

## CASE STUDY: ANAWIM WOMEN'S CENTRE

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As outlined in the Corston Report<sup>1</sup> and the Justice Select Committee report entitled *Women Offenders: after the Corston Report*,<sup>2</sup> women in contact with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) need gender-specific, holistic and personalised support to enable them to rebuild their lives and begin their journey to desistance from crime. Despite this recognition, barriers still remain that prevent both the provision of and access to gender-specific support for many women. As Clinks seeks to highlight the specific and often neglected needs of women offenders and to provide support to the organisations which work with them, we are publishing a series of in-depth case studies of services working to support women in contact with the CJS.

This series aims to highlight the impact of current policy and funding arrangements on both the clients and the organisations themselves. For this case study we spoke to Joy Doal, Chief Executive of Anawim Women's Centre based in Birmingham.

## Section 1: the women's needs

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**What are the needs of the women you are supporting?**

*"It's basically women with multiple and complex needs, so any women who have needs in more than three or four areas. We're really looking at women who have or are experiencing homelessness, mental health issues, have been or are involved in sex work and crime. It is a combination of all of these issues."*

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<sup>1</sup> Corston, J. (2007) The Corston Report: A review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System, Online: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf> (last accessed 10.02.2016)

<sup>2</sup> Justice Select Committee (2013) Women offenders: after the Corston Report, Online: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/justice-committee/news/women-offenders-report-published/> (last accessed 10.02.2016)

**Have you seen any recent changes in the needs of the women you are supporting?**

*“Yes, there are more complex needs, I think - more issues with benefits, sanctions and homelessness. There's such a small amount of accommodation. We had a woman only last week or the week before, who got released from prison, from quite a long sentence actually, so she should have had something in place, but there was absolutely nothing put in for her.*

*Our workers were with her until 10:30 at night trying to find her somewhere. There wasn't a single bed in the whole of the city and beyond. Even if you paid for a B&B, there wasn't a bed available. It was horrendous, and we had that for a week, really, trying to find her somewhere every day, sitting at the Housing Office every day. Housing is getting to be a real issue at the moment. Because the 'Supporting People' programme<sup>3</sup> has gone a lot of the hostels have decided that it's not viable for them to operate anymore, so some of the hostels have gone. If you lose a 20 or 30-bed hostel, all those people get put in B&B accommodation, so then all the B&Bs get full.*

*We've also seen much less Class A drug use. That's gone down quite a lot recently. I think nationally that has gone down but its also because we have developed the 'Alternatives to Custody' and other referral routes since we were first set up as a project to support women who were involved in sex work. We're now working with women who are not sex workers, so they're less likely to be involved with Class A drugs.*

*One of the major changes we've seen is that, for more women, their children are adopted very quickly. They don't have the opportunity to try to get the children out of care or not going into care, which is very different to when we first started when all our women had got their children with them. Now, most of our women haven't got their children, so that's been quite a big change.”*

**Can you explain when and why that change has happened?**

*“It has probably taken place in the last two years. It's very pronounced now. You can really tell the difference. We used to have a crèche onsite, which was busy every day. It just gradually got quieter and quieter, so in the end we had to close it. Then, we just did contact sessions for the women subject to care, now, we're not even getting many requests for contact anymore. We still*

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<sup>3</sup> House of Commons Library (2015) *The supporting people library*, Online: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/RP12-40> (last accessed 21.06.2016)

*have a weekly stay and play and hold some activities for children in there, but don't provide child care anymore.*

*It's because they brought in the Education and Adoption Act.<sup>4</sup> I think that it makes the process much faster, so adoption is a lot quicker than it used to be, and it is more challenging for the women to access legal aid. So it has meant that women just can't stop their kids being taken straightaway. It has had a massive impact on the women's mental health."*

## Section 2: working to meet those needs

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**Do you feel that you've been able to meet the women's changing needs?**

*"Yes, our Family Support Worker, instead of having a caseload of women with their children, has now got a caseload of women who have lost their children, so she's had to adapt.*

*Things like the "Parenting Course" that we've run, it is very much about sleep patterns, how to manage children's behaviour, and all that sort of thing. This is hard for women to attend whose children are in care, so we run another group around the loss and coping with that, post-adoption support.*

*We're developing a new building that will have accommodation upstairs for six women. It will also house the Prison and Outreach team, Money Advice and the crèche. This is a response to the accommodation needs of the women released from prison and we needed permanent space for our Prison and Outreach team who have been struggling in portacabins."*

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<sup>4</sup> This received Royal Assent in March 2016 and more details about the Act can be found here: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/educationandadoption.html> (last accessed 2.06.2016)

### Where do you deliver your services?

*"We extend to Greater Birmingham, but, really, Birmingham City is our geographical area. Anyone from the Birmingham area can access the Women's Centre. We're not postcode-bound, so as long as they [the women] can get here and they're not too far."*

### What services do you deliver?

*"It's a one-stop-shop Women's Centre. We have lots of different agencies, courses and things coming in every day – in-house Specialist Money Advice, Domestic Violence and Family Support."*

*We've got different teams. An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA), who works with women who are at 'homicide risk.' We've got the Family Support Worker, whose primary issue is around supporting the women with their children."*

*We've got an Early Intervention Liaison and Diversion team, and there are two workers in that team. We're just about to employ two new workers to work on another Early Intervention Scheme, which is funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner. That's about diverting women [from the Criminal Justice System] much earlier. With that project they're targeting women between 18 and 40 who have been arrested less than five times and have no convictions."*

*We have three workers on the Mental Health team, and we've got three on the Criminal Justice team, but that will be going soon. We also have the Prison and Outreach team who go into prisons and they do the night outreach for the sex workers."*

*Then, there are two Floating Support Workers who work evenings and weekends to support women out in the community. We're also doing some work with the Forensic Mental Health Unit as a transition back into the community. It's a bit like 'Through the Gate' for prison, but through the hospital door, if you like."*

*Then there are various other workers like the Curriculum Coordinator, a Specialist Money Adviser, a Service User Coordinator, an Operations Manager, a Data Analyst and a Receptionist."*

**Could you tell me a bit more about the role of the floating support workers?**

*"There are two remits to their role, really. One is to respond to a woman who is in crisis. If somebody has had a crisis on a Friday afternoon and the nine-to-five, Monday-to-Friday caseworkers have had to go home...they will stay on, obviously, if they're in a relationship with that woman, but if they've got to go, then the idea is that the Floating Support can pick it up.*

*There was some research by Birmingham City University with women who had been either reunited, through the Reunite programme, with their children in settled accommodation, or who were in settled tenancies.<sup>5</sup> One of the things that came through strongly in the research was the loneliness and isolation they felt once they'd got their lives back in order. It was like, "What do I do now? I'm just sitting here twiddling my thumbs." Some were sabotaging their recovery because they were bored and didn't know what to do with themselves in the evening. So the second part of their remit is to work to address those issues. Help them make local contacts etc."*

**Are there different referral pathways through which the women can access your services?**

*"Yes, [she can access our services] any way she likes. She can self-refer. We get lots of referrals from social workers, the police, housing providers, probation at the moment...Victim Support. Yes, all sorts. Anyone, really.*

*And our door is always open to the women we support. The only ones that we would signpost are if they've really only got one issue and they're presenting with something quite minor."*

**You mentioned having a Service User Worker, can you talk a little bit more about some of the work that they do?**

*"She's one of our ex-service users and is now working part-time as our Service User Involvement Worker. She's getting forums together and getting the women involved with things. It's a very new role but she's finding her way and it's going really well.*

*She is just brainstorming ideas at the moment but has already started a group with some of the women, which she's calling 'Flip the Script.' It is looking at how you programme your brain to always be looking at the negatives and it's flipping it the other way around to encourage the*

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<sup>5</sup> Birmingham City University, Midland Heart and Anawim (2014) *Women with multiple needs: breaking the cycle*, Online: <http://www.anawim.co.uk/documents/Summary-Report-2014.pdf> (last accessed 08.06.2016)

women to focus on the positives. She does a bit of 'Mindfulness' at the end and stuff with them. She gets their ideas, gets them involved and chatting about how they want to see things change. It will develop in time, what they want to get involved with."

## Section 2b: providing a women-only space

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### Why is it important to have a women-only space?

*"It's so that the women feel safe. It's somewhere where the women can come and they can feel it's their space, because there are not many spaces that are women-only. It's important that they have that safe place.*

*Generally, we try to maintain that women-only space because women talk differently in a women-only space than they do in a mixed group. You couldn't run the sorts of groups that we run, like the Trauma courses and that sort of thing, in a mixed group. You just couldn't do it. You need the women to open up about domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape and everything. They won't do that with a mixed group."*

## Section 3: funding and the impact of Transforming Rehabilitation

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Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) is the government's programme for managing offenders in England and Wales. Under this reform programme there has been a replacement of the previous 35 individual Probation Trusts with a single National Probation Service, responsible for the management of high-risk offenders, and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) responsible for the management of low to medium risk offenders in 21 areas across England and Wales, referred to as Contract Package Areas (CPAs). The CRCs will also have a new responsibility for supervising short-sentence prisoners (those sentenced to less than 12 months in prison) after release.

The CRC who is responsible for the management of low to medium risk offenders in the Staffordshire and West Midlands CPA is the Reducing Reoffending Partnership. Joy told us about the impact TR has had on the Women's Centre.

You mentioned about having a Criminal Justice team, and you said that that's going to be going soon, could you explain a bit more about that?

*"Yes, that's because we've said "No" to the TR contract.*

*There were two women's centres in the Staffordshire and West Midlands Contract Package Area that received funding from the old Probation Trust. The CRC owner felt that it wouldn't be fair if a women living in Dudley or Wolverhampton couldn't access those services, but someone living in Birmingham could. This is fair enough, but, of course, if you're going to have a Gold Service available in all the areas, you've got to put the investment in.*

*However, they've taken the same budget that they gave to two women's centres, spread it out between five women's centres, and asked those five centres to cover larger geographical areas as well. They wanted us to work with about a third more women than we were working with, for less money.*

*The only way you can make that work is to have a model that is just group work, with no individual support and no casework. The CRC wanted us to deliver a 10-week 'Change Programme' course, which the centres have written. It would have meant that our caseworkers would have had to become tutors on that programme, which is a totally different set of skills for one thing. And we felt that without the casework, the women weren't going to be stable enough to attend the groups as this takes months of pre-engagement work.*

*Also, for us, we've got a full timetable of courses going on here. If we were to put on the 'Change Programme', we worked out, with the number of women that they wanted us to work with, which was 287, we would have had to have run the 'Change Programme' six times a week to get through that number in a year. That would have filled our timetable pretty much with just that; we've got a really good, full range of different providers who come in and deliver courses for us and we would have lost them all. It's just not viable.*

*It also wouldn't fit in, because if we've got women coming voluntarily who can access the holistic support we provide, and then you've got women who can only access the 'Change Programme', you're going to have all sorts of problems, aren't you, with the two lots of women mixing? One women walks in with a load of crises, and she's seen and sorted. One of the women referred to us through the CRC would have come in for the 'Change Programme', with an equal amount of problems, and we wouldn't have been able to help her in the same way.*



*At the moment, we have the Probation Officers co-located here and the women are able to access all the services they need in the same place and that is going to be lost. That was the other thing with the contract: the CRC wanted to provide employment and money advice themselves so it would have meant the women going to another office for that support. And the problem is that they won't do it. If they've got 10 appointments all over the place, that's when they fail. Whereas, here, they've got it all in one place."*

**What impact has not signing the contract had?**

*"Well, at the moment, they're rolling our existing contract [from the previous Probation Trust] on for two months - so, for April and May, we're continuing. The co-located Probation Officers are moving out on 31<sup>st</sup> May, and one of the other projects in the area is taking on the contract.*

*Obviously we won't be getting women on [probation] orders any longer, so it will have a huge impact. Well, it's horrible. We started doing 'Alternatives to Custody' back in 2007. We were one of the early centres to do it and it was something we fought for for a long time.*

*We don't know what the full impact will be yet, because, at the moment, they're still here and we're still working with the women, but, come June, then we'll see how it goes.*

*The other side of it is that the CRC may still want to refer the women here for the holistic support, but that won't come with any funding. If that happens we are going to have to send the women away, if we don't get alternative funding, which is horrible. Of course, they know that we're nice people and we're going to want to help, but we're going to have to be quite firm, really. Obviously, the women can self-refer so we're just going to have to monitor that and see how it goes."*

**Have you experienced any other changes in terms of funding opportunities?**

*"I'm finding it very difficult at the moment. We've been searching and searching and searching for funding to apply for, and there's just nothing out there at the minute. I'm really struggling to find anything to apply for."*

**Is that different to what would have happened, say, this time last year?**

*"Yes, it's much different. Normally, by April, things are out there. Opportunities come out with the new financial year but there's nothing at the moment.*

*I think it's just cutbacks. There have been a lot of local authority cuts, so a lot of the people who were in contracts are now not. They've gone to the charitable trusts, so the pool is a lot bigger of those who are trying to get the same money.*

*I am a bit concerned. We're alright for this year, but next year doesn't look good at the moment. But, things can change. We're 30 this year. It's our 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, so we're doing a lot of promotion around that. We're looking at doing our awards ceremony where the women receive certificates of achievement in July, then we're having a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday evening reception targeting the business community and funders in September. Then, we'll have the building opening in December. There will be three big events in the year."*

**Yes, it's quite an exciting year for you guys. There's quite a lot going on as well as the challenges.**

*"Yes, there is a lot going on this year.*

*I think, with the Criminal Justice bit going, the growth area is the Early Interventions with the police, and work around Mental Health. We work in the CAMEO Unit at Foston Hall, we've got three enrichment workers in there. We're also going to put the Women's Centre through the 'Enabling Environments' accreditation in the next few months, which will help consolidate us in the Personality Disorder strategy."*

## Section 4: conclusion

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Some of the concerns Joy raised in this case study in relation to the contract Anawim were offered by the CRC are supported by the report *Change & challenge: the voluntary sector's role in Transforming Rehabilitation*.<sup>6</sup> This details the findings from a survey of 151 voluntary sector organisations and shows that 31% of respondents felt that services for women had worsened under TR.

The report, published as part of Clinks, NCVO and Third Sector Research Centre's project that tracks the voluntary sector's involvement in and experiences of the TR reforms, also found that

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<sup>6</sup> Clinks (2016) *Change & Challenge: the voluntary sector's role in Transforming Rehabilitation*, Online: <http://www.clinks.org/resources-reports/change-challenge-voluntary-sector-role-transforming-rehabilitation> (last accessed 2.06.2015)

voluntary sector organisations, especially those like Anawim who are operating outside of CRC supply chains, were anxious about their current and future funding and sustainability.

Organisations also report that a lack of information about what services the CRCs and National Probation Service (NPS) are commissioning and/or delivering is putting other funding sources at risk, particularly from local authorities and independent charitable funders.

Clinks will continue to track voluntary sector organisations' experiences of TR and highlight the unique experiences of organisations working to support women in contact with the CJS. If you would like your service to be featured as a case study, please contact Nicola Drinkwater on [nicola.drinkwater@clinks.org](mailto:nicola.drinkwater@clinks.org). More information about Anawim Women's Centre can be found on their website [here](#).

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