

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Community Safety Committee

22 August 2013

Support Services for Women at Risk of Offending in Perth City

Report by Executive Director (Housing and Community Care)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee and seek endorsement of the work undertaken to date to implement the Offending Women's Learning Service (OWLS) and mentoring service for female offenders in the criminal justice system in Perth and Kinross.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Offending Women's Learning Service (OWLS) was set up in response to a recommendation within the report from the Commission on Women Offenders chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini. The report recommended the establishment of a Community Justice Centre staffed by a criminal justice social worker, nurse and addictions worker to reduce re-offending and bring about behavioural change. This was supported by other national developments and research which highlighted the need for a different approach to be taken when working with vulnerable women offenders. The Angiolini report reinforced this approach commenting that services '...need to be tailored to the multiple and complex needs of women offenders to achieve reductions in reoffending and better outcomes for local communities'.
- 1.2 In addition, the Angiolini report recommended that the work delivered by the Community Justice Centre should be complimented by '...intensive monitoring of women offenders at risk of re-offending or custody to support compliance with court orders'.
- 1.3 Funding has been secured for a 3 year period to support mentoring and befriending services and a further £64,000 over two years to fund GP input to the Central Health Care Team to support its wider work and to secure a base for the development of OWLS.
- 1.4 The OWLS service was set up in consultation with NHS Tayside, Drug and Alcohol Services, and Housing and Criminal Justice Services who formed the core group for service design and development. In preparation for this, two of the services noted in the Angiolini report were visited, including the 218 project in Glasgow and the Women Offenders Team in Dundee. Cognisance was taken that these services are located in urban area, and that a service for Perth and Kinross must also consider the challenges of a rural population, taking account of the current developments in relation to locality working.

- 1.5 A survey of female offenders was conducted locally to determine the shape and focus of a women's centre for Perth and Kinross. Those surveyed felt that it took a long time to access help from services; they wanted somewhere to go to share their experiences, talk to other women and get the support they needed. When asked about their future aspirations, there was a common theme of wanting to do work for others by giving something back to their community and of wanting to feel valued.
- 1.6 A tendering process was conducted for the mentoring service and Tayside Council on Alcohol (TCA) were the successful bidders in this process. TCA now have capacity for ten to twelve mentoring spaces, but have given assurance that should capacity increase, they will accommodate any additional demand. There is also capacity via the criminal justice assistant attached to OWLS and Perth Sheriff Court to support any shortfall. After a period of approximately six months with a mentor and after achieving a period of stability requiring a reduced level of support, women will then be introduced to a Befriender. The Befriending service works in conjunction with the mentoring service and is provided by the 'Facing Change Project' run by Churches Action for the Homeless (CATH). Once women have successfully transitioned through these support services and are more stable, they will have the opportunity to be trained as peer mentors, thereby increasing our mentoring capacity.
- 1.7 **Progress to date**
OWLS was launched on 02 February 2013 and is based at Drumhar Health Centre. The GP service is provided by the Mauve practice and allows for ready access to a composite range of services. The progress and development of OWLS has been monitored via a Steering Group consisting of representatives from the core group of services with weekly operational meetings between front line staff to share client information and deal with operational problems. Presentations on OWLS have been delivered to Perth Sheriff Court (including Defence Agents) to ensure that women offenders are afforded the opportunity of this intervention.
- 1.8 The initial focus for OWLS has been on women who are subject to Community Payback Orders, those who have served short term prison sentences, and those who are subject to a supervision Licence after release from custody. The implementation of OWLS was planned, in part, to address the nationally recognised concern of the 'revolving door' of those subject to short term prison sentences and their propensity to re-offend and return to custody.
- 1.9 OWLS operates every Thursday from 08.30 to 16.00. The service is delivered at Drumhar Health Centre until 12.30 where specific rooms are utilised both for appointments and as a drop-in facility with the following services:
- Criminal Justice Social Worker (services the CPO/Licence, group work delivery and individual programmes of work, e.g. anger management; managing violence and aggression)

- Criminal Justice Assistants (mentoring if required and practical interventions including group work delivery)
 - Drug and Alcohol Team Social Worker (substance misuse interventions, Blood Borne Viruses and Naloxone awareness as well as participation in group work delivery)
 - Housing Options Support Worker (including benefit maximisation)
 - General Nurse (holistic health check including sexual health)
 - Community Psychiatric Nurse (assess to mental health allowing access to community mental health services)
 - Podiatrist
 - Dentist
 - Optician (when required)
- 1.10 The group work component takes place at the Perth offices of TCA and is run from 13.30 to 15.30. Originally the programme was delivered at Drumhar Medical Centre however, it was the decision of the women that this environment was 'too clinical' and alternative premises were sourced.
- 1.11 When a woman is made the subject of a Community Payback Order (CPO) or released from custody, then they attend OWLS the following Thursday and are escorted to the service either by a mentor or a Resettlement worker (criminal justice assistant). They are given a 'Welcome Pack' which contains information about the mentoring scheme, a leaflet about OWLS and a diary where they can record their thoughts. They receive a full health check (physical, psychological and sexual) and appointments are scheduled with other health professionals or services as required e.g. drug and alcohol services for substance misuse, housing options support worker for all housing and financial matters.
- 1.12 The conditions of statutory supervision are explained to women by the Criminal Justice Social Worker at OWLS. The Criminal Justice Assistant then conducts an outcome focused assessment (Rickter) which specifically determines the woman's view of their offending, accommodation, financial situation and health and wellbeing. The Rickter assessment establishes a base line from which progress can be measured and reviewed after six months, to record any changes. This process is linked to the criminal justice assessment for assessing risk of reoffending and harm (LS/CMI) and the statutory review process for those subject to supervision. Future plans for OWLS include working with women who are not subject to statutory supervision, but may still be at risk of offending.
- 1.13 There are currently 20 women attending OWLS; 19 subject to CPOs and one subject to an Extended Sentence post custody Licence. The cohort are aged from 23 to 45 years and have committed offences including misuse of drugs, dishonesty, assault and offences against children, (e.g. neglect and physical abuse). There is one member who does not speak English. She has now been allocated a criminal justice social worker who speaks her own language allowing her to participate and work on her English language skills at OWLS.

- 1.14 The group work programme is designed to run on a six month rolling basis and is theoretically underpinned by the Stages of Change model outlined by Prochaska and DiClemente (1984). There are ten specific processes of change which, on completion, enables a person to move from one stage to the next and gain a more insightful understanding of their behaviour. This model encourages and promotes self awareness which allows the person to make more considered and positive choices in their life.
- 1.15 As identified in the Angiolini report and evaluations of other services for women offenders, it is important to give women a say in determining some of the group work activities. This helps to promote group cohesion and ownership as well as promoting the participants' confidence, self-worth and communication skills. Women are given the opportunity to make suggestions about any activities or changes they think would be appropriate. This is currently evidenced by the group's desire to develop a portable Library facility and a 'Thought Tree' often used in recovery with those who misuse substances or for those with mental health problems. This will allow them to articulate their current thoughts as well as their future hopes and desires.
- 1.16 The group work programme has been running since the beginning of April and is still evolving. Some areas for development have been identified and enquiries are currently being made with PKAVS to look at possible volunteering opportunities. This reflects the comments from women about wanting to give something back to the community with the added value of enhancing their employability opportunities. Apex also have input into the programme, exploring employment options and dealing with the prejudice experienced by those who have committed offences.
- 1.17 There have been group work activities to improve mental wellbeing including alternative therapies, e.g. aromatherapy, Reiki and Mindfulness meditation. Initially these were met with scepticism, but feedback after these sessions has been very positive and the openness of the women to participate in spite of their initial comments is commendable.
- 1.18 Skinnergate Hostel has also been utilised as a venue for the group work programme in relation to providing facilities for cookery classes. One of the staff has also offered to teach fly fishing which was positively received by the group and there has also been input from the Venture Trust. Some of the women are keen to experience this residential survival programme.
- 1.19 A concurrent and prevalent theme is the nature of abusive relationships experienced by women attending OWLS both past and present. This is addressed in the group work component of the service with planned input from the Womens Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (WRASAC).
- 1.20 Given the offences of which certain women have been convicted, it is our intention to develop interventions about parenting skills, attachment and how to manage relationships with children. We intend to approach a local children's charity to enlist their support for a module of the group work programme.

- 1.21 A SharePoint site is currently being developed so that information and progress can be recorded about the women who attend OWLS. This will be in place by the end of August 2013 and will allow outcomes to be recorded and monitored. Currently this information is being held manually by each service which complicates data collection as different services are operating separate IT systems.
- 1.22 The outcomes to be captured reflect those of the Angiolini report. OWLS endeavours to demonstrate the following outcomes for the project, all of which can be linked to each woman's perception of their achievement through the Rickter assessment. These include:
- Reduce offending and re-offending
 - Reduce and stabilise substance misuse
 - Improve physical health
 - Improve mental wellbeing
 - Improve access to appropriate accommodation
 - Improve employability opportunities
 - Income maximisation and improved financial wellbeing
- 1.23 To date, there has been full engagement from the women attending OWLS. Feedback is obtained after each group work session which will be analysed and used to develop and improve the service.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Although the project is in its early stages, the plan by the end of this year is to open the service to women at risk of offending and re-offending. Currently OWLS is linked to the recently developed Tayside Intensive Support Service (TISS) which deals with persistent offenders who are not yet subject to community supervision by criminal justice services, both male and female. Links will also be made with women known to wider services, including drug and alcohol and housing services, which will open up the OWLS project to a wider and more diverse group of vulnerable women.
- 2.1 Expansion of the OWLS project presents benefits and challenges in terms of staff capacity. There is also the geographical challenge of Perth and Kinross although most of the women who are attending OWLS live in central Perth. It is, accordingly, proposed to explore expansion of the service to those areas where there is greatest need – adopting a locality-based model for service provision.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The establishment of the Offending Women's Learning Service was the response by Perth and Kinross to a number of recommendations in the report by the Commission on Women Offenders published in April 2012. The report clearly stated that the lives of women offenders are characterised by multiple

complexities and their potential to offend and re-offending links directly to their chaotic lives and lack of social supports.

- 3.2 The Commission endorsed a holistic approach to working with women across services by delivering interventions which address their immediate needs and bring about behaviour change to improve the quality of their lives. A fundamental part of this entails the practical support and guidance provided through the mentoring service, progressing to social support via befriending. This should allow women to build their self confidence and self-esteem and to live more productive and fulfilling lives as valued members of their families and communities.
- 3.3 The Committee are invited to support and endorse the work of the OWLS project to instruct the Executive Director (Housing & Community Care) to bring forward a further report in 6 months time. This will allow the opportunity for further development and sufficient time to evidence the positive impact of the service.

Author(s)

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Approved

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David Burke	Executive Director	7 August 2013

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion only, a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting Nicola Rogerson



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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The undernoted table should be completed for all reports. Where the answer is 'yes', the relevant section(s) should also be completed. Where the answer is 'no', the relevant section(s) should be marked 'not available (n/a)'.

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The delivery of a service to women offenders and those at risk of re-offending and the extension of the capacity at Drumhar Medical Centre assists in the delivery of both the Perth and Kinross Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement in respect of the following local outcomes:

- (i) People in vulnerable circumstances are protected
- (ii) Resilient, responsible and safe communities
- (iii) Longer healthier lives for all
- (iv) People are ready for life and work
- (v) Nurtured and supported families

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The Councils Corporate Plan 2013 – 2018 lays out five strategic objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. The relevant strategic objectives in respect of this report are as follows:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Funding for this service has already been agreed and met from Community Safety and Wellbeing Earmarked Reserve. No additional funding is required.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications arising from this report. The current work force has been found within existing resources.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no Asset management implications arising from this report.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This report is relevant for the purposes of EqlA as the project which it describes seeks to address both the alienation and problematic access to services experienced by a marginalised group in society.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

Sustainability

- 3.3 There are no issues in respect of sustainability.

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 This report contains no issues which would have a legal or governance impact on the Council.

Risk

- 3.5 There are no issues of risk arising from the proposals in this report.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 I have consulted with colleagues from housing services and community care services in developing the service.

External

- 4.2 I have consulted with colleagues from NHS Tayside and Tayside Council on Alcohol in developing this service.

5. Communication

There are no communication issues in respect of the proposals in this report.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Community Safety Committee report No: 12/500.

7. APPENDICES

There are no appendices attached to this report.

