



The Together Women Centre for Vulnerable Women

Independent Evaluation Report

Second stage: Project Impact and Outcomes

January 2012

“Without this place either my partner or alcohol would have killed me” (TWP service user)

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SUMMARY AND KEY MESSAGES FROM THE EVALUATION

The Together Women Centre (known as TWP), which has been operating for four years, provides a gender specific service for Salford women who have offended or who are at risk of offending. It provides a 'one stop' service that gives personalised, tailored support to women, which meets their individual needs. In addition, it provides the opportunities for women to meet together and gain support from their peers.

In 2010/2011 the Centre received **661** referrals from 22 different sources and had the capacity to support 340 women. Of these referrals, 337 women engaged in the project, 52% of which were offenders and 48% were identified as significantly at risk of offending. 93.5% did not re-offend whilst on project, 28 reduced the seriousness of their offence, 9 women were diverted from custody and 24 reduced their anti-social behaviour. The Centre supported 128 safeguarding children cases and 30 children were removed from safeguarding procedures or returned to their family.

FINDINGS

The Together Women Centre has achieved all the outcomes required by NOMS and the Big Lottery for 2009-2011 and in most cases it has exceeded expectations.

The outcomes required were:

- Reduce women's offending and re-offending
- Divert women away from custody
- Increase the number of women engaging in community provision
- Reduce the number of family breakdowns.
- 512 women take part in confidence building, health awareness or wellbeing activities, resulting in increased confidence levels and awareness;
- 448 economically inactive women report increased awareness of education, training and work opportunities with 192 entering an opportunity;
- 320 women take part in parenting skills training and report an improvement in their parenting;
- 512 women take part in mentoring, peer support or counselling sessions and report an improvement in their mental health and social interaction;
- 448 women attend support service awareness with 269 women increasing their use of them and reporting an improvement in community relationships and social interaction.

The evaluation collected data from a range of sources including interviews, focus groups and self-completion questionnaires with service users; workshop and interviews with partners and other stakeholders; focus group with staff team and use of the project monitoring data and documentation¹. A thematic analysis drew out the unintended outcomes, how the changes occurred and why.

¹ 102 evaluation interactions took place with women at TWP through interviews, focus group and questionnaires.

ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST OUTCOMES AND TARGETS

Strategic Positioning: reducing women's offending and diverting women away from custody

In the two years since the progress evaluation in 2009², **there has been a significant change in the positioning of the Together Women Centre.** It has established itself as a credible Third Sector service providing alternative provision within the Criminal Justice System (CJS), and other local authority services. This is a great achievement at a time of austerity, with consequent cuts and scarce resources and is in part due to the professional approach, integrity and significant outcomes resulting from TWP.

In an interview with Judge Fineststein for this evaluation, he made it clear that having TWP as a statutory option allowed him to provide an alternative to a custodial sentence:

"When I am considering the availability of a community order, the opportunity to impose the Together Women Project as part of a community order is a very big positive and has tipped the balance against what otherwise would have been a custodial sentence".

Senior management in the Greater Manchester Probation Trust described TWP as:

"A key component of our work with women offenders. It has been an essential part of our strategy and operational work with sentencers".

The Together Centre was said to be:

"An enhanced, unique service that meets the range of different needs women have. It offers a service to women that is more likely to reach their needs"

Early intervention and prevention: reducing family breakdown

TWP contributes to the safeguarding of children in Salford in a number of ways, and this has resulted in 30 children of mothers attending the Centre being removed from safeguarding procedures or returned home in one year. The Centre provides the opportunity to supervise and monitor children, in particular through the crèche and through parenting activities. A significant way that TWP supports the protection of children is through the sharing of data and attendance at safeguarding meetings. The key worker will often attend the conference with the client and take a full part in the decision making process.

The Together Women Centre is an exemplar within the Family Poverty Strategy in the City of Salford.

² Granville, G (March 2009) *"When I get in the lift to come here, it is like coming up to heaven": An Evaluation of the Salford Together Women Project, Salford Foundation.*

558 women have taken part in one or more confidence building or health and well being activities, including accessing information

When asked what changes had occurred in their lives since attending the Centre, the majority of women said an increase in their confidence:

"Confident, more assertive and knowledgeable"

"I still need support but my confidence has grown"

Many of the women spoke of improvement in their health and well being since coming to TWP. This included alcohol reduction and abstinence, coming off drugs, eating more healthily, reduced smoking and taking exercise:

"Without this place (TWP) either my partner or alcohol would have killed me"

"I have stopped smoking. This was partly due to the budgeting course"

Improved mental health was a significant change for many women. The woman's story below sums up a number of comments from many of the women:

"I have been through hell and may have committed suicide without this place. I needed it years ago and then would not have needed anti-depressants. I did not want to go down the anti-depressant road again. Now I have learnt to relax with yoga, relaxation tapes, listening to music and walking loads. I also reflect now on how I react to things. The Positive You course was very good for this. I have a good outlook on life now".

426 women reported an increase in education, work and training opportunities; 257 entered a training or work opportunity; 199 took part in employability activities; 103 produced a CV or registered for training and 243 received support in accessing support and training

Through the interviews and focus groups, many of the women talked about future employment:

"At the moment I am proud to be learning and getting some qualifications"

"You get a second chance to learn maths and English – it's a second chance"

One woman explained how TWP had helped her to find a work placement:

"TWP gave me the confidence to go to REACH who have now sent me on a work placement from which I may get a part time job. I love it. TWP provides motivation and a key worker to confide in"

227 women have taken part in parenting activities, 148 safeguarding cases have been allocated and parents supported, and 173 sessions of mums and tots delivered

The significant majority of women³ who attend TWP are mothers, which is in line with national statistics on women offenders and those at risk of offending⁴. Many of the women showed how attending TWP had improved their parenting. For example:

"I found the parenting courses very helpful in giving me strategies to cope better with the children. Also having people to talk to about parenting, it is much better now".

"My child has been returned to my care, moved house, my confidence, skills and motivation are massively improved"

"The very best thing is the staff. Without them I would not now have my youngest with me. They supported me through the courts and everything"

511 women have taken part in mentoring, counselling and peer support and 649 have been identified and assigned to a keyworker

The assessment informs the key worker as to which courses and interventions best meet the needs of the client.

"Before, I wanted to run away. It's totally different now...I feel proud of myself"

One woman explained how it had helped her:

"The drop in was a lifeline for me when I felt miserable. Now I come at least 3 days a week and have classes to do. I hope I can help others".

She is also planning on becoming a volunteer counsellor when she has completed the 36-week course she is currently engaged in. Another woman who was an alcoholic for 10 years wants eventually to work with recovering alcoholics because she knows how hard it is to come off alcohol. One woman wanted to pass on the parenting skills she had learnt:

"If others think I can, I would like to teach on parenting courses, passing on what I have learnt".

466 women have attended support service awareness sessions; 210 have engaged in a service and 200 women have increased their use of support services and report an improvement in community relationships and social interaction (NOMS: Increase the number of women engaging in community provision)

³ 231 out of 337 who engaged with the project in 2010/2011 were mothers

⁴ Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice (2009), *Short study on women offenders*, HM Government.

Some women spoke of knowing more people through school and the local Sure Start or Children's Centre. The friendships described support increased social interaction and community support.

Some of the women felt they now chose their friends more carefully and had learnt through the courses to be more discerning whom they associated with. One woman now avoids getting close to people involved in drugs or alcohol.

WHAT HAS DRIVEN THE CHANGES? WHY AND FOR WHOM?

The drivers for change operate on a number of levels including changes for women, their families and community, the Salford Foundation and the wider system. They are:

- The ethos and values of the service
- The 'key worker' delivery model
- Peer support
- One Stop Shop
- Gender Specific Service
- Courses and Centre activities
- Good outcome monitoring data, economic benefits and evaluation
- Strong established partnerships and relationships
- Part of an established local organisation
- Statutory Function

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

The delivery model adopted by TWP works in achieving better outcomes for vulnerable women who offend or who are at risk of offending. A number of key messages and learning have emerged which can inform the future development and direction of TWP and the way statutory services are commissioned and delivered. These are:

- Co-production and co-delivery
- Influencing the statutory sector
- Extending the service and increasing capacity
- Peer supporters
- 'Think Family' safeguarding and family poverty
- Commissioning for mental health and wellbeing
- Business Development

Independent Evaluation Report Second stage: Project Impact and Outcomes

"Without this place either my partner or alcohol would have killed me" (TWP service user)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Together Women Centre (known as TWP), which has been operating for four years and provides a gender specific service for Salford women who have offended or who are at risk of offending. It provides a 'one stop' service that gives personalised, tailored support to women, which meets their individual needs. In addition, it provides the opportunities for women to meet together and gain support from their peers.

In 2010/2011, the project delivered 37 separate types of interventions to 337 service users in addition to structured one to one case management⁵. Over 20% were self-referrals from women who had heard a positive account from a TWP service user. 337 women engaged in the project, 52% of which were offenders and 48% were identified as significantly at risk of offending. 93.5% did not re-offend whilst on project, 28 reduced the seriousness of their offence, 9 women were diverted from custody and 24 reduced their anti-social behaviour.

In 2009, an independent evaluation of TWP⁶, commissioned by Salford Foundation, was carried out, which showed that it had achieved its original objectives of the NOMS project⁷. There was evidence that it had reduced women's offending and re-offending, influenced the Criminal Justice System, increased the number of women in community provision and reduced the number of family breakdowns. In addition the project was successful in identifying the need for additional services for those women who are at risk, or vulnerable in other ways, to social exclusion.

An analysis of the data showed how the project created these changes: by reducing isolation and creating active citizens; giving support without dependency; reducing vulnerability through learning coping strategies and improving life chances through training, employment and parenting.

The project was successful in securing funding to continue for a further two years. This came from a variety of sources including the Big Lottery Reaching Communities, Ministry of Justice, the Corsten Coalition, Probation and Salford City Council.

About this report

In October 2011, a second stage, independent evaluation was commissioned by Salford Foundation; it builds on the first stage evaluation and explores the impact and outcomes of the project.

⁵ Salford Foundation, (2010/2011): The Together Women Project: A bespoke service for Salford women offenders and those at risk.

⁶ Granville, G (March 2009) *"When I get in the lift to come here, it is like coming up to heaven"*: An Evaluation of the Salford Together Women Project, Salford Foundation.

⁷ The Salford Together Women Project was established in 2007 as one of five demonstration sites funded by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) until the end of March 2009. The five projects were delivered in two Regional Offender Manager regions, two in the North West (including Salford) and three in Yorkshire and Humber. An external national evaluation across the five demonstration sites was conducted by Leicester University.

This report presents the findings from the second stage. In addition it explains **why** the changes have occurred and whether they occurred as expected. This enables changes to be attributed to the activities of the project and supports replication and sustainability of what works to improve the lives of vulnerable women.

It begins with a short background to the Together Women initiative and the approach taken by the independent evaluation. Evidence is then presented against the project outcomes, as well other changes that have occurred as a result of the project. Section 5 explores what has driven the changes and Section 6 presents the key messages and recommendations for moving forward.

The audience for this report is the Big Lottery, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Salford City Council, probation service, local commissioners of Children's Services, Directors of Public Health and those interested in early intervention and prevention services for women and their families.

2. BACKGROUND

Over the last 5 to 10 years a number of reports have highlighted the need to establish radical new approaches to meet the specific needs of women offenders⁸⁹¹⁰¹¹, in order to tackle the causes of crime and reoffending amongst this group and to reduce the need for custody.

Women in prison constitute a small proportion of the number of women offenders who pass through the criminal justice system each year. Though most women offenders do not pose a threat to society, most have multiple complex needs and many are caught in a damaging cycle of abuse, victimisation, and offending. The majority are also mothers. Problems often begin long before women enter the criminal justice system, yet they have not been able to engage in or get the support they need. By the time they reach prison, their problems are likely to have become entrenched and more complex and outcomes for the whole family can be affected¹².

The conclusion from these studies is that the underlying issues need to be addressed by helping women develop resilience, life skills and emotional literacy, and that more personalised and responsive services offer prospects for improved outcomes.

The Together Women Centre for vulnerable women was set up on 2007 to address these issues. In 2010/2011 the Centre received **661** referrals from 22 different sources and had the capacity to support 340 women. Of these referrals, 337 women engaged in the project, 52% of which were offenders and 48% were identified as significantly at risk of offending. 93.5% did not re-offend whilst on project, 28 reduced the seriousness of their offence, 9

⁸Corston, J (2007), *The Corston Report: A report by Baroness Jean Corston of a Review of Women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, London: Home Office.

⁹Gelsthorpe, L, Sharpe, G and Roberts, J (2007), *Provision for Women Offenders in the Community*, London: Fawcett Society.

¹⁰nef (new economics foundation) (2008) *Unlocking value: how we all benefit from investing in alternatives to prison for women offenders*, Measuring What Matters 3, London: nef and the Prison Reform Trust.

¹¹Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice (2009), *Short study on women offenders*, HM Government.

¹²Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice (2009), *Short study on women offenders*, HM Government.

women were diverted from custody and 24 reduced their anti-social behaviour. The Centre supported 128 safeguarding children cases and 30 children were removed from safeguarding procedures or returned to their family.

In 2011, the Centre has become an established, highly credible, local service with a reputation for achieving positive results for women offenders and those at risk of offending, through tackling the underlying issues that cause women to offend or adopt risky lifestyles. Learning from this approach has influenced the local Criminal Justice System, reducing the level of women reoffending and entering custody. It has established a strong relationship with the local NHS providers and has reached a stage in its development when it is ready to become embedded in the local system and replicated in other local authorities.

3. ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The evaluation uses a theory of change approach, which focuses on impact and outcomes; in other words, what changes as a result of the intervention. It determines what works, for which groups of people and in what particular circumstances. Most importantly it determines why changes have occurred and what has driven these changes, in order that successful interventions can become embedded in local structures and replicated elsewhere.

It has used a multi method approach with a number of activities in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. These include interviews, focus groups and self-completion questionnaires with service users; workshop and interviews with partners and other stakeholders; focus groups with staff team and use of the project monitoring data and documentation. A full list of evaluation activities is presented in appendix 1; the self-completion questionnaire is in appendix 2 and the stakeholder interview topic guide is in appendix 3.

The data from all these sources has been analysed against the outcomes expected of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the Big Lottery project outcome targets. A thematic analysis has been used to draw out the unintended outcomes, how the changes occurred and why.

NOMS has four key aims:

- To reduce women's offending and re-offending
- To divert women away from custody
- To increase the number of women engaging in community provision
- To reduce the number of family breakdowns.

The Big Lottery specific project outcome targets 2009-2011 are:

- 512 women take part in confidence building, health awareness or wellbeing activities, resulting in increased confidence levels and awareness
- 448 economically inactive women report increased awareness of education, training and work opportunities with 192 entering an opportunity
- 320 women take part in parenting skills training and report an improvement in their parenting

- 512 women take part in mentoring, peer support or counselling sessions and report an improvement in their mental health and social interaction
- 448 women attend support service awareness with 269 women increasing their use of them and reporting an improvement in community relationships and social interaction

4. FINDINGS: ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST OUTCOMES AND TARGETS

The Together Women Centre has achieved all the outcomes and targets required by NOMS and the Big Lottery and in most cases it has exceeded expectations.

This section presents the evidence of the changes beginning with the wider strategic outcomes, and **Section 5** explains in more detail **why** these changes have occurred. Appendix four is a case study of a TWP service user with an economic analysis.

TWP has an excellent monitoring system in place with a dedicated worker who has responsibility for ensuring the data is collected and accurately recorded. The statistics reported here are taken from the project monitoring data covering the period February 2010 to November 2011 (one year, 10 months of the two year funding).

4.1 Strategic Positioning: reducing women's offending and diverting women away from custody

In the two years since the progress evaluation in 2009, **there has been a significant change in the positioning of the Together Women Centre.** It has established itself as a credible Third Sector service providing alternative provision within the Criminal Justice System (CJS), and other local authority services. This is a great achievement at a time of austerity, consequent cuts and scarce resources and is in part due to the professional approach, integrity and significant outcomes resulting from TWP.

The decision taken in July 2011 to become part of the CJS statutory framework and offer TWP as a specified activity requirement in a community order when there is a sentencing offence, has both reinforced the reputation of the service to deliver results and also enabled the change to an established provider to occur. The progress evaluation in 2009 raised the issue of whether mandatory attendance at TWP would alter the non-judgemental, voluntary approach at the Centre, which has been so successful in supporting women to change. Currently there is no evidence that those women who attend as part of community orders do not engage fully with the project; it has almost certainly allowed TWP to reach another group of women and offer an alternative way out of crime.

In a letter dated 24th November 2011, District Judge Finestein who was based in Salford, wrote about TWP:

"The results are nothing short of fabulous. Over 90% did not offend within one year, which is vastly superior to any other community penalty. The fact that the programme can now be a specified activity as part of a supervision order further enhances its status and importance"

In an interview with Judge Finestein for this evaluation, he made it clear that having TWP as a statutory option allowed him to provide an alternative to a custodial sentence:

"When I am considering the availability of a community order, the opportunity to impose the Together Women Project as part of a community order is a very big positive and has tipped the balance against what otherwise would have been a custodial sentence".

Senior management in the Greater Manchester Probation Trust described TWP as:

"A key component of our work with women offenders. It has been an essential part of our strategy and operational work with sentencers".

It fully supports the probation service's strategy to reduce the number of women in custody and reduce punitive sentencing. The Together Centre was said to be:

"An enhanced, unique service that meets the range of different needs women have. It offers a service to women that is more likely to reach their needs"

Another example of the close working with the CJS begins in January 2012. On Saturday mornings, TWP is to become at Adult Attendance Centre for offender management programmes run by the Ministry of Justice. Staff working for TWP will be part of the delivery team.

4.2 Early intervention and prevention: reducing family breakdown

TWP has **increased contribution to the early intervention/ prevention agenda** through improving women's health and wellbeing and reducing family breakdown.

Since the progress report in 2009, the partnership with health has strengthened, in particular with the health improvement agenda¹³. The role of TWP to reach women who do not access statutory health services has been recognised and this has allowed the barriers these women face to be better understood within the NHS. As health services move forward in a more integrated way, there will be further opportunities to work together to achieve better outcomes for women and their families.

The Changing Directions programme was cited by a number of stakeholder interviewees as an example of working with families and partners of the women who attend the Centre. The programme, funded by the local authority Community Safety Partnership, offers one-one mentoring support to other family members who are not eligible for the Together Women programme.

The Together Women Centre is an exemplar within the Family Poverty Strategy in the City of Salford.

TWP contributes to the safeguarding of children in Salford in a number of ways, and this has resulted in 30 children of mothers attending the Centre being removed from safeguarding procedures or returned home in a twelve-month period. The Centre provides the opportunity to supervise and monitor children, in particular through the crèche and through parenting activities. A significant way that TWP supports the protection of children

¹³Public Health is moving from the NHS to the Local Authority in 2013

is through the sharing of data and attendance at safeguarding meetings. The key worker will often attend the conference with the client and take a full part in the decision making process. It is a sign of the maturity and integrity of the TWP that its judgements are made in the best interest of the child; on occasions the key worker in full consultation with the client will recommend the child should not be returned home at this stage.

The area of safeguarding and more family focused work is an area for development in TWP and will be discussed in section 6.

4.3. 512 women take part in confidence building, health awareness or wellbeing activities, resulting in increased confidence levels and awareness by the end of year two

558 women have taken part in one or more confidence building or health and well being activities, including accessing information. These include courses such as Positive You, First Steps to Success, I Can, Freedom and Healthy Lifestyles.

Increased confidence is a key outcome for the project, particularly in a client group where confidence and self worth are so low. Out of 86 questionnaires, 85 recorded an increase in confidence from very poor at the beginning to good and excellent now. When asked what changes had occurred in their lives since attending the Centre, the majority of women said an increase in their confidence:

"Feeling better about myself"

"Confident, more assertive and knowledgeable"

"I still need support but my confidence has grown"

"Gained self confidence, I used to be very shy and not go out"

Many of the women spoke of improvement in their health and well being since coming to TWP. This included alcohol reduction and abstinence, coming off drugs, eating more healthily, reduced smoking and taking exercise:

"Without this place (TWP) either my partner or alcohol would have killed me"

"I have stopped smoking. This was partly due to the budgeting course"

"My skin is better, (I am) walking a lot, so much better for not drinking"

"I have put weight on. Before I was losing weight and feeling sick all the time with stress"

Improved mental health was a significant change for many women. The woman's story below sums up a number of comments from many of the women:

"I have been through hell and may have committed suicide without this place. I needed it years ago and then would not have needed anti-depressants. I did not want to go down the anti-depressant road again. Now I have learnt to relax with

yoga, relaxation tapes , listening to music and walking loads. I also reflect now on how I react to things. The Positive You course was very good for this. I have a good outlook on life now".

4.4. 448 economically inactive women report increased awareness of education, training and work opportunities with 192 entering an opportunity by the end of the second year.

426 women reported an increase in education, work and training opportunities; 257 entered a training or work opportunity; 199 took part in employability activities; 103 produced a CV or registered for training and 243 received assistance in accessing support and training. This has been achieved by the women taking part in a number of opportunities including Raising Aspirations (REACH) workshops and a weekly programme of literacy, numeracy, Information Technology and counselling skills training.

Barriers to work are explored with individuals at the initial assessment and include lack of experience, low levels of literacy and numeracy, drug and alcohol dependency, child protection, domestic abuse and confidence. Courses are designed to address these underlying issues before women are able to tackle employability training.

One of the evaluation methods was to observe a numeracy training session. The 9 women were being taught percentages linking to previous work on fractions. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly and the women appeared highly motivated and focused on the work tasks and learning. There was great sense of achievement by the women and many wanted to progress: two women interviewed were redoing the course to get a higher grade.

Through the interviews and focus groups, many of the women talked about future employment and demonstrated the value of the educational opportunities provided at the Centre. For example:

"Yes eventually I would like to get a job but at the moment I have 5 children, although the oldest is 18. At the moment I am proud to be learning and getting some qualifications"

"I want to get off benefits. I see the courses as moving towards this"

"You get a second chance to learn maths and English – it's a second chance"

Another woman who is a carer for her disabled child commented:

"I would like to get a job in the future but in the meantime doing courses and getting qualifications will help me in the future and I feel good about myself"

One woman explained how TWP had helped her to find a work placement. She is also doing an NVQ through REACH and has been told that her ability has exceeded their expectations:

"TWP gave me the confidence to go to REACH who have now sent me on a work placement from which I may get a part time job. I love it. TWP provides motivation and a key worker to confide in"

4.5. 320 women take part in parenting skills training and report an improvement in their parenting by the end of the second year

227 women have taken part in parenting activities, 148 safeguarding cases have been allocated and parents supported, and 173 sessions of mums and tots delivered. Improved parenting skills have been achieved through a range of activities provided by the crèche, individual key worker support and courses such as Family Links Nurturing Programme and Speakeasy.

The significant majority of women¹⁴ who attend TWP are mothers, which is in line with national statistics on women offenders and those at risk of offending¹⁵. Through our interviews and questionnaires, many of the women showed how attending TWP had improved their parenting. For example:

"I found the parenting courses very helpful in giving me strategies to cope better with the children. Also having people to talk to about parenting, it is much better now".

"I am a much better mum now. I am happier and my little boy is very contented. The courses and having a key worker and lots of people to talk to has really helped"

"I am not as stressed as a mum"

One woman since doing the parenting courses is able to help her children with homework, which also makes her feel pleased with herself.

TWP performs an important safeguarding function. Key workers attend a number of safeguarding meetings, including Child Protection case conferences, Core Group, Team around the Child, Child in Need and Local Authority Care. The crèche observes children, and parental contact visits are facilitated at the Centre. One woman who has now been attending the centre for 18 months after a break, explained how she had lost her children through alcohol abuse but has recently had her youngest child back. She told us:

"I will not touch a drop again, it's not worth losing someone you have brought into this world"

When asked what had changed in their lives since coming to TWP, one woman told us that her daughter has been taken off a protection plan and another said: *"I have my kids back"*. Other women explained:

"My child has been returned to my care, moved house, my confidence, skills and motivation are massively improved"

¹⁴ 231 out of 337 who engaged with the project in 2010/2011 were mothers

¹⁵ Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice (2009), *Short study on women offenders*, HM Government.

"The very best thing is the staff. Without them I would not now have my youngest with me. They supported me through the courts and everything"

"If there wasn't a place like this I would not have my kid and I'd be really messed up".

One woman, whose children were in care, explained the value of having a key worker who has come with her to meetings with the social worker. At first she had access every 6 weeks, but now, through the support of the key worker, they have access 4 times a week and she and her partner are working hard to get the children back home.

One woman's wish for the future was:

"I will get my children back and be a good mum"

4.6. 512 women take part in mentoring, peer support or counselling sessions and report an improvement in their mental health and social interaction by the end of year two

Over the one year and 10 months of the funding period, 511 women have taken part in mentoring, counselling and peer support and 649 have been identified and assigned to a keyworker. Key workers have a range of experience and qualifications and having received a new case, a comprehensive assessment of need is completed. The assessment informs the key worker as to which courses and interventions best meet the needs of the client. One woman said:

"Before, I wanted to run away. It's totally different now...I feel proud of myself"

Peer support by other service users is offered by daily 'drop in' sessions, attending the lunch club and recreational sessions such as jewellery making and floral crafts.

337 individual women were assessed and received 758 counselling sessions. The women are initially offered 6 sessions and then reviewed if further sessions are needed.

Nearly all the women involved in the evaluation¹⁶ spoke of the value of being able to meet women who had had similar experiences to themselves. For example:

"There are a wide variety of people here for different reasons; no cliques and no nastiness"

This was reinforced by another interviewee who experienced a complete shift in attitude from the sort of spiteful behaviour, which characterised relationships between women she mixed with at school. At TWP there was an acceptance of individuals as they were.

One woman who started coming to the Centre when it was first opened explained how it had helped her.

¹⁶102 evaluation interactions took place with women at TWP through interviews, focus group and questionnaires.

"The drop in was a lifeline for me when I felt miserable. Now I come at least 3 days a week and have classes to do. I hope I can help others".

She is also planning on becoming a volunteer counsellor when she has completed the 36-week course she is currently engaged in. Another woman who was an alcoholic for 10 years wants eventually to work with recovering alcoholics because she knows how hard it is to come off alcohol. One woman wanted to pass on the parenting skills she had learnt:

"If others think I can, I would like to teach on parenting courses, passing on what I have learnt".

When asked what was the best thing about TWP, many women said it was somewhere to meet others in a similar position and get support. One said:

"Meeting new people and finding out that many people have problems and are often worse than yours. Drop in if good for this"

"Making friends with like-minded people"

The opportunity to *"make lots of lovely friends"* was a common response to the changes attending the Centre had brought.

This outcome also demonstrated the value of a gender specific service with many of the women claiming that the 'women only' space enabled them to make friends, interact with other women and feel more positive. One woman said the best thing about the centre was that *"There only women"*. Women felt safer attending a women only service and this helped to increase their confidence:

"Feeling more confident with only women"

"It is always safe here and even when I was afraid of my ex-partner, the building was safe and discreet"

4.7. 448 women attend support service awareness with 269 women increasing their use of them and reporting an improvement in community relationships and social interaction by the end of the second year (NOMS: Increase the number of women engaging in community provision)

466 women have attended support service awareness sessions; 210 have engaged in a service and 200 women have increased their use of support services and report an improvement in community relationships and social interaction. The key worker assesses the client and determines which sessions support her needs and, with her consent, referrals are made on her behalf.

Multi agency working at the Centre is key to supporting a woman with multiple problems and if required, the key worker supports the client by attending meetings. Other agency workers on occasions can attend the Centre in order for the client to meet and find out about the service in order to allay any fears.

This outcome links to outcome **4.6** above and explores what changes have happened for women in communities since being involved in TWP. Some women spoke of knowing more people through school and the local Sure Start or Children's Centre. The friendships described above support increased social interaction and community support.

Some of the women felt they now chose their friends more carefully and had learnt through the courses to be more discerning whom they associated with. One woman now avoids getting close to people involved in drugs or alcohol.

The reduction in reoffending and anti social behaviour since attending the Centre ensures better community relationships. We heard from staff about women taking more care of in their homes and gardens, or wanting to move to 'better' areas, because of an increase in pride and raised aspirations.

5. WHAT HAS DRIVEN THE CHANGES? WHY AND FOR WHOM?

This section looks at why these changes have occurred, in other words, what is the theory of change that has led to these outcomes. This allows changes to be attributed to the activities of the project or service and enables replication of 'what works' to be spread to other areas and contexts.

The drivers for change operate on a number of levels including changes for women, their families and community, the Salford Foundation and the wider system.

5.1 The ethos and values of the service

There is considerable evidence that the non-judgemental, empowerment style of working is a key factor in engaging women and helping them to move forward. Women who attend the Centre have a different experience than they have been used to in their daily lives and through contact with other services. The women spoke of not feeling judged, that everyone was respected as an individual and *"you are not looked down on here"*; another woman described it as *"the magic support that comes with it"*.

Many women in the focus group admitted that although it was daunting when they first came, they all felt welcomed and were reassured that they would be alright here. One woman had sat in a corner feeling terrified but was soon made to feel welcome. The environment is caring and nurturing which for many is a new experience.

The non-judgemental approach allows trusting relationships to develop with the staff and their peers, and begins to build the women's confidence and self-esteem:

"It was the only place I found that would open its doors to someone in my position"

"I don't feel afraid of what I say or do at the Centre"

"No one judges you"

"Dealing (now) with impossible things"

5.2 The 'key worker' delivery model

A personalised, individually tailored service is delivered through a key worker, case management approach. Each woman is treated as an individual with her own specific needs and a programme of support is developed to meet those needs. The women spoke highly of their relationships with their key workers and the trusting relationship that develops between them.

Some stakeholders spoke of the experience and credibility of the staff team as a key success factor. The staff were considered "*in touch with the real world*", able to relate to the women and understand and empathise with their circumstances. This ensures the project remains grounded in reality and that solutions are developed that can be effective.

The core team include a number of sessional workers and volunteers who all have the same ethos described in 5.1 and offer a non-judgemental, caring approach in the way services are delivered.

5.3 Peer support

As evidenced in section 4, the opportunity to meet with others in similar circumstances is an important change mechanism. The women feel understood

"It's good to know people who can relate to your situation"

"I know now there is a reason for everyone's problems"

"I don't feel alone anymore"

"I find it difficult to make friends anyway, but here we have suffered similar problems"

The belief that 'someone like me' can change is a powerful tool, and the evidence showed that this motivated and enabled women to move forward.

5.4 One Stop Shop

The services are delivered altogether from one Centre. This includes the crèche, courses and the counselling service: "*All support in one place*". This enables the women to try new opportunities in a safe, non-judgemental environment, developing their confidence and trust.

One woman commented that she liked the Centre because:

"The way the rooms are, (they) don't look like offices"

Some statutory services are delivered at the Centre with external staff coming into the Centre. These include the probation service offender management duties, public health interventions, such as alcohol reduction programmes and stop smoking and child access visits. The Centre enables a different interface with the statutory sector that is perceived as less authoritative and judgemental and to which the women using the Centre respond.

5.5 Gender specific

The progress evaluation in 2009 recommended that the gender specific nature of the project was an essential component of success. The particular needs of vulnerable women and women offenders is now well documented and better understood, in part through projects such as TWP. The women we spoke to for this evaluation reinforced the importance of a 'women-only' service, which created a safe and trusting environment with the support of female peers and staff.

5.6 Courses and Centre activities

There was strong evidence that the wide variety of courses offered at the Centre contributed to successful outcomes. Many women welcomed the chance to gain qualifications, a 'second chance', where they may have failed before. The value of learning as a way to gain confidence and empowerment was demonstrated and, as a result, the women were able to raise their aspirations.

The wide range of courses on offer allows courses to be tailored to specific needs. The Centre is also able to respond to women's wishes for Centre activities such as crafts, and offer them new experiences and opportunities. The women's motivation to attend courses is increased because they develop their friendships and gain support from like-minded peers.

5.7 Good outcome monitoring data, economic benefits and evaluation

TWP takes the collection of evidence very seriously and has in place a thorough monitoring system. It has also commissioned two external evaluations so it can learn and develop from what works and importantly what does not work. This enables the service to show a proven track record of success in a number of service areas and is key to embedding it in local systems. It has a reputation for quality, service user engagement and delivery and delivering successful outcomes.

Plans are already underway for the Foundation to show more clearly the economic benefits of its service and this will be essential for further development.

5.8 Strong, established partnerships and relationships

Another key driver for change is the strong partnerships and relationships that TWP has established over four years. This is demonstrated in a number of ways: membership of local authority strategy groups, provision for statutory services such as probation being delivered from the Centre, access visits with children and most significantly, the outreach services in the courts and at Styal prison. These close working partnerships have allowed statutory services to trust the TWP approach and respect the integrity and honesty of the staff.

There is room to develop further partnerships and this is discussed in section 6 below.

5.9 Part of an established local organisation

TWP is one of the adult services provided by Salford Foundation. The Foundation is an established local educational provider, which works with disadvantaged young people and adults and which plans to maintain and develop broad sources of income to develop and deliver offender related specialisms. The trustees are senior partners in the public and private sector with specialist skills and knowledge. For example, one Trustee is the Deputy Chief Executive of Salford Council and Chair of the Crime and Disorder Partnership.

TWP's position in the Foundation supports its profile and credibility and demonstrates a continuum of support from children to adults. The young people who are part of the young people's services show similar profiles to those adults in TWP¹⁷ and this linking across the age groups offers the opportunity for the Salford Foundation to take forward further a family focus to provision.

5.10 Statutory function

The decision to offer TWP as part of the Criminal Justice System statutory framework by becoming a specified activity requirement in a community order has been a significant factor in driving the service forward locally. Evidence so far suggests this has not detracted from the approach and ethos of the Centre and has given it a higher profile. This in turn means it is well positioned to influence and transform the way local services are delivered in the future.

6. KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

The delivery model adopted by TWP works in achieving better outcomes for vulnerable women who offend or who are at risk of offending. A number of key messages and learning have emerged which can inform the future development and direction of TWP and the way statutory services are commissioned and delivered.

6.1 Co-production and co-delivery

TWP demonstrates a commitment to co-production by working closely with individual service users to plan the interventions that most closely meet their needs. Service user forums and service user involvement in strategic planning and service development are a further development of this approach.

It can be further enhanced by more co-delivery of services with statutory partners such as in the CJS and Children's services. The specified activity requirement (5.10 above) is a good example of how this can operate effectively.

6.2 Influencing the statutory system

Interviews with senior managers for this evaluation illuminated the fact that TWP was influencing the way statutory services are delivered. It supports the evidence from national reports that a different approach is required if women offenders and those at risk of

¹⁷ Granville, G (May 2011) Salford Foundation ONE THREE ONE NINE project: External Evaluation: Salford Foundation

offending are to be supported to change their lives. One stakeholder spoke of TWP as “*a new and different approach, which thinks outside the box*”; it was felt that the statutory sector had even more to learn from this approach and that TWP had more to offer to realise its full potential in delivering services differently.

Mechanisms to influence the current systems and improve understanding of how TWP works could include secondments of local authority staff to work in the Centre, as well as shadowing senior staff in Salford Foundation. The continuation of outreach and liaison work is also essential.

6.3 Extending the service and increasing capacity

Currently TWP works with Salford women, and the recent closure of Salford Magistrates Court means that the TWP court liaison worker goes the Manchester Magistrates Court. However, the courts are only able to refer Salford women to TWP, which means that a different service is offered to women based on where they live. Consideration should be given to extending TWP into the whole of Greater Manchester, on condition that learning from what works, such as the ethos and value base of the project, is replicated and maintained.

TWP currently has approximately twice as many referrals than it has capacity to manage. If TWP is to become an alternative service to women, its capacity needs to increase. This includes more key workers and staff to support the delivery model and larger premises to accommodate a range of services. Outreach centres on housing estates and a central hub for training, activities and administration, a ‘hub and spoke model’, could be considered.

6.4 Peer supporters

One development being considered by TWP is to work with their service users to support other women to make changes in their lives. The evidence presented in this report shows the importance and influence of peer support in enabling women to make positive changes in their lives. A peer support model would also empower individual women supporters by further increasing their confidence and ability to find employment. It supports the Centre’s ethos in helping women to become independent of the Centre and to manage their own lives. The skills the women learn as peer supporters enable them to support their friends and family, becoming champions and role models in their own communities.

The Salford Foundation already has experience of running peer support models in its youth programmes. This can be extended into the adult programmes and women can take part in skills development training to enhance the co-delivery of the TWP service.

6.5 ‘Think Family’, safeguarding and family poverty

TWP already has a family focus to its work through its interventions with women and children. However, the profile and outcomes from this work could be enhanced so it achieves more recognition from the statutory sector. For example, monitoring data and evidence on the mechanisms TWP uses to support the safeguarding of children would be useful for commissioners of Children’s Services and those responsible for ensuring safeguarding procedures are in place to protect children.

Salford Foundation is committed to a way of working that supports families and not only the individual client. TWP is an exemplar within the local authority Family Poverty Strategy, which is one way to show its work with families. Changing Directions is one good example of how this could work although currently the continuing funding for this project with clients' families is uncertain. However, the connections across the different areas of the Foundation's work could be made clearer to partners, and how these link to support whole families and the communities they live in.

6.6 Commissioning for mental health and wellbeing

As TWP has developed, the contribution it makes to improve the mental health and wellbeing of service users and consequently their families has been recognised by the health service. The ability of TWP to reach clients who are not easily reached by statutory services (referred to by one stakeholder as "*below the radar*") and to deliver successful outcomes, presents opportunities for commissioners to provide effective integrated services in communities.

Similarly, TWP could enhance its contribution by providing more early intervention and prevention activities similar to those currently carried out in the Centre by the drug and alcohol service.

6.7 Business development

As TWP becomes an established and well-regarded partner in the delivery of services to families and disadvantaged communities, it can look to further business development opportunities. The provision of an Adult Attendance Centre at TWP in January and income generation opportunities being explored for the crèche are examples of this.

Learning from TWP makes it clear that the Centre works because it is not perceived as a statutory authoritative service and its approach is more acceptable to service users who have found barriers to accessing support in the past. Opportunities to extend into neighbouring authorities and join with other women's services working with vulnerable women need to be considered. Some stakeholders suggest that TWP could move to other premises, which may be more economical, and possibly make use of local authority venues such as Children's Centres.

These suggestions are useful but need careful consideration to ensure the essential features and characteristics of TWP, as described in section 5 above, which produce the significant outcomes and underpin the effectiveness of the service, is retained in any move away from their current premises. In particular, the requirement to have all the services delivered in one Centre, the 'One Stop Shop' model, and the gender specific nature of the service are vital.

Appendix one: Evaluation activities

Activity	Details
Documentation review	Lottery reports, literature on women offenders and previous evaluations, progress reports to funders including NOMS, information from Salford Foundation business plan
Monitoring data	February 2010 to November 2011 (1 year 10 months of a two year project)
Workshop with 8 stakeholders to develop theory of change	Salford Foundation and TWP staff, Head of Salford City Council Safeguarding, senior counsellors, course tutor, community drug and alcohol team, Family Poverty lead at Salford City Council
Structured questionnaire for service users	86 completed in 3 weeks
Service user one-one interviews	8 one hour interviews
Service user focus group	8 women participated
Stakeholder interviews one-one x 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior commissioner for Community Safety, Salford City Council • Programme Director for Health and Wellbeing Salford City Council (previously) NHS Salford • Head of Safeguarding Children's Services, Salford City Council • Assistant Chief Executive, Greater Manchester Probation Trust, strategic lead for Salford and safeguarding children • District Judge Finestein
Focus group with TWP staff team	7 staff members plus 2 who joined later

Appendix two: **Service users questionnaire**

Salford Foundation: Together Women Centre

Questionnaire

It would be really helpful if you could complete the questions below. It will help us to give you the best possible service.

Please complete all the questions.

Question	Answer
1. How long have you been attending the Centre?	
2. How would you rate the service you receive on a scale of one to five? <i>Please tick one</i>	1 very poor 2 poor 3 average 4 good 5 excellent
3. What is the one best thing about the Centre? One only	1.
4. What would you like to see done differently?	
5. Name 3 changes in your life since attending the Centre?	1. 2. 3.
6. Has your health improved since coming along? If so, in what ways?	

<p>7. How confident were you when you first attended the Centre? <i>Please tick one</i></p>	<p>1 very poor 2 poor 3 average 4 good 5 excellent</p>
<p>8. What is your confidence like now? <i>Please tick one</i></p>	<p>1 very poor 2 poor 3 average 4 good 5 excellent</p>
<p>9. How does the Centre help you make new friends?</p>	
<p>10. What do you think will happen in your life in the future?</p>	

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. It will help us to deliver a good service to you at the Centre.

Appendix three: Stakeholder interview topic guide

Salford Foundation: Together Women Centre

Stakeholders interview Topic Guide

Introduction

- Evaluator's name, thanks, etc
- Confidentiality of data
- Process of reporting

Role

1. What is your key role?
2. What is your involvement with TWP? Referrals etc

Centre

3. What has worked well?
4. What could be different?

System

5. What changes have occurred locally as a result of TWP?
6. What has driven the change?
7. What have been the barriers/ challenges to change?
8. What part does the family/ community play?

Sustainability

9. How do you see things developing in the future?
10. How will TWP be sustained? What needs to happen

Thank you for your time

Appendix four: Case study including economic analysis

'Rosie'

Rosie is a 33 year old woman referred to TWP from HMP Styal. She has a history of alcohol misuse and domestic abuse relationships, which have led her to commit several violent offences. She has been subjected to previous community sentences and was serving a short custodial at the time of referral. She has 3 children all of whom live with extended family due to being on the Child Protection Register for likelihood of physical abuse due to Domestic Abuse and alcohol misuse.

Once released into the community Rosie lived in temporary hostel accommodation before getting a council flat. Rosie continuously had contact with her ex-partner and they would go out drinking together which would end up in some kind of domestic abuse incident. This would then lead to one or both of them being injured or arrested. During one such incident she stabbed her ex-partner and was convicted of Assault leading to a 9 month custodial sentence. She frequently attended the Accident and Emergency Department at Hope Hospital.

Following an in depth assessment, the allocated TWP Key Worker compiled and implemented a support plan to address risk and areas of identified need with Rosie's consent. Intervention and Support included:

- Structured support with Key Worker on a 1 to 1 basis
- Regular use of the drop in facility
- Multi-agency work with Probation
- Accommodation support, liaison with tenancy support to help Rosie stay in her accommodation
- Domestic violence interventions, referral to MARAC, opportunity to undertake the onsite Freedom Programme and IDAAS
- Referral to Alcohol services
- Support to access the Crisis team regarding her mental health

Accommodation

TWP were able to help Rosie secure hostel accommodation for release and further support with housing to get on the social housing waiting list in Salford, she is currently bidding on houses.

Substance use

Rosie was able to access AA in custody to address her alcohol misuse and was referred to the Community Alcohol team on release from Prison; she is currently abstinent from alcohol.

Safety

Rosie completed the Freedom Programme at TWP and was referred to MARAC and specialist Domestic Abuse Services in order to help her realise the effects her ex-partner has on her relationship and her substance use.

Health

TWP supported Rosie to register with a GP; she was prescribed anti-depressants to help improve her state of mental health. On release from custody Rosie was given contact details for the Crisis team to ensure that if she felt vulnerable she had someone to talk to 24 hours a day.

TWP continues to advocate and support Rosie; she remains in settled hostel accommodation. She is currently working hard to improve her relationships with her children and remains abstinent from alcohol. Rosie has come a long way since she was first referred to TWP and although she has not fully reached her goals she is determined to achieve them. TWP continues to work in a multi-agency setting with Probation and hostel staff to ensure that Rosie's needs are met and she continues to thrive.

Episode	Estimated Cost	Reference
3 X violent offending	£10,000 per incident £30,000	Social and Economic Costs of Crime
1 x short custodial sentence (9 months)	£25,000	HMP Annual Report (2007)
5 x Accident & Emergency Attendances	£500 per incident £2500	Health and Social Care Costs
Cost of Domestic Abuse	£29,000	Research into the Financial Benefits of Supporting People(2009)

Total £86,500

TWP £1,000