



*Women into Work
Pilot Project
Evaluation Report*

Creative Business

*LCC with HMP East
Sutton Park*

JUNE 2005

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Executive Summary

Creative Business Pilot – London College of Communications & HMP East Sutton Park

Background

*In 2001 SOVA in partnership with Addaction, CAST (Creative and Supportive Trust), Department for Education and Skills (Offender Learning and Skills Unit), Home Office (Women's Policy Team), Job Centre Plus, London Probation Area, NACRO, National Probation Directorate, Prince's Trust, Prison Service, Sheffield Hallam University, Stonham Housing Association, along with 40 Associate Partner Agencies, were successful in securing funding from the **Equal** Fund for a 3 year Development Partnership named 'Women into Work'. The Women into Work programme was commissioned to work towards combating discrimination and inequality experienced by women who have been disadvantaged, particularly by their experiences of the Criminal Justice System.*

The first phase of Women into Work involved conducting peer research in order to identify barriers to accessing Employment, Training and Education and the second phase involved the commissioning and delivery of Pilot Projects to address the needs identified through the research.

*As a result of a commissioning process, 5 pilot projects were ultimately commissioned. All the projects were managed by Women into Work staff. Each project has been evaluated. This represents a summary of the findings of the London College of Communications and HMP East Sutton Park run **Creative Business Pilot**.*

This was a business start up course which would provide a basis for people to initiate self-employment upon release, particularly in the creative industries. This small scale project was seen as being a forerunner of a larger national project. It was hoped the unit being delivered, validated by ABC, could be delivered on a national basis by other partner educational institutions. The target group was women in prison; women who expressed an interest and aptitude to some aspect of the creative industries and who have a desire to explore the opportunities of being self-employed. An exhibition of beneficiaries work was organised at end of the course.

The Creative Business Pilot Project has effectively responded to the Peer Research recommendations contained within the Moving Mountains report by:

- Providing a 'higher level' course
- Listening to and validating women's aspirations for the future
- Attempting to overcome the barrier which disclosing a criminal record poses to women seeking/gaining employment by encouraging a self-employment route
- Raising awareness of the potential of female prisoners to individuals/organisations within the Creative Industries

The project has successfully engaged 7 beneficiaries from varied backgrounds and with multiple and complex needs and guided them through the process of developing their own creative business. The key innovation of this project was in taking a course developed for mainstream students and adapting it for the prison environment. The course also provided a learning experience which was significantly different from that provided by the prison, in both content and approach. Particularly commendable was the way in which beneficiaries were enabled to 'think outside the box' and to recognise transferable skills in themselves. This type of approach questioned traditional notions of 'intelligence' and thus provided an empowering approach.

The support of HMP East Sutton Park and their 'enabling approach' proved instrumental to the success of the project. However, the inevitable restrictions of working within the prison regime undoubtedly hindered the project at times and certainly impacted upon the extent to which beneficiaries were able to be empowered by their involvement.

Project Management

- The Creative Business Pilot Project began significantly later than the other four projects commissioned
- It was intended that the project would be a collaborative venture between London College of Communications and HMP East Sutton Park (a working prison in rural Kent). The main partnership however, ended up being between an individual worker (an Associate Lecturer at the College) and East Sutton Park. The College did however contribute to the project in significant ways

- The lack of project team/management structure had knock on effects and it appears that the success of the project was largely attributable to the commitment of the individual worker
- The project was an innovative venture, fraught with potential difficulties. As a result of the lack of project structure and management the worker had to adopt 'multiple roles' which proved very challenging, particularly given the tight timescales of the project:
- The Programme Director did however, feel very much supported by the SOVA Women into Work team and staff there provided much needed 'hands on' help and reassurance throughout project delivery.

Relationships with Prison

- The Programme Director had an extremely positive relationship with the Deputy Governor of HMP East Sutton Park and this proved instrumental to the success of the project.
- There also existed a belief that women prisoners in particular had huge potential to progress and to support and empower each other:
- This 'enabling' approach is reflected in the Programme Directors' experience of his interactions with prison staff.
- Once the taught element of the programme was completed and the exhibition was over, the Head of Learning and Skills at HMP East Sutton Park continued working with beneficiaries to enable them to achieve the ABC qualification.

Practical Constraints

- Several practical barriers impacted upon beneficiaries' experience in significant ways.
- The prison successfully arranged Licences for all beneficiaries to travel to London when the exhibition was showing and this is an achievement in itself. During the planning phase of the exhibition, the women were unable to obtain Licences to enable them to visit the exhibition space and have an input into it's design and curation. This had a profound effect upon women's perception of the exhibition itself
- Within the prison environment beneficiaries were unable to access the Internet, publications and external parties in order to conduct research or construct their exhibits which caused huge frustration
- An additional constraint was the limited amount of time devoted to the teaching of the course. All teaching was conducted within a two hour weekly slot
- Some of the beneficiaries suffered from learning difficulties such as dyslexia and a lack of basic skills which also affected the speed at which teaching could progress.
- As prisoners, the few women who had actually developed products which they wanted to sell were unable to do so

Learning Point: The above issues clearly highlight that even with the highest level of commitment of tutors, prison staff and beneficiaries, the restrictions of the prison regime itself will often disadvantage prisoners when attempting to learn and progress, when compared to mainstream students.

Recruitment

- Recruiting women to the course occurred in a somewhat haphazard manner. By the time the course actually started, it appeared that enthusiasm and momentum had dwindled somewhat with only 3 women attending.
- Despite this somewhat shaky start, attendance of the course remained relatively high and constant throughout it's duration.

The Course and the Group

- The programme was adapted from a course which the Programme Director had taught in mainstream education. It consisted of ten modules based on two-hour workshops which took place from November 2004 to March 2005
- The course was accredited with an ABC Award of Creative Enterprise, a university qualification
- Teaching a course designed for 'mainstream' students in a prison environment necessitated a high degree of flexibility
- Considerably more time than anticipated was spent on 'development work' – coming up with business ideas, defining goals and encouraging women to consider the skills which they have but may not immediately recognise
- a range of guest speakers were invited to come and talk to the group about their experiences and perceptions of the business world. The guest speakers were considered a hugely important contribution to the course by both the Programme Director and beneficiaries

- Beneficiaries valued the speakers taking the time to come into the prison and speak to them and enjoyed sharing their ideas with professionals
- Transferring a course designed to be taught in an academic institution to a prison environment proved challenging as it was uncharted territory for all parties
- Beneficiaries also had little experience of team working; of 'pulling together' to reach a final goal
- It was inevitable that problems would sometimes be brought into the group and that levels of motivation would fluctuate according to the external problems and issues which women were experiencing
- The overall experience of participating in the project was largely positive for most of the women involved and provided a valuable bonding opportunity with their fellow prisoners.

THE EXHIBITION

- The week long exhibition entitled *Within Walls & Across Bridges* was held at the **London College of Communications** in February 2005. The exhibition had a dual purpose:
 - To present the business ideas/plans of beneficiaries
 - To raise awareness and dispel stereotypes around the lives and experiences of women in prison
- The editorial description of the exhibition was developed by the women and it was decided by the beneficiaries that the exhibition should have a strong narrative and theme. The exhibition was largely text based with strong images spread throughout.

Perceptions of the Exhibition

- The evaluation has revealed clear differences in opinion between the Programme Director and beneficiaries around the amount of consultation which took place during the planning stages of the exhibition. The beneficiaries felt very strongly that the exhibition was not what they expected it to be
- Beneficiaries felt as though they lost all control over it's design and presentation and this was perceived as extremely disempowering
- The main complaint which beneficiaries had was that the exhibition focussed too much on their individual stories as prisoners and this aspect of the exhibition overshadowed the work which they had invested in developing their business plans/ideas
- From the perspective of the Programme Director the main problem was the lack of actual work which was available to exhibit, thus a resulting emphasis on the stories of women
- The Evaluator also picked up a powerful need for the Programme Director to not only maintain his professional credibility in the presentation of the exhibition but also to represent beneficiaries in the best possible light
- Beneficiaries also expressed disappointment at the lack of businessmen/women and entrepreneurs attending the exhibition and whilst it was encouraging that the prison service showed a high level of support, women stated they expected more opportunities to network with business contacts
- Beneficiaries did acknowledge that despite the limited amount of networking opportunities, the exhibition was a useful awareness raising exercise which 'put their prison on the map'.

Project Closure and Exit Strategies

- Considered debate occurred around how the work of the project may be effectively disseminated and mainstreamed. Partnership working between the prison, the College, beneficiaries and SOVA was considered to be crucial to this element of the work.
- It has been suggested that the exhibition work should be widely promoted and plans have been discussed to conduct a tour around other prisons in the female estate. It was hoped that this would not only validate the hard work of beneficiaries but also encourage women in other prisons to explore their own creative potential.
- It was acknowledged that the question of who actually owned the work (i.e. the women themselves or the British Council) would have to be clarified before this work commenced
- The Programme Director feels that another crucial factor in enabling mainstreaming is to create effective networks within prison systems and then local pathways into industry to raise awareness of the potential impact of female prisoners in the creative industries.
- The above points demonstrate a clear commitment to mainstreaming work and Women into Work have offered to provide funds to support some of this work
- An exciting dissemination activity has been the production of an 8 page spread on the work of beneficiaries for the 'Big Issue' magazine.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Roles and responsibilities of partner organisations need to be clarified from the outset of projects
- The potential impact which working within the prison regime may have on project activity (e.g. difficulties in obtaining licences etc) needs to be negotiated from the outset of projects
- The recruitment of project beneficiaries should take place as close as possible to the start of course delivery to avoid losing momentum
- It is vital to provide adequate time and resources for one to one support in addition to work conducted within taught sessions. This may need to be both emotional and practical support
- When working with a client group largely disempowered by their circumstances, the way in which expectations are managed becomes particularly significant and therefore needs careful consideration
- Clear boundaries need to be established around what beneficiaries can reasonably expect of project workers and visa versa. When working with women with complex, multiple needs expectations of the progress which can be made should be realistic to avoid compounding a sense of failure
- When working in a prison environment, consideration needs to be given to whose responsibility it is to manage issues which may arise for beneficiaries as a result of their participation (i.e. prison or project staff?)
- When delivering projects of this kind the possibility of negotiating limited and supervised internet access to facilitate learning could be considered
- It is vital that in the learning environment, women are encouraged to recognise transferable skills in both themselves and their fellow prisoners
- Projects need to have strict ground rules to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and decisions are made in a truly democratic way
- The direction of project work should be continually discussed with beneficiaries and as far as possible their input should be gained into decisions which are made

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to Women into Work Pilot Projects

In 2001 SOVA in partnership with Addaction, CAST (Creative and Supportive Trust), Department for Education and Skills (Offender Learning and Skills Unit), Home Office (Women's Policy Team), Job Centre Plus, London Probation Area, NACRO, National Probation Directorate, Prince's Trust, Prison Service, Sheffield Hallam University, Stonham Housing Association, along with 40 Associate Partner Agencies, were successful in securing funding from the **Equal** Fund for a 3 year Development Partnership named 'Women into Work'. The Women into Work programme was commissioned to work towards combating discrimination and inequality experienced by women who have been disadvantaged, particularly by their experiences of the Criminal Justice System.

The first phase of Women into Work involved conducting peer research in order to identify barriers to accessing Employment, Training and Education¹ and the second phase involved the commissioning and delivery of Pilot Projects to address the needs identified through the research.

A Commissioning Group was set up in May 2003 in order to select suitable projects from those tenders submitted. This group served as a 'sub group'

¹ O'Keeffe, C. (2003) Moving Mountains: Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Employment, Training and Education from the Voices of Women (Ex)Offenders. SHU Press.

to the main Development Partnership and was made up of DP members.

The remit of this group was as follows:

- To determine and implement the application process for potential projects
- To identify eligibility and criteria for selection
- To ensure that projects selected meet the key themes of Equal (Equal Opportunities, Empowerment, Innovation, Dissemination and Mainstreaming)
- To ensure that the findings of the Peer Research are utilised appropriately throughout the whole process
- To ensure that the whole process is transparent and consultative
- To identify projects which are cost effective and offer best value, be replicable and mainstream able
- To consider current government policies and initiatives which may add value and will aid dissemination and mainstreaming
- Identify and make recommendations on exit strategy and future funding beyond expiry of Equal initiative
- To assist in promoting opportunities for tendering organisations to understand the process and make bids
- To consider good practice from within the UK and Europe which may aid the decision making process

As a result of the commissioning process, 5 pilot projects were ultimately commissioned. This report provides an evaluation of one of these 5 pilot projects – Creative Business.

All the projects were managed by Women into Work staff. A Special Programmes Manager was appointed who ensured that each aspect of accountability – finance; equal opportunities monitoring; support for the project staff; links to the DP – was efficiently managed. The SPM ensured that Steering Groups were set up to support the projects. Julie Otter was the first SPM and on becoming Acting Programme Director, Valerie Monti-Holland took on this role. Nicola Cadet (Programme Director) had overall responsibility for contracting issues, ensuring that strategic objectives were met and also represented Women into Work on Pilot Project Steering Committees.

2.0 The Evaluation

2.1 Overall Aim of Pilot Project Evaluation

- To provide a rigorous and ‘user friendly’ assessment of the extent to which this Women into Work Pilot Project has met its objectives using a combination of both formative and summative evaluation approaches

2.2 Objectives of Pilot Project Evaluation

- To provide information on the progress made towards objectives as outlined in tender bid document (incorporating the five leading principles of EQUAL)²
- To identify what worked well and what did not work so well (in terms of both what was done (outputs) and how it was done (processes))
- To provide information on the extent to which Pilot Projects have met the needs of the target group
- To recommend improvements to working practices with women (ex)offenders thus assisting Women into Work in their mainstreaming and dissemination strategy
- To assist with planning of future projects

² Innovation, Equal Opportunities, Transnational Co-operation, Mainstreaming and Empowerment (Equal Support Unit Guidance Note on Evaluation, 2002)

2.3 Type of Evaluation

The evaluation incorporated both formative³ and summative⁴ elements. The formative element employed mainly qualitative methods and involved a process evaluation which enabled an understanding of the critical factors and mechanisms that shaped the delivery and outcomes of the Women Into Work Pilot projects. The process evaluation is valuable in helping to understand what works, for whom and why.

The summative element focussed upon outcomes and impact of the Pilot Projects and drew upon both quantitative and qualitative data.

The Evaluation was conducted in consultation and co-operation with Women into Work. In particular, Women into Work were responsible for monitoring beneficiary information.

2.4 Methodology

As previously mentioned, the evaluation included both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. These included the following:-

- Analysis of project documentation including:
 - Minutes/Notes of meetings
 - Training materials

³ A type of process evaluation for the purpose of new programmes or services that focuses on collecting data on programme operations so that changes or modifications can be made to the programme in its early stages. Formative evaluations can be used to provide feedback to staff about the programme components that are working and those that need to be changed.

⁴ A type of outcome evaluation that assesses the results or outcomes of a program. This type of evaluation is concerned with a program's overall effectiveness (<http://www.synergyaids.com/lacriaids/glossary.asp>)

- Any other documents which reflect work conducted

The following information sources were also used:

- Pilot Project progress reports
- Analysis of data collected from Entry, Exit, Early leaver forms

In addition to the above, two in depth semi structured interviews were held with the Creative Business Programme Director. The Evaluator also visited HMP East Sutton Park, where the project was being conducted and observed a meeting between the Programme Director, the Prison Acting Governor and the Prison Head of Learning of Skills. During this visit the Evaluator also observed the final session of the course where beneficiaries were able to give feedback to both herself and the Programme Director.

CHAPTER 2 – THE PROJECT

1.0 Project Information/Details

Project Title: Creative Business

Timescales: Nov 2004 – May 2005

Location: Kent

Funds allocated to

Project: £20,550

The following sections are intended to inform the reader of the original project intentions. The information is sourced from the tender documents which were submitted at the commissioning stage, thus are written in the future tense.

1.1 Rationale

Following the first stage of the “Women into Work” project, the findings indicate that the target group feel that:

- There is an overemphasis on basic skills training
- Higher– level courses were not available.
- Disclosing a criminal record is a major barrier to employment

The proposed business start up course would provide a basis for people to initiate self-employment upon release, particularly in the creative industries.

We see this project, being run with only fifteen beneficiaries as being a forerunner of a larger national project. The unit being delivered, validated by ABC, can be delivered on a national basis by other partner educational institutions. We will disseminate the evaluation of this project.

1.2 Objectives of the Programme

- To provide an introduction to concepts and practical skills required for setting up and running a business in the creative industries.
- To work towards achieving the Professional Development Unit “Business Start Up for the Creative Arts” (ABC Level 3)

Content:

- Prepare a research report
- Prepare Diagnostic and Assessment Workshop
- Develop first 5 learning modules
- Ensure co-ordination with Prison Education Co-ordinator
- Engage and brief guest tutors
- Undertake Workshops
- Develop Opportunity Networks
- Organise Exhibition

- Evaluation

Delivery:

- To deliver a course leading to the above qualification
- To facilitate an exhibition event.

It was intended that the overarching objectives of the project listed above would be achieved through adherence to a detailed Workplan (submitted alongside tender document). All elements of the Workplan are thus evaluated within this document, according to stated objectives and tasks.

1.3 Partners Involved

Partner Organisation	Main Contact	Roles and responsibilities
HMP East Sutton Park	George Carruthers,	Acting Governor

1.4 Target Group

The target group would be inmates of one or two prisons. These would be women who express an interest and aptitude to some aspect of the creative industries and who have a desire to explore the opportunities of being self-employed.

In addition, the following EQUAL criteria applied to all beneficiaries entering Pilot Projects:

- Upon release they will be resident within the EU
- They are due to be released within two years from the start of their involvement with Women into Work

CHAPTER 3 – TARGET GROUP RESULTS

1.0 Beneficiary Profile

1.1 Number of beneficiaries participating over the lifetime of the project

	Target Set	No. achieved
Unemployed or not active in the labour market	0	0
Employed		
Other* (incl ex-offenders)	15	7
Total	15	7
*Please state		

1.2 Ethnicity of Beneficiaries

Ethnic Group	Target Set	No achieved
White-British	8	2
White-Irish	1	0
White-Other	3	2
Mixed-White and Black Caribbean	0	0
Mixed-White and Black African	0	0
Mixed-White and Asian	0	0
Mixed-Other	0	0
Asian or Asian British -Indian	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Other	3	0

Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	2
Black or Black British – African	0	1
Black or Black British – Other	0	0
Chinese	0	0
Other**	0	0
Not Known	0	0
Totals	15	7
** Please State		

1.3 Disabilities

	Target Set	Actual Number Engaged with
Physical disability	1	0
Mental Disability	2	0
Learning Disability	2	1
No Disability	10	6 ⁵
Total	15	7

1.4 Background⁶

Background	Target Set	Actual Number Engaged with
Ex-offenders	15	7
Homeless People	0	1
Refugees	0	0
Asylum seekers	0	0
Drug and alcohol misusers	0	0
16–17 year olds in danger of being excluded from school	0	0
Gypsies and travellers	0	0

⁵ Although 3 stated they had 'currently or in the past received professional support or medication for emotional well being e.g. Depression, stress etc'

⁶ Women were able to tick more than one box

People over 50	0	0
Labour market returners	0	0
Those from disadvantaged areas (i.e. the 10% most deprived wards)	0	0
Job seekers with low basic skills	0	0
Lone parents/ care responsibilities	0	0
Prison leavers/ those under statutory supervision	0	0
Others*	0	1
Total	0	9
* <i>Please state</i>	Domestic Abuse	

1.5 Qualifications Please estimate how many beneficiaries will have the following qualifications before engaging with the project)

Qualification Level	Target Set	Actual Numbers
No qualification	7	0
Qualifications below NVQ 1 or equivalent	3	0
NVQ1 or equivalent	2	1
NVQ2 or equivalent	2	5
NVQ3 or equivalent	1	1
NVQ4 or equivalent	0	0
NVQ5 or equivalent	0	0
Other **	0	0
Total	15	7
**Please state		

1.6 ETE Outcomes

What will happen to beneficiaries following their involvement in the project activities?

	Target Set	Actual Number ⁷
Full-time employment	3	0
Part-Time employment	0	0
Self-employment	3	0
Voluntary work	4	3
Further education, training	2	6
Government programmes e.g. New Deal	1	0
Unemployment	2	0
Other**	0	0
Not known	0	0
Total	15	9
*Please state	Women Prisoners (ex-offenders)	

⁷ Beneficiaries were able to tick more than one category (i.e. they may have been involved in both voluntary work and further education simultaneously)

2.0 Workplan Results (see Appendix A)

The table attached as Appendix A provides a 'snapshot' of the extent to which the original objectives of the project, as outlined in the tender document, have been achieved. The project was required to ground each objective in the principles of EQUAL (innovation, empowerment, equal opportunities, transnationality, dissemination and mainstreaming). These themes were required to inform and guide all aspects of programme delivery. The theme applicable to each objective are detailed in the 3rd column.

The following section provides more detailed information on successes and also barriers to achievement which arose from in depth interviews with project staff. This data proved vital in understanding process issues and outlines the critical factors and mechanisms that shaped the delivery and outcomes of the Women into Work Pilot Projects. The qualitative data collected and presented also provides evidence on the extent to which the themes were incorporated.

CHAPTER 4 – DECONSTRUCTING THE PROJECT PROCESSES

This section draws upon a thematic framework analysis of interview data in order to explore further the process of project delivery, successes encountered, barriers encountered and how these have/have not been overcome. This analysis provides:

- a comprehensive mapping of issues uppermost in the minds of stakeholders as the project progressed
- evidence of good practice in the programmes work and identification of where improvements could be made to encourage reflection on and re-conceptualisation of current thinking and practice

The issues identified are not grounded in arbitrary external judgments but are firmly grounded in the data collected during the course of the evaluation.

1.0 Project Background and Management

The innovative idea for the Creative Business Pilot Project arose out of a conversation between a London College of Communications (LCC) lecturer and the former Head of Women's Policy Unit. It was decided between them and also the Women into Work Acting Programme Director that East Sutton Park would be the ideal prison to accommodate such a venture and a meeting was arranged with the Governor, Acting Governor and the

Resettlement to discuss this. They were enthusiastic about the proposal and the Women into Work Acting Programme Director visited the prison again with the individual who was to become the Programme Director, to finalise details with the Acting Governor.

However, there were then huge delays in LCC completing the tender document despite significant contribution and support from the Women into Work team. The main problem seemed to be that the contract had been left with LCC yet the Programme Director undertook almost all the necessary work on it. Effectively the project was largely instigated by the individuals mentioned above who invested much time and energy in ensuring the proposed project became a reality.

The Creative Business Pilot Project began significantly later than the other four projects commissioned. Following the initial tender submission there followed many weeks of negotiations between SOVA and the London College of Communication before the project commenced. Although SOVA were very keen to commission the project, as outlined above there were problems in the College submitting a complete tender document detailing all the necessary information.

It was intended that the project would be a collaborative venture between London College of Communication and HMP East Sutton Park (a working, open prison in rural Kent). The main partnership however, ended up being between an individual worker (an Associate Lecturer at the College) and

East Sutton Park. The College did however contribute to the project in the following ways:

- Provided a venue for the project exhibition
- Took responsibility for course accreditation and marking
- Students from the college contributed to the design of the exhibition (this process was overseen by a College Tutor)

There was however a lack of project team/management structure which had knock on effects. The success of the project was largely attributable to the commitment of the individual worker (who adopted the role of Programme Director).

The project was an innovative venture, fraught with potential difficulties. However, the individual worker worked largely in isolation in dealing with the issues which arose from taking an academic course into the prison environment and working with a client group of which he had no previous experience:

'The feedback loop wasn't very effective and there was no way of saying 'this where we are now, these are the issues and these are the problems'. They weren't simply about the teaching and delivery of course, they were issues to do with the women. A lot of them were very vulnerable women and it would have been good to have that support. It would have been good to be able to share those

experiences to make the project better or more effective'
(Programme Director)

As a result of the lack of project structure and management the worker had to adopt 'multiple roles' (Project Director/Manager, Exhibition Organiser and Curator) which proved very challenging, particularly given the tight timescales of the project. In addition, there was no formal agreement drawn up between the Programme Director and the College which meant that he had no 'safety net' regarding payment and other contractual issues. It appeared that the potential role of the College was not clearly defined during the project planning stages. As the 'visible face' of the project, the Programme Director ultimately 'took the flack' from beneficiaries when problems occurred and the College was largely absent from this process.

The Programme Director did however, feel very much supported by the SOVA Women into Work team and staff there provided much needed 'hands on' help and reassurance throughout project delivery:

'SOVA has been the main support. They were excellent, really, really helpful. They put me in touch with people, people from the Home Office, they were always at the end of the phone, they came down to the prison with me. I felt very much part of the wider network there'
(Programme Director)

2.0 Prison Working

2.1 Relationships with Prison

The Programme Director had an extremely positive relationship with the Acting Governor of HMP East Sutton Park and this proved instrumental to the success of the project. A desire to enable women to ‘better themselves’ appeared to be ingrained within the philosophy of the prison:

‘Anything that benefits women, we’re happy to be involved with. The prison gets satisfaction from seeing women do well. Success depends purely on individual staff, it’s about caring about people’

(Deputy Prison Governor)

There also existed a belief that women prisoners in particular had huge potential to progress and to support and empower each other:

‘Women tend to be more responsive than men so you always feel you can do something with them. They tend to be more creative and imaginative than men and women support each other. They can’t mother their own children so they mother each other’

(Deputy Prison Governor)

This 'enabling' approach is reflected in the Programme Director's experience of his interactions with prison staff. He reported being particularly encouraged by the amount of time the Acting Governor was willing to devote to the project, this was deemed particularly important as the Programme Director had no prior experience of working with this client group:

'What made the difference was having the support of the Prison Governor. That worked really, really well. He gave an enormous amount of time to me, the preparation, introduction to people. I would always get there an hour early and sit down with him and go through things - not necessarily the details of the course but more issues with the women. Very, very helpful' (Programme Director)

This consultative process provided an excellent 'induction' into the prison environment and the issues faced by beneficiaries. It helped to alleviate the anxieties of the Programme Director and enabled realistic expectations of what could be achieved.

Once the taught element of the programme was completed and the exhibition was over, the Head of Learning and Skills at HMP East Sutton Park continued working with beneficiaries to enable them to achieve the ABC qualification. This again shows considerable commitment and willingness to 'see things through'.

2.2 Practical Constraints

Despite the undoubtedly supportive attitude of the prison in facilitating the project, several practical barriers impacted upon beneficiaries' experience in significant ways. The prison successfully arranged Licences for all beneficiaries to travel to London when the exhibition was showing and this is an achievement in itself. However, this was the only external trip which beneficiaries were able to make during the lifetime of the project. During the planning phase of the exhibition, the women were unable to obtain Licences to enable them to visit the exhibition space and have an input into it's design and curation. This had a profound effect upon women's perception of the exhibition itself, which is discussed in a later section.

Within the prison environment beneficiaries were unable to access the Internet, publications and external parties in order to conduct research to assist them with their portfolio building and business planning. This is one of the many factors which highlights the considerable difference between teaching this course to prisoners and 'mainstream' students. Women were also unable to access the necessary materials to construct their exhibits which caused huge frustration amongst the group.

An additional constraint was the limited amount of time devoted to the teaching of the course. All teaching was conducted within a two hour weekly slot and it proved a continual challenge to maintain the momentum of the course between these sessions. The limited time available resulted

in some beneficiaries feeling that they did not receive adequate one to one support from the Programme Director when completing coursework. Some beneficiaries were in employment, either inside or outside the prison which made it difficult for the group to meet outside taught sessions, as did differing levels of motivation within the group. Some of the beneficiaries suffered from learning difficulties such as dyslexia and a lack of basic skills which also affected the speed at which teaching could progress.

As prisoners, the few women who had actually developed products which they wanted to sell were unable to do so. For example, one woman had created a number of paintings for which she had found buyers but was told that prison regulations would not allow this. This again caused considerable frustration for the individual involved.

The above issues clearly highlight that even with the highest level of commitment of tutors, prison staff and beneficiaries, the restrictions of the prison regime itself will often disadvantage prisoners when attempting to learn and progress, when compared to mainstream students.

2.3 Recruitment

Recruiting women to the course occurred in a somewhat haphazard manner. Initially a presentation about the aims and objectives of the course was delivered by the Programme Director with the Women into

Work Acting Programme Director in the prison canteen and a number of women signed up to participate.

However due to the delays which occurred in refining the contract between SOVA and the College, there was then a gap of a number of weeks before the Programme Director visited the prison again and delivered an additional presentation to a smaller number of women. By the time the course actually started, it appeared that enthusiasm and momentum had dwindled somewhat with only 3 women attending. The Programme Director adopted a pragmatic and creative approach to addressing this problem:

'I said to them 'if we only have three or four people we can't do it so if you really want to do it you've got to go out there and get some people'. I gave it to them as like an assignment and we talked through how to use influencing skills. And that was when they started coming but we'd had about three sessions before I thought 'well now we've got enough women'. (Programme Director)

Despite this somewhat shaky start, attendance of the course remained relatively high and constant throughout its duration.

3.0 The Course and the Group

3.1 Content of the Course

The programme was adapted from a course which the Programme Director had taught in mainstream education. It consisted of ten modules based on two-hour workshops which took place from November 2004 to March 2005. The programme ran approximately to the structure outlined below (extracted from the Project Closure Report) and was divided into three main themes:

Theme One

Ideas generation, team working, personal recipes and organisational skills

Theme Two

Planning & Strategic Thinking

Theme Three

Implementation & Preparation for the Marketplace

The above themes ran through the full range of workshops, each one having an objective, a learning outcome and set of learning tools. These were as follows:

1. Creativity & Setting Objectives

Objectives:

To provide clearly defined outcomes through self-diagnosis, team building and lateral thinking skills

Learning Outcomes

To be able to formulate ideas and set goals

Learning Tools

Mind mapping exercises, written autobiographical prose, and definitions of creativity

2. Organisational Skills

Objectives:

To provide a personal planning toolkit

Learning Outcomes

Understanding of personal and business priorities using business-planning tools

Learning Tools

Time Management, personal mission statements, written '3rd party' prose

3. Selling Yourself

Objectives

To provide communications skills

Learning Outcomes

Understanding of approaches to marketing, pitching, CVs, promotional and presentation skills

Learning Tools

Elevator Pitch

Marketing theory

Marketing strategies

4. Making Money from your Idea

Objectives

To develop business proposals

Learning Outcomes

To understand business sector, motives for business transaction and importance of transferable skills

Learning Tools

Creating added value exercises

Winning first contract/commission

Building and maintaining a clientele base

Database development

Portfolio working

5. Networking, Pitching & Negotiating

Objectives:

To provide participants with real life 'win-win' skills

Learning Outcomes

Understanding of objectives and customer/client perspectives & priorities

Learning Tools

Role-playing

Influencing skills

Communication skills

Open ended sentencing construction

6. The Business Plan

Objectives

To provide participants with a business planning toolkit

Learning Outcomes

Planning skills

Research skills

Financial literacy

Learning Toolkit

Business Plans

Case Studies

Executive Summaries

Market Research

Competitors' Analysis

7.The Marketing Plan

Objectives

To provide participants with marketing planning toolkit

Learning Outcomes

Planning

Understanding of 'value creation'

Understanding of differentiating benefits

Understanding of USPs

Learning Toolkit

Marketing, PR and publicity plans

Case studies

Mission Statements

Marketing spend

8.Exhibition Planning

Objectives:

To create the content and key messages for a public facing exhibition of work to date

Learning Outcomes

Prose writing

Narrative Development

Publicity

Networking

Creative Thinking

Teamwork

9. Exhibition Implementation

Objectives

To mount an exhibition

Learning Outcomes

Understanding of deadlines

Understanding of teamwork

Public speaking

Design Specifications

Learning Tools

Organisational tools (i.e. CPAs etc.)

Team building skills (collaborative and collective goal setting exercises)

Media Relations

Speech writing and delivery

10. Review & Feedback

Objectives:

To provide evaluation and SWOT analysis

Learning Outcomes

Understanding of benchmarking process

Critical evaluation

Scenario Planning

Learning Tools

Report writing

Inter-personal skills

The course was accredited with an ABC Award of Creative Enterprise, a university qualification.

3.2 Marginal vs Mainstream Teaching

Teaching a course designed for 'mainstream' students in a prison environment necessitated a high degree of flexibility on the part of the Programme Director. Having not worked with this client group before, he was somewhat unprepared for the level of 'difference' between them and mainstream students:

'Also the course wasn't like hitting the ground running, there was a lot of preparation and groundwork to be done before we could even

hit it. That was the thing that kind of took me by surprise. I went in there thinking well we've got the modules, done a bit of research and I didn't expect things like nobody turning up and I also didn't expect ...I thought everyone would come to it with a business idea but actually nobodyhad a business idea. That was a big thing, it shifted the whole parameters because it wasn't like starting at the beginning it was like going back to before the beginning'
(Programme Director)

Thus considerably more time than anticipated was spent on 'development work' – coming up with business ideas, defining goals and encouraging women to consider the skills which they have but may not immediately recognise. It was considered important to get women to 'think beyond' the confines of their own limitations (both physical and psychological). For example, one session included conducting a basic psychometric test to try and enable women to consider whether they had 'what it takes' to develop a creative business:

'One thing I found which was very interesting was that there was a sense that they didn't have the right qualifications and they wouldn't be able to do anything so I asked them questions like 'Do you think you have the ability to overcome barriers?' and they'd say 'yes' and I'd say 'well that's an entrepreneurial quality'. So it was getting them to look at things in a new way and recognising the skills that

they do have. It was very interesting for me because they'd obviously been told lots of negatives' (Programme Director)

3.3 Guest Speakers

In addition to the taught modules, a range of guest speakers (all of whom were personal contacts of the Programme Director) were invited to come and talk to the group about their experiences and perceptions of the business world. These included:

- Amanda White, Channel 4 Television (educationalist and producer)
- Rachel Brushfield, Energise (coach)
- Iain Rikkie, TGWU (mediator and specialist in conflict resolution)
- Fiona Dawe MBE, Youthnet (Chief Executive and specialist in volunteering)
- John Bird CBE, The Big Issue, (Founder, Chairman and social entrepreneur)

Each speaker was briefed about the nature and content of the course prior to the sessions:

'I told them what we were doing and what we wanted from them but I wasn't too prescriptive and that was intentional. They were personalities doing quite unique things and I wanted that to come out' (Programme Director)

In addition to a course related exercise, the session also included an open question and answer session.

The intention was for the guest speakers to be integrated into the content of the course modules with the session being divided between taught time and 'real world' case studies from the invited guest on a particular topic. In reality, time constraints meant that it was extremely difficult to integrate both the taught element and the guest speaker into one two hour session:

'What tended to happen was there just wasn't enough time and it did cause a bit of a fragmentation but I'd booked them all in and it was very difficult to unbook them. The idea was for it to be more integrated but it did feel like a bit of a 'bolt on'. If I did it again I would have had people come down in addition to the two hours rather than trying to incorporate it' (Programme Director)

Despite these difficulties, the guest speakers were considered a hugely important contribution to the course by both the Programme Director and beneficiaries. The Programme Director felt it important that beneficiaries had an 'outside perspective' on the business world and the opportunity to gain inspiration from those who had achieved success. Beneficiaries valued the speakers taking the time to come into the prison and speak to them and enjoyed sharing their ideas with professionals. Inviting guest speakers from 'the industry' fulfilled an additional awareness raising role:

'It was about dispelling prejudices and the possibility of getting people from the 'outside' to act as advocates for the women'
(Programme Director)

3.4 The Group

As already touched upon, transferring a course designed to be taught in an academic institution to a prison environment proved challenging as it was uncharted territory for all parties. The tutor had no prior experience of working with this client group and many of the beneficiaries had little or no experience of a classroom environment, completing assignments and working to deadlines.

Beneficiaries also had little experience of team working; of 'pulling together' to reach a final goal. As with any group working scenario some personalities were more forceful than others, leading to intermittent tensions. Around the time of the exhibition, a crucial stage in the lifetime of the project, it appeared that the group was pulling in different directions:

'At the beginning it was fine but then the other personalities and other agendas started coming to the fore and that was a tricky one. Normally when you get towards the end it all starts gelling but as it got towards the end it all started fragmenting and spiralling out of control' **(Programme Director)**

It was also felt that some beneficiaries had gained more than others from the exhibition itself. This perceived unfairness centred around how much of their work was actually displayed and also how much money was allocated to each woman. These issues did lead to some resentment within the group. However, this resentment was partially directed towards the Programme Director and also served to unite the women to a certain extent – *'I felt really bad for [name] 'cos her work wasn't presented'*.

It is also important to note that women in prison exist in an environment which can be uniquely stressful and there are numerous problems inherent in the condition of being 'prisoners'. It was inevitable that such problems would sometimes be brought into the group and that levels of motivation would fluctuate according to the external problems and issues which women were experiencing. Women sometimes turned up late to class and in the words of one beneficiary *'there were a lot of downs in the group'*. However, despite the problems outlined above, the experience of participating in the project was largely positive for most of the women involved and provided a valuable bonding opportunity with their fellow prisoners. This is discussed in more depth in a later section. The Programme Director found his experience of working with this diverse group to be extremely valuable. Indeed it proved instrumental in opening his heart and mind to the potential of working with prisoners:

'I feel really honoured to have been able to spend this time with them. I've been really impressed with the women and it's been a

brilliant experience, especially working with such a culturally diverse cross section' (Programme Director)

4.0 The Exhibition

4.1 Content

The week long exhibition was held at the London College of Communications in February 2005. During classes, extensive discussions were held around the aims and objectives of the exhibition. It soon became apparent that the exhibition could have a dual purpose:

- To present the business ideas/plans of beneficiaries
- To raise awareness and dispel stereotypes around the lives and experiences of women in prison

The following statement, outlining the ethos of the exhibition was developed by beneficiaries in collaboration with the Programme Director:

'This is a journey about dynamic women each telling their own individual stories, incredible stories of life in prison and after. My story has become our story. A journey that reveals the harsh realities of life within these walls. A journey that looks at the broken dreams, lost hopes, the pain, the regrets, confusion, fear, shame, disgrace and humiliation, that we have experienced as women first hand'

The following section (extracted from the Project Closure Report) clearly outlines the structure and content of the exhibition:

A key part of the exhibition was getting the communications right. To this end the participants came up with a brand for the exhibition and called it *Within Walls & Across Bridges*. The editorial description of the exhibition was developed by the women and was set out as:

Seven dynamic women, seven life stories, seven ideas for a creative enterprise, and one shared experience: life inside prison.

Within Walls & Across Bridges is an exhibition of an idea, from its first seedling in the imagination within the four walls of the prison to the oak of its realisation as a creative enterprise.

Following both the individual and collective journey of seven women, this exhibition maps out the evolution of a creative idea; it reveals individual stories and experiences and provides a valuable insight into the power of dreams.

Using creative work, mind-maps, graphics, video and personal mission statements, as well as examples of more conventional business planning tools – this unique exhibition gives women who aren't normally heard, a voice; it provides a visibility that is often invisible and is a call for action for creative and education agencies to recognise the wealth and talent that exists within the four walls of a woman's prison.

It was decided by the beneficiaries that the exhibition should have a strong narrative and theme and be divided into the following sections:

Section One

Images of Prison (photographs and regulations to convey a woman's first encounter with prison)

Section Two

My Story (pieces of prose written by the women)

Section Three

The Idea (a cross section of Business Plans etc.)

Section Four

Their Stories (Other people's perspectives of women in prison e.g. family, officers etc.)

The exhibition was largely text based with strong images spread throughout. The texts were then edited, put onto large boards around the exhibition space and were framed by a coherent visual identity which was bold and contemporary combining text, images, paintings and displays.

4.2 The Planning Process

The evaluation has revealed clear differences in opinion between the Programme Director and beneficiaries around the amount of consultation which took place during the planning stages of the exhibition. The Programme Director insisted that this was an entirely collaborative process, largely driven by the ideas of beneficiaries:

'At quite an early stage they decided that this was the message we want to get across, we want to have a voice. And we talked about how we could do that in an exhibition and I do feel that very much came from them' (Programme Director)

However, once the practical problems of getting beneficiaries to the exhibition venue during the planning stage became apparent he did acknowledge:

'At one point they lost ownership of the exhibition'

It is difficult to ascertain the actual discussions which took place during classes around the actual content of the exhibition but a letter sent to beneficiaries prior to the exhibition clearly states:

'Just as a reminder, as we agreed, the exhibition will be divided into the following sections':

The content of the exhibition is then explicitly outlined along with a list of tasks which the women needed to complete. This is followed by a paragraph stating:

'As it is so hard to get any of you to the exhibition space before the launch, I will have to make certain decisions on the presentation of the exhibits and the texts. Unless I receive something in writing from any of you objecting to this, then I will accept that we are all in agreement with this'

However, beneficiaries felt very strongly that the exhibition was not what they expected it to be. Although pre-warned that some decisions would have to be taken on their behalf and no objections were raised, beneficiaries felt as though they lost all control over its design and presentation and this was perceived as extremely disempowering:

'A lot of it was out of their control. There was a gap between the perception of what the exhibition was going to be when compared to the reality, a real sense of anti climax' (Head of Learning and Skills)

The main complaint which beneficiaries had was that the exhibition focussed too much on their individual stories as prisoners and this aspect of the exhibition overshadowed the work which they had invested in developing their business plans/ideas:

'The amount of trouble we went to was immense, to get all work together. I feel like I've been led down the garden path. I felt like exhibition was about 7 women in prison who happened to have a business idea. The exhibition was about prisoners not about business plans. I walked in and felt it was an exhibition about prisoners' (Beneficiary)

There was a definite sense that the credibility of beneficiaries was undermined and they resented their identities being represented as intrinsically bound up with criminality as opposed to more positive character traits.

From the perspective of the Programme Director (and perhaps not taken into account by beneficiaries), the main problem was the lack of actual work which was available to exhibit, thus a resulting emphasis on the stories of women:

'In the bid it says 'exhibition of their work' so that was assuming that everyone had work but nobody did have work so it was like....a bit of a panic. What happened was I got them to think it through - 'what are the big issues, what do we want to say?' And that's when it became very narrative driven' (Programme Director)

The Evaluator also picked up a powerful need for the Programme Director to not only maintain his professional credibility in the presentation of the

exhibition but also to represent beneficiaries in the best possible light. In order to fulfil both these criteria there was a need to produce an end product which had cohesion and editorial continuity. As already mentioned, individuals had very disparate ideas about what they wanted to exhibit and there were discrepancies in the amount of work which women had to show. Thus it was deemed by the Programme Director that the most effective way of achieving cohesion was to make the women's stories the focus of the exhibition. It was felt that in order to organise the exhibition effectively within the limited timescale, he had to *'take charge of the curation'*. and adopt a pragmatic approach in order to manage the difficult circumstances with which he had been presented.

'It would have been a bowl of soup – everyone had different ideas and different agendas. It was difficult to exhibit business plans without looking dull. We had to produce something which had public value and it felt that the collective stories were more important than individual exhibits' (Programme Director)

However, beneficiaries felt dispossessed by this experience stating that:

'We should have been involved in every aspect of the project from start to finish. The actual exhibition should have been agreed by all involved not left to the discretion of the tutor' (Beneficiary)

'My daughter was disappointed saying 'where's your work?'. We

were supposed to be 7 women exhibiting work ideas, not 7 'my stories' (Beneficiary)

It proved challenging for the Programme Director to explain to beneficiaries the practical and time constraints which prevented a more consultative process. At the feedback session observed by the Evaluator it seemed that unfamiliarity with this kind of 'real life' scenario, on the part of beneficiaries as well as coming from a fairly dispossessed starting point meant that it was difficult for beneficiaries to 'hear' what was being said and this prevented a more rational response.

Beneficiaries also expressed disappointment at the lack of businessmen/women and entrepreneurs attending the exhibition who could give feedback about their work. They were also disappointed that many attendees were from within the prison service and this led them to conclude that:

'It was an advert for East Sutton Park and the Prison Service'

Whilst it is encouraging that the prison service showed a high level of support, women stated they expected more opportunities to network with business contacts.

However the Programme Director points out that:

'The invitation list was developed by the women. It was only at the end, when it was impossible for them to get to the venue [that they lost ownership]...but things like the mailing list was done by the women, they took charge of it. They all had to come up with names and they were sent out from the prison. The university sent some out but it was very much them leading...500 invitations went out but it was hard to control where they were going within different networks. At the end of the day you can't control who actually got them or who comes. Even on the day were unsure of numbers'

Despite the misgivings of some beneficiaries, feedback indicates the exhibition was undoubtedly a success in the view of those who attended.

Beneficiaries did acknowledge that despite the limited amount of networking opportunities, the exhibition was a useful awareness raising exercise which 'put their prison on the map'. They also reported enjoying family members being able to see their achievements firsthand.

The process of organising the exhibition has certainly highlighted the difficulties of managing the high and diverse expectations of a group of female prisoners. Also the severe time constraints involved will have impacted upon the level of dialogue and communication achieved between the Programme Director and beneficiaries. However, the Programme Director did insist *'I did my best to capture the spirit of what was going on here'*.

5.0 Impact on Women

Despite the considerable disappointment felt by beneficiaries particularly around issues relating to the exhibition, it is clear that they gained a great deal from their involvement in the project. A particular benefit was the experience of team working and a sense of 'pulling together' in order to achieve a common goal. This is clearly reflected in the following comments gathered when women were asked to state 'what are the things you have enjoyed most about your involvement in the project?':

- Communicating with others, working as a team, seeing it through to the end
- Working in a team, knowing that people care, going to the exhibition and having [Programme Director] with us
- Meeting informative people (speakers)
- Involvement with SOVA
- Meeting different people
- Seeing our work on display
- The help we were given from people who visited
- Forming the ideas together as a group
- Making tentative plans for a potential business when leave. The work I have done will come in handy
- The exhibition was a gift for our hard work and rewarding to the prison and several women

- Sharing ideas
- Seeing the outcome
- Opportunity to get a qualification

In addition the following comments were made:

'It helped me to believe in myself and talent that I'd never thought of!'

'Women in adverse conditions managed to make an exhibition... I was pleased to see the women work together for the outcome - that part was exciting'

'I enjoyed being part of portraying women in prison in a positive way'

'It helped in coming together with other women with shared goals'

'I am lucky as I do possess self confidence but in other women I noticed a change in their outlook and an opportunity to shine'

'I enjoyed being there, my family was there. It's given me more confidence to go forward in life'

'It was an eye opener for me that gave me the opportunity for a better future'

'I've benefited 'cos it's given chance to meet people who can help'

6.0 Project Closure and Exit Strategies

In order to bring closure to the project a 'debrief' session was held which was attended by the beneficiaries, the Programme Director, SOVA's Programme Manager and the Head of Learning and Skills (the Evaluator also attended as an observer). This offered beneficiaries an opportunity to give feedback to the Programme Director on the taught elements of the course and the exhibition. It also offered the opportunity to reaffirm to beneficiaries the work which needed to be done in order to obtain the ABC qualification. As already mentioned the Head of Learning and Skills at HMP East Sutton Park took responsibility for getting women through the qualification once the taught element of the course was completed.

Bearing in mind the extremely short term nature of the project it is commendable that considered debate occurred around how the work of the project may be effectively disseminated and mainstreamed. Partnership working between the prison, the College, beneficiaries and SOVA was considered to be crucial to this element of the work.

It has been suggested that the exhibition work should be widely promoted and plans have been discussed to conduct a tour around other prisons in the female estate. It was hoped that this would not only validate the hard work of beneficiaries but also encourage women in other prisons to explore their own creative potential. The prospect of promoting the exhibition more widely outside of the prison environment was also discussed, this was thought to be important awareness raising work on account of the lack of statements about women in prison in the public

domain. It was acknowledged that the question of who actually owned the work (i.e. the women themselves or the British Council) would have to be clarified before this work commenced. Agreement has been reached with the Women into Work Acting Programme Director that a tour of HMP Downview, HMP Holloway and possibly HMP Send will be conducted and funded using Women into Work Action Three money. The Acting Programme Director is currently working on this alongside the Head of Learning and Skills at HMP East Sutton Park. The Acting Governor felt confident that they could take the exhibition to at least one other women's prison with no cost implications.

In the longer term, there exists a willingness within the prison to replicate and continue the course for other prisoners. The Programme Director felt that the best way to take this work forward would be to build capacity to run the course within the prison by training up existing staff members within the Learning Unit, with someone from the creative industries to act in an advisory role.

The Programme Director feels that another crucial factor in enabling mainstreaming is to create effective networks within prison systems and then local pathways into industry to raise awareness of the potential impact of female prisoners in the creative industries. Future success will also be dependent upon getting 'key players' on board to act as advocates thus ensuring that women in prison remain high on the social responsibility agenda of flagship creative business organisations.

The above points demonstrate a clear commitment to mainstreaming work, however at the time of writing it is not clear to what extent some of the plans have been implemented.

Finally an exciting dissemination activity has been the production of an 8 page spread on the work of beneficiaries for the 'Big Issue' magazine. Although, at this point it not possible to assess the wider impact of this work, it will undoubtedly generate future interest and further validate the hard work of beneficiaries.

7.0 Links with Women into Work Team and Other Pilot Projects

As already mentioned this Pilot Project is one of five commissioned by Women into Work. The aim was that Pilot Projects would liaise with each other and share good practice. During the course of the project the Creative Business Pilot has engaged in the following activities with other Pilot Projects:

- Participated in Pilot Project meetings
- Liaised and networking at other Women into Work events including the conference and transnational events (see below)

And have also engaged in the following activities with the Women into Work team:

- had ongoing support from the Programme Manager
- had ongoing support from the Finance Manager re: any financial concerns and submitting claims
- participated in Pilot Project meetings
- Programme Director participated in a visit to Gothenburg to share good practice with our Swedish partners
- Programme Director attended and presented at the Women into Work national conference in January 2005

The project had specific objectives related to transnational work.

However, in reality there were limited opportunities for project staff to become involved in Transnational Work. This was an issue for all five pilot projects, as explained by the Women into Work Transnational Co-ordinator below:

'My original intention from March 2004 when a transnational meeting was held in Sheffield was to link each pilot project with a partner. The connections didn't happen, mainly because the pilots were so busy with domestic issues and I still wasn't entirely clear on what was happening in France or Germany at that point. Also, there were staffing changes in NACRO, CAST & WEETU. The problem with women still being on licence and some not having passports was also an issue. The plan changed to travelling to Sweden in February 2005 as that was the earliest time some on licence could leave the country, if permission by probation were to be granted'

However, it is very encouraging that the Programme Director was given the valuable opportunity to travel to Gothenburg to share knowledge with our Swedish partners.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

1.0 Summary of Results

The Creative Business Pilot Project has effectively responded to the Peer Research recommendations contained within the Moving Mountains report by:

- Providing a 'higher level' course
- Listening to and validating women's aspirations for the future
- Attempting to overcome the barrier which disclosing a criminal record poses to women seeking/gaining employment by encouraging a self-employment route
- Raising awareness of the potential of female prisoners to individuals/organisations within the Creative Industries

The project has successfully engaged 7 beneficiaries from varied backgrounds and with multiple and complex needs and guided them through the process of developing their own creative business. The key innovation of this project was in taking a course developed for mainstream students and adapting it for the prison environment. The course also provided a learning experience which was significantly different from that provided by the prison, in both content and approach. Particularly commendable was the way in which beneficiaries were enabled to 'think outside the box' and to recognise transferable skills in themselves. This

type of approach questioned traditional notions of 'intelligence' and thus provided an empowering approach.

The support of HMP East Sutton Park and their 'enabling approach' proved instrumental to the success of the project. However, the inevitable restrictions of working within the prison regime undoubtedly hindered the project at times and certainly impacted upon the extent to which beneficiaries were able to be empowered by their involvement. The lack of project structure/management and effective feedback loop with the London College of Communication led to a certain degree of isolation for the Programme Director in delivering the course, although the support received from the SOVA Women into Work team and the prison staff went some way to alleviate this problem.

It is very unfortunate that at several stages in the lifetime of the project beneficiaries felt disempowered by their lack of involvement in certain key decisions and lessons must be learned from this experience, particularly around the management of expectations and communication when working with disenfranchised groups. However, it is heartening that in spite of some significant problems, beneficiaries gained considerably from their overall involvement in the Creative Business Project. The experience of team working and 'pulling together' was perceived as particularly worthwhile, as was having the opportunity to meet and discuss ideas with guest speakers from the creative industries.

The project, although very small scale also offered an important awareness raising function around the potential of women prisoners for working in creative businesses and will undoubtedly provide a crucial impetus for future, more widespread work.

2.0 Recommendations

The preceding chapters have set out key successes and barriers to success encountered during the Creative Business Pilot Project. In addition the proactive attempts which have been made to overcome barriers have been noted. Clearly the barriers presented and the ongoing learning evidenced during the lifetime of the project need to be turned into opportunities. To support and give direction to this process the following recommendations are made which will enable more effective service provision in future Women into Work projects and for working with women (ex)offenders generally. It is anticipated that these recommendations will inform decision making during the commissioning process and delivery period of Round Two projects:

- Roles and responsibilities of partner organisations need to be clarified from the outset of projects
- The potential impact which working within the prison regime may have on project activity (e.g. difficulties in obtaining licences etc) needs to be negotiated from the outset of projects

- The recruitment of project beneficiaries should take place as close as possible to the start of course delivery
- It is vital to provide adequate time and resources for one to one support in addition to work conducted within taught sessions. This may need to be both emotional and practical support
- When working with a client group largely disempowered by their circumstances, the way in which expectations are managed becomes particularly significant and therefore needs careful consideration
- Clear boundaries need to be established around what beneficiaries can reasonably expect of project workers and visa versa. When working with women with complex, multiple needs, expectations of the progress which can be made should be realistic to avoid compounding a sense of failure
- When working in a prison environment, consideration needs to be given to whose responsibility it is to manage issues which may arise for beneficiaries as a result of their participation (i.e. prison or project staff?)
- When delivering projects of this kind the possibility of negotiating limited and supervised internet access to facilitate learning could be considered
- It is vital that in the learning environment, women are encouraged to recognise transferable skills in both themselves and their fellow prisoners

- Projects need to have strict ground rules to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and decisions are made in a truly democratic way
- The direction of project work should be continually discussed with beneficiaries and as far as possible their input should be gained into decisions which are made

Appendix A - Workplan Results

Objective	Equal Theme	Evidence of Achievement /Barriers to Achievement
<p><u>1. Prepare a research report</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dissemination and Mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Due to considerably reduced timescales as a result of delays in the commissioning process, a research report was not prepared as part of project activity ➤ However, 'Moving Mountains' and other reports provided by the Women into Work team and the Women's Policy Team were studied by Programme Director and used as a baseline for providing an understanding of issues faced by women (ex)offenders
<p><u>2. Prepare Diagnostic and Assessment Workshop</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Empowerment ➤ Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Diagnostic and assessment workshop conducted in one of weekly sessions. ➤ Beneficiaries asked to complete questionnaire which formed the basis of a basic psychometric test ➤ Encouraged women to recognise their own entrepreneurial skills ➤ Challenged traditional notions of intelligence ➤ Empowering experience enabled women to recognise their strengths

<p><u>3. Develop first 5 learning modules</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Empowerment ➤ Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learning modules were developed by Programme Director ➤ Adapted from a course he had taught in mainstream education - “Business Start Up for the Creative Arts” ➤ 10 modules in total based on 2 hour workshops ➤ Main themes were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ideas generation, teamworking, personal recipes ○ Planning & Strategic Thinking ○ Implementation & Preparation for the Marketplace
<p><u>4. Ensure co-ordination with Prison Education Co-ordinator</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovation ➤ Equal Opportunities ➤ Dissemination and Mainstream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Excellent co-ordination and co-operation achieved between staff at HMP East Sutton Park (particularly Deputy Governor and Head of Learning and Skills) and the Programme Director ➤ Women into Work staff team had key role in facilitating this process ➤ Regular meetings and de-brief sessions occurred with prison staff throughout the project ➤ Prison staff keen to ‘enable’ women to achieve their goals ➤ Prison staff keen to have key role in dissemination and mainstream work

<p>5. <u>Engage and brief quest tutors</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovation ➤ Empowerment ➤ Dissemination and Mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 5 guest speakers engaged and briefed during course ➤ All were key figures in the Creative Industries and personal contacts of the Programme Director ➤ Time constraints meant it was difficult to integrate taught element of the course and guest speaker into a 2 hour session ➤ Guest speakers highly valued by beneficiaries and Programme Director
<p>6. <u>Undertake Workshops</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovation ➤ Empowerment ➤ Equal Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ten taught modules delivered by Programme Director ➤ In addition, a feedback session was held with beneficiaries, Programme Director, Women into Work Programme Manager and Evaluator once course and exhibition had been completed ➤ High degree of flexibility needed when teaching a course designed for 'mainstream' students ➤ Considerable time needed to be spent on personal development work at the start of the course

<p>7. <u>op Opportunity Networks</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dissemination and Mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Numerous exhibition invitations sent out to members of business community but attendance from this sector was disappointing ➤ Beneficiaries valued the opportunity to discuss business ideas with Guest Speakers and receive feedback ➤ The engagement of John Bird (Founder and Chairman of Big Issue) as a guest speaker led to production of an 8 page supplement on work of beneficiaries appearing in Big Issue
<p>8. <u>Organise Exhibition</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Empowerment ➤ Innovation ➤ Dissemination and Mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Week long exhibition held at London College of Communications in February 2005 ➤ Had dual purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To present business ideas/plans of beneficiaries ○ To raise awareness and dispel stereotypes of the lives of women in prison ➤ Due to prison regime restrictions, beneficiaries felt excluded from the exhibition planning process ➤ Beneficiaries were disappointed by the lack of 'entrepreneurs' attending the exhibition launch ➤ However, welcomed the opportunity to promote their work/stories in this way and were pleased to be able to invite their families to see their achievements



The Women into Work programme was commissioned by the **Equal** Fund to work towards combating discrimination and inequality experienced by women who have been disadvantaged, particularly by their experiences of the criminal justice system. The programme which is managed by SOVA in partnership with 12 agencies, focuses specifically upon Employment, Training and Education



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