vulnerable women, got them to re-evaluate their lives and possibly given them the confidence to not to return to their previous life upon release from prison.

5. Recommendations

Female sex workers pose an extremely difficult sub-group contingent for a variety of reasons; from an inability to explicitly identify them to a variety of complex needs requiring specialist but sympathetic support. If a project of this nature was to be conducted again, the following recommendations are made:

- Female sex workers are hard to identify but this is because they are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and bullying. It is imperative that it provision is unidentifiable as specifically for sex workers. The criteria based assessment used in the REACH subject was an excellent idea that ensured participants were brought on but did not label them.
- The core approach of the support should empower women and give them the choice. These women suffer a great deal of control and exploitation. Any support that is offered to them should be led by them and should take in to consideration their thoughts, feelings and fears.
- Support should be sympathetic of the women and should promote a sense of progress to boost feelings of confidence and self-worth. It also should be realistic and any goals set should be in small steps over a long period of time. Full-time employment would be the very last step for these women.
- Support should be focused on giving women the confidence to make their own choices about what they want to do. This is so that on release, women feel strong enough to leave their old lifestyle.



- Women's specific support should be delivered by organisations with a comprehensive understanding of women's specific needs and the required provision.
- Through-the-Gate work should be developed to ensure that support is there to help women after they are released; a period of time where they are most likely to fall back to their old habits.
- Relationships between all organisations and agencies involved should be as strong as they are within in the current project to ensure that the participants or provision does not suffer as a result of miscommunication or other erroneous circumstances.



6. Appendices

Appendix A: REACH Female Sex Worker sub-project initial sign up criteria

- Inappropriate or lack of suitable housing
- Issues with family and children
- Lack of support networks
- Financial/Debt issues or no income
- History of sex work
- Poor mental health
- Substance misuse (legal and illegal)
- Attitudes, thinking and behaviour issues
- History or experience of sexual abuse
- History or experience of the care system
- At risk of third party abuse