

Research Centre for Community Justice

Women into Work Pilot Project Evaluation Report

Going Straight to Work

Nacro

JUNE 2005

prepared by Caroline O'Keeffe

Executive Summary

Going Straight to Work Pilot – Nacro

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 Nacro run **Going Straight to Work Pilot**.*

Aim – as detailed in original tender document

'The project will work with individual women prisoners to enhance their skills, knowledge and self-confidence, thus increasing their employability. The focus will be on remand prisoners who are likely to receive a short custodial sentence. All beneficiaries will be unemployed prison leavers, not active in the labour market at the time of joining the project and unemployed for a significant period before being received into custody. We expect 70 beneficiaries to participate in the project over it's lifetime. The beneficiaries will be aged 16 to 65 and all will be female. They will be from a range of ethnic groups and backgrounds. A significant proportion will have no qualifications before engaging with the project.'

The Going Straight to Work Pilot has effectively responded to the Peer Research recommendations contained within the Moving Mountains report by:

- Offering peer led mentoring support to women (ex)offenders
- Tailoring support according to individual need
- Acknowledging the 'stepping stones' route which needs to be taken when working with women recently released from custody
- Engaging employers in understanding the particular needs of women ex-offenders

Recruitment, Staffing and Support

- Two Project Workers and one Project Manager were initially recruited. In line with the ethos of peer support the Project Workers were recruited from the target group
- From the outset patience and understanding regarding this workers multiple needs was demonstrated by project management. This proved empowering in the difficult journey to re-enter the workplace and also shows a strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for women (ex)offenders.
- As the project developed a distinct 'hands on' management style emerged with a strong focus upon the needs of the client group. This also proved empowering for project workers.
- One of the key strengths of this project was the supportive and non hierarchical relationship developed between the Project Manager and Project Workers.

Learning Point: the provision of 'all encompassing' support will have an important impact on the ease with which peer support workers are enabled to make the transition from custody to a 'professional' role

- Some practical barriers/concerns were encountered during the early stages
 - having no 'fixed' office space. Workers had to 'hot desk'
 - a lack of formalised training to assist Project Workers in delivering services:
 - a lack of proper induction within the prison setting

Staffing Problems and Changes

- The Project experienced significant staffing changes during the lifetime of the project, not just within the project team but also within the prisons on which they were relying upon to facilitate and support the project.
- The Project Manager took a very proactive approach to ensuring that effective systems were in place to meet the support and supervision needs of staff.

Learning Point: need to be fully aware of and have support systems in place to avoid or deal with the potential problems of Project Workers carrying out a professional role in prisons where they had once resided.

- The impact of reduced staffing was minimised due to the impressive commitment to the project by the remaining worker.
- Staff changes in HMP Send where the project was primarily based also occurred, leading to a lack of consistency in levels of support for/commitment to the project amongst staff.
- The excellent reputation which the project soon gained proved helpful in terms of rebuilding relationships.

Barriers to Collaborative Working Methods Between Prisons

- A key innovation of this project was its intention to 'test out' collaborative working systems between HMP SEND, HMP Holloway and HMP East Sutton Park. In practice getting this work off the ground proved to be one of the main challenges for the project. These included:
 - Very fast turnover of remand prisoners making it difficult to engage potential beneficiaries
 - Lack of knowledge of project among prisoners and staff 'on the ground'
 - Lack of direct access to potential beneficiaries
 - Remand prisoners being understandably reluctant to 'action plan'
 - Issues and problems occurred when women were being referred to the project by prison staff
- Collaborative working with HMP East Sutton Park also proved problematic
 - Plans to recruit a Vision team member to conduct voluntary work in the project were not actioned
 - There were practical difficulties in enabling women to travel

Project Recruitment at HMP Send

- The project was largely based at HMP Send where demand for the project was huge and recruitment was far more straightforward. Staff at HMP proved instrumental in promoting the project to prisoners
- This project has highlighted the need for pro-active marketing of support services within prisons
- The project ensured that recruitment took place mainly by word of mouth. A 'snowball effect' occurred.

Experiences of Working within the Prison Regime

- The project office was located on the resettlement wing and women on the main block, who were mainly women serving short sentences who do not progress to the resettlement wing, were unable to access it
- The peer support element of the project undoubtedly made it easier to do informal networking
- The project worker was offered keys but was resistant to this idea fearing that it would symbolise a distance between herself and beneficiaries
- Additional barriers of working within the prison environment included:
 - Not having an office phone.
 - Sometimes delays occurred in processing applications for Release on Temporary Licence
 - Problems with security issues
 - Beneficiaries were sometimes transferred to other prisons without notice
 - 'Lock up' and other prison regime requirements
 - It was difficult for those women working 9 – 5 to make appointments.
- Encountering such barriers in their work with beneficiaries re-awoke feelings of frustrations which they had felt as prisoners. However, their own experiences of prison regimes and staff created a certain resilience
- Despite these difficulties it is encouraging to note the goodwill of the key members of prison staff.

Integrating with the Prison Service

- Prison staff were keen for the projects' work to be integrated into core resettlement work within the prison

- Offender centred 'outside' projects can become perceived as the main providers of resettlement services, a 'them and us' situation could be created which could impact on the prison service and staff development
- Interestingly, for beneficiaries, the NACRO project was seen as entirely separate from the prison service and this was considered to be one of its key strengths
- This raises interesting issues for debate around the wants and needs of the prison service vs the wants and needs of women for whom they are providing a service.

Designing Project Interventions

- The original plan was to develop and conduct a programme of group work with beneficiaries but the programme was substantially changed to offer one to one support which was tailored to their needs.
- Some of the original material designed for group work was incorporated into the one to one materials and there was a portfolio of ETE information which could be utilised by beneficiaries which was adapted from the Project Worker's own experiences of training in custody so in a sense it was already 'tried and tested'
- The one to one tailored approach proved to be effective.
- The project worked closely with other agencies within the prison (e.g. housing advice, CARATS, Job Centre Plus) thus contributing towards a joined up and holistic approach to the resettlement of women (ex)offenders.
- Project staff also liaised closely with prison education to ensure the effective signposting to existing services.
- The main priority of the 'Going Straight to Work' project was to work with the women as part of the resettlement process and to offer them support through motivational interviewing, advice and guidance.

Learning Point: The breadth and variety of support offered reflects the findings of the 'Moving Mountains' peer research that in order to become 'job ready', there are numerous 'stepping stones' which need to be crossed and also the need for women to receive both emotional and practical support.

Beneficiary Perceptions of Support Offered

- For some women, involvement in the project represented a significant and positive shift in their motivation
- Women interviewed felt let down by the prison service in their attempts at resettlement. Thus one of the key successes of the Going Straight to Work project was the speed of service offered
- The accessibility of project worker and the amount of time willing to devote to beneficiaries was important
- The project filled a gap in resettlement support and made a significant difference to women's lives.

Engaging Employers

- A key event was an '**Employers Information Morning**' in March 2005 to raise awareness amongst employers of the potential of women in prison as employees and to break down the barriers
- Over 100 employers and training and educational services were invited it was therefore disappointing that despite the huge amount of 'groundwork' conducted, only ten organisations/companies attended the event
- Attendees of the event were given a comprehensive information pack which was compiled by Project Workers. The material contained was geared towards awareness raising and challenging misconceptions
- Another significant piece of work around engaging employers was a visit by **Royal Mail** to HMP Send
- **Royal Mail** expressed that in a proposed pilot project, opportunities would be made available for women. Significantly, the prison also expressed a willingness to amend ROTL arrangements to facilitate this work.
- Although it is not possible to ascertain if *attitudes actually changed* as a result of this work it was undoubtedly a vital awareness raising exercise which could lead to real change/opportunities for (ex)offenders in area.

Benefits of Peer Support

- Facilitated increased rapport, openness and a strong interpersonal connection with beneficiaries
- Project Workers were also able to provide positive role models and inspiration for beneficiaries
- Peer Support overcomes the immediate barrier created by prison uniforms creates a climate of openness
- Project Workers' commitment and dedication to their role is immediately proven in the mind of beneficiaries by virtue of their decision to come back to work in the prison environment post release
- Knowledge of prison protocols and how to work effectively within the prison system was also appreciated
- Personal experience of 'trying to get things done' in a prison environment offered a unique insight into how to form effective relationships with staff/colleagues which a non-peer worker would not have
- Beneficiaries felt they were 'heard' by peer workers in a way that doesn't occur in traditional services

- Peer workers may play a key role in motivating beneficiaries, their own experiences of being released from prison meant they were to offer a realistic perspective on the difficulties which beneficiaries may face
- The potential for peer support to have a wider organisational impact in prison was perceived as considerable
- The employment of peers enabled them as workers to experience considerable personal growth and further positive shifts away from the 'ex-offender identity'

Risks of Peer Support

- Some confusion around whether the project was being explicit about the 'peer element' of the work and this could be potentially disempowering for workers
- Some resistance was evident in the behaviour of individual officers towards project staff
- Important issues arose around the 'readiness' of women to re-enter prison establishments. It is vital to safeguard against coming back into prison in a 'professional' role too soon after leaving as a prisoner
- Need to guard against assuming that a shared experience of custody will automatically ensure a sensitive response when working with beneficiaries.

Project Closure and Exit Strategies

- The closure of the 'Going Straight to Work' project certainly left beneficiaries wanting more
- Project Workers also expressed concerns around raising unrealistic hopes of women regarding future support provision
- Project staff were keen to offer some 'cushioning' during the difficult process of exiting the project. The need for the continuation of support was clearly highlighted
- Considerable potential for/actual dissemination and mainstreaming activity has been highlighted, especially via the NACRO Strategic Workplan for Women (ex)Offenders
- The peer service delivery model has been incorporated as one of NACRO's standard methods of service delivery
- Peer research methodology is currently being employed on a piece of research, commissioned by the Prison Service, to map the resettlement needs of Young Women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the development phase, projects need to negotiate closely with prisons to ensure that the set objectives are realistic and ensure prisons have a role in designing these objectives
- Be prepared to work flexibly within the constraints of the prison environment
- Ensure effective handover in terms of prison – knowledge of project
- Negotiate carefully access arrangements with the prison and ensure prison staff at all levels understand the role of the project workers
- Ensure induction and support of project staff is carefully managed and ensure new project staff are ready to (re)-enter prison
- Ensure an 'all-encompassing' support package is in place to support workers in transition from offender to professional worker
- Referral processes need to be established including consideration of the relative merits of self-referral v. prison referral
- Collaborative working between prisons will take time to negotiate and the commitment of all parties to make it work
- Pro-active marketing of services is essential, including word-of-mouth information within the prison
- Where the project office is located will have a significant impact on the ability to work with the target group - negotiate this carefully
- Peer Support processes will enable good networking with the beneficiaries
- One-to-one tailored approach can enable 'stepping stones' to change to be achieved
- Negotiate carefully the place of this support work in the prison's resettlement strategy - there are potential gains and limitations in being identified as a prison service facility
- Working with employers is an essential bridge to enabling re-engagement of beneficiaries to the world of work
- Peer Support should be developed across all prisons as a distinctive part of the provision for prisoners
- The Prison Service need to consider developing a positive and empowering policy to enable ex-offenders to work effectively and in a positive and non-discriminatory atmosphere within prisons

CONTENTS PAGE

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to Women into Work Pilot Projects

2.0 The Evaluation

- 2.1 Overall Aim of Pilot Project Evaluation
- 2.2 Objectives of the Pilot Project Evaluation
- 2.3 Type of Evaluation
- 2.4 Methodology
- 2.5 Interviews

CHAPTER 2 - THE PROJECT

1.0 Project Information/Details

- 1.1 Rationale
- 1.2 Objectives of the Programme
- 1.3 Partners Involved
- 1.4 Proposed Management and Delivery Structure
- 1.5 Target Group
- 1.6 Anticipated Activities

CHAPTER 3 - TARGET GROUP RESULTS

1.0 Beneficiary Profile

- 1.1 Number of Beneficiaries Participating Over the Lifetime of the Project
- 1.2 Ethnicity of Beneficiaries
- 1.3 Disabilities
- 1.4 Background
- 1.5 Qualifications
- 1.6 ETE Outcomes

2.0 Workplan Results

CHAPTER 4 – DECONSTRUCTING THE PROJECT PROCESS

1.0 Staffing and Support

- 1.1 Recruitment, Staffing and Support
- 1.2 Staffing Problems and Changes

2.0 Working with the Prison Service

- 2.1 Barriers to Collaborative Working Methods
- 2.2 Project Recruitment at HMP Send
- 2.3 Experiences of Working within the Prison Regime
- 2.4 Integrating with the Prison Service

3.0 Beneficiary Support

- 3.1 Designing Project Interventions
- 3.2 Summary of Support Offered
- 3.3 Beneficiary Perceptions of Support Offered

4.0 Engaging Employers

5.0 Peer Support

- 5.1 Benefits of Peer Support
- 5.2 Risks of Peer Support
- 5.3 Benefits for Peer Workers

6.0 Project Closure and Exit Strategies

7.0 Links with Women into Work Team and Other Pilot Projects

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

1.0 Summary of Results

2.0 Recommendations

APPENDIX A

Workplan Results Table

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

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 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 with the capacity to mainstream
- To consider current government policies and initiative 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
- To ensure projects selected address the findings of the peer research

As a result of this commissioning process, 5 pilot projects were ultimately commissioned. This report provides an evaluation of one of these 5 pilot projects – ‘Going Straight to Work’.

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 MontiHolland 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

2.2 Objectives of Pilot Project Evaluation

- To provide information on the progress made towards objectives as outlined in tender 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

2.3 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

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

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.

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
 - Terms of Reference
 - Recruitment/publicity material
 - Training materials
 - Documents/diagrams relating to project structure
 - Reports relating to issues/progress so far
 - Any other documents which reflect work conducted

The following information sources were also used:

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

⁴ A type of outcome evaluation that assesses the results or outcomes of a program. This type of evaluation is concerned with a programmes overall effectiveness

2.5 Interviews

In addition, in depth semi structured interviews with key stakeholders were conducted, as detailed below:

Project Role	No. of Interviews	Timepoint
Project Worker (employed for duration of project)	3	June, September 2004 and March 2005
Project Worker (employed November 2004 - May 2005)	1	March 2005
Project Manager	2	June and September 2004
Principal Officer*	1	September 2004
Beneficiaries (x3)	1 per woman	September 2004

*with responsibility for overseeing project at HMP Send

Interview schedules were developed and amended according to the stage of development of the Pilot Projects.

CHAPTER 2 - THE PROJECT

1.0 Project Information/Details

Project Title: Going Straight to Work

Timescales: March 2004 – May 2005

Location: South East and London

Funds allocated to project: £163,016

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

The Social Exclusion Unit's report on reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners cites employment as one of the key factors determining whether or not people re-offend. The WIW peer research findings highlight the specific barriers to employment experienced by women prisoners and identify the need to work with employers to address issues related to negative perceptions of ex-offenders.

The rationale behind this project is that interventions with beneficiaries will enhance their employment prospects and interventions with employers will raise awareness of the benefits of employing women ex-prisoners and promote employment opportunities for the target group.

1.2 Objectives of the Programme

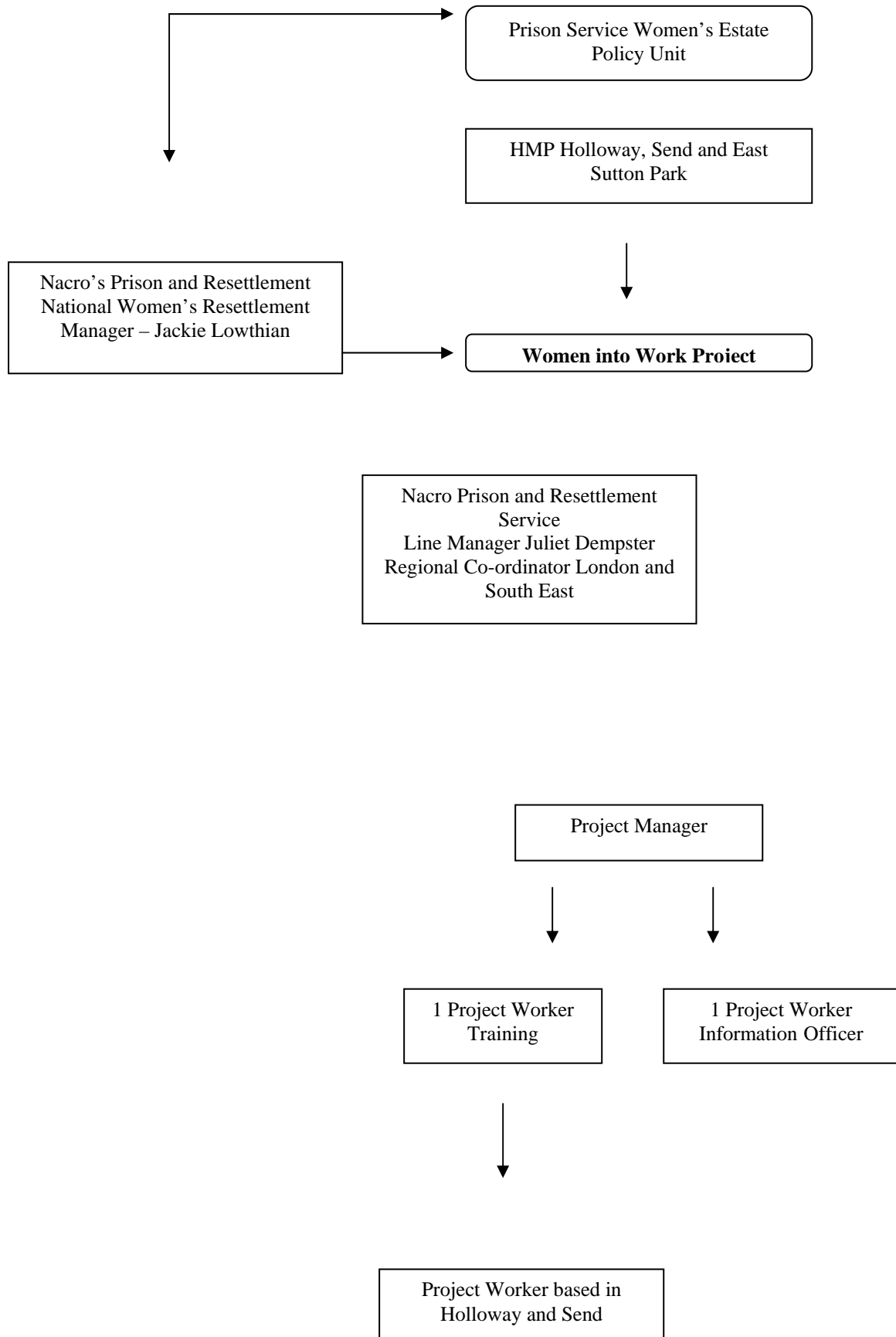
➤ To deliver resettlement support services to a target group that is currently not provided for	➤ To test collaborative working methods between different women's prisons
➤ To design project interventions in collaboration with target group of beneficiaries	➤ To ensure that equality and diversity issues are central to the programme by the design and implementation of Equal Opportunities Plan
➤ To engage with BME groups and obtain advice and guidance on Equality and Diversity	➤ To engage successfully with employers and achieve their participation in the project
➤ To improve levels of self-esteem, confidence, knowledge and skills in the target group	➤ To enable beneficiaries to achieve outcomes in employment, training, learning and voluntary work
➤ To produce packages of information that can be used during and after the project's lifetime to raise awareness among employers of the benefits in recruiting ex-offenders and to provide guidance on recruiting safely	➤ To positively influence employer attitudes to recruiting ex-offenders

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 were thus evaluated, according to stated objectives and tasks.

1.3 Partners involved

Partner Organisation	Main Contact	Roles and responsibilities
HM Prison Service Women's Estate Policy Unit	Chris Dolphin Resettlement Co-ordinator	Advice and consultancy
HMP Holloway	Michael Daniels Head of Resettlement	Facilitating and supporting project activity within the prison
HMP Send	Jonathon French Head of Resettlement	Facilitating and supporting project activity within the prison
HMP East Sutton Park	Rev. Robin Carter, Governor	Facilitating the Vision Team's contribution to the project

1.4 Proposed Management and Delivery Structure



1.5 Target Group

The project will work with individual women prisoners to enhance their skills, knowledge and self-confidence, thus increasing their employability. The focus will be on remand prisoners who are likely to receive a short custodial sentence. All beneficiaries will be unemployed prison leavers, not active in the labour market at the time of joining the project and unemployed for a significant period before being received into custody. We expect 70 beneficiaries to participate in the project over its lifetime. The beneficiaries will be aged 16 to 65 and all will be female. They will be from a range of ethnic groups and backgrounds. We anticipate that the following factors will apply to many of the beneficiaries:

- Homelessness
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Disadvantaged home area
- Low basic skills
- Primary carers/Lone parents
- Poverty and debt

A significant proportion will have no qualifications before engaging with the project.

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

1.6 Anticipated Activities

The project will test new methods of raising awareness among employers of the benefits of recruiting ex-offenders – women trainees will act as ‘ambassadors’ visiting large employers to give presentations and deliver one-

to-one interviews with HR managers. Information and promotional material will be produced to reinforce the messages and indicate the employer helpline service that can be contacted for advice and support. HR materials for *recruiting safely* will be produced that provide guidance to employers on developing the policies and procedures to actively recruit ex-offenders, including job risk assessments, and ensure support is provided in the workplace.

Successful women ex-offenders will contribute to this process, thus demonstrating to employers that change is possible. For the participants, this process will enhance their skills in communication, preparing and delivering presentations and achieving targets. For those women with personal employment goals, the project will deliver increased knowledge of the labour market, awareness of the employability skills sought by employers and will raise self-confidence and self-esteem.

This work will directly benefit women involved in the project and, importantly, will increase employment opportunities for ex-offenders in general. The *recruiting safely* materials produced and access to the helpline service will be for all employers in the region. Events will be held to provide an additional mechanism for promoting the employment of women ex-offenders and marketing the materials and services available to support employers.

Holloway will identify remand prisoners who are likely to receive a short custodial sentence and undertake some resettlement needs assessment. The prisoners will be transferred to Send where intensive work to address resettlement needs will be undertaken. Nacro will train and support the women to undertake labour market research and to conduct PR work with employers to raise awareness of the benefits of employing ex-prisoners.

The Vision Team, a peer led resettlement advice project at HMP East Sutton Park, will provide advice, consultancy and role modelling for women trainees. Women will be trained in the best techniques for declaring convictions and helped to prepare to deal with negative employer attitudes. They will receive

personal job seeker support and preparation for work training. Employers' perceptions of offenders will be challenged and issues such as risk, suitability for work and achievements during custody will be explored.

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		
Employed		
Other* (incl ex-offenders)	55	98
Total	55	98
*Please state	Women prisoners/ex-offenders	

1.2 Ethnicity of Beneficiaries

Ethnic Group	Target Set	No achieved
White-British	35	43
White-Irish	0	4
White-Other	0	7
Mixed-White and Black Caribbean	2	9
Mixed-White and Black African	2	2
Mixed-White and Asian	0	1
Mixed-Other	0	3
Asian or Asian British -Indian	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	1	1
Asian or Asian British - Other	0	1
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	16
Black or Black British – African	5	6
Black or Black British – Other	2	2
Chinese	0	1
Other**	0	2
Not Known	0	0
Totals	55	98
** Please State	Latin American	

1.3 Disabilities

	Target Set	Actual Number Engaged with
Physical disability	1	2
Mental Disability	2	2
Learning Disability	16	6
No Disability	36	88 ⁵
Total	55	98

1.4 Background⁶

Background	Target Set	Actual Number Engaged with
Ex-offenders	55	91
Homeless People	28	32
Refugees	0	1
Asylum seekers	0	1
Drug and alcohol misusers	35	47
16-17 year olds in danger of being excluded from school	0	0
Gypsies and travellers	0	1
People over 50	2	0
Labour market returners	0	0
Those from disadvantaged areas (i.e. the 10% most deprived wards)	24	3
Job seekers with low basic skills	24	9
Lone parents/ care responsibilities	31	26
Others*	0	36
Total	199	247
* Please state	11 Prostitution / 25 Domestic Abuse	

⁵ Although 32 beneficiaries 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

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	11	41
Qualifications below NVQ 1 (or equivalent)	11	5
NVQ1 or equivalent	22	8
NVQ2 or equivalent	5	24
NVQ3 or equivalent	6	17
NVQ4 or equivalent		3
NVQ5 or equivalent	0	0
Other **	0	0
Total	55	98
**Please state		

1.6 ETE Outcomes

What will happen to beneficiaries following their involvement in the project activities?⁷

	Target Set	Actual Number
Full-time employment	29	10
Part-Time employment	7	1
Self-employment	3	3
Voluntary work	14	5
Further education, training	11	6
Government programmes e.g. New Deal	19	3
Unemployment	14	0
Other**	3	0
Not known	0	0
Total	55	28
** Please state	Long term sickness/incapacity	

⁷ It has not been possible to establish all outcomes achieved due to the fact that not all women completed Exit Forms on their departure from the project. It is likely that more outcomes were achieved than can be reported here

2.0 Workplan Results (See Appendix A)

The table attached at Appendix A provides a 'snapshot' of the extent to which original objectives of the project, as outlined in the tender document, have been achieved. The project was required to ground each objective in the Principals of EQUAL (innovation, empowerment, equal opportunities, transnationality, dissemination and mainstreaming). These themes were required to inform and guide and guide all aspects of programme delivery. The theme applicable to each objective is detailed in the 2nd column of the table.

In the next chapter there also follows 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 and how these have been/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 work of the programme 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 Staffing and Support

1.1 Recruitment, Staffing and Support

Two Project Workers (referred to hereafter as 1 and 2) and one Project Manager were initially recruited. The Project Manager was already employed by NACRO on a different project. In line with the ethos of peer support promoted by the Moving Mountains report the Project Workers were recruited from the target group (i.e. were themselves ex-offenders and had recently been released from custody). Posts were advertised in local newspapers and circulated in known networks.

Indeed, one of the workers came into post directly from serving her prison sentence. From the outset patience and understanding regarding this workers' multiple needs was demonstrated by project management. This proved empowering in her difficult journey to re-enter the workplace and also

shows a strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for women (ex)offenders.

'They contacted me every now and again...to explain or enlighten me...they contacted me all through it and discussed with me what dates would be alright for me...they really understood that I'd just come out and there was things that I needed to get sorted out, that was brilliant' **(Project Worker 1)**

'I decided that it [first two weeks in post] was very much going to be a sort of getting to know each other, getting comfortable, because of the background, making sure they were comfortable going into a working environment and just picking up skills that they might have felt have fallen by the wayside' **(Project Manager)**

As the project developed a distinct 'hands on' management style emerged with a strong focus upon the needs of the client group. This also proved empowering for project workers:

'Just because I'm managing a project doesn't mean that I shouldn't be operational, its not all strategic and the further I move away from the client group the less chance I have of understanding their needs and I have to be driven by needs in this project' **(Project Manager)**

Indeed one of the key strengths of this project was the supportive and non hierarchical relationship developed between the Project Manager and Project Workers. In addition to the broad knowledge base of the Project Manager, Project Worker (1) repeatedly expressed her appreciation of the 'all encompassing' nature of the support she received and this had an important impact on the ease with which she was enabled to make the transition from custody to a 'professional' role:

'She's really nice. I get on with her and that's important, you know. And if I've got any problems she's always there. I can go and, you know, talk to her and she's really understanding' **(Project Worker 1)**

'I was conscious of the fact that both had their own issues. Obviously the priority is work, but if there's certain needs I take those into consideration, which I think any employer has to do when somebody has come out of custody' **(Project Manager)**

The perceived gap between Project Worker/Project Manager was perhaps less pronounced than in more traditional project work. Also a two way learning process was facilitated which proved to be of benefit to all concerned:

'I'm not into a hierarchical approach. The only difference between [Project Worker] and I is that I've got a different title and that title represents different responsibilities. It's not how much better a person I am, how much more I can do, how much more able I am... I learn a lot from her because I've not had the experience of custody and other experiences she's had before' **(Project Manager)**

Despite the supportive environment created for Project Workers coming into post, some practical barriers/concerns were encountered during the early stages which produced feelings of uncertainty. These included:

- having no 'fixed' office space. Staff were originally going to be based full time in prison – hence office space within NACRO was not initially planned for. Workers had to 'hot desk' in one of the NACRO offices and work in the office which also housed the NACRO helpline

'It was just really badly planned, so some days we were sort of what you might say evicted from room to room and I was quite annoyed and it was quite draining because I was trying to support two new people joining the company and give them a good impression when nobody really in some ways made us feel very welcome' **(Project Manager 1)**

- a lack of formalised training to assist Project Workers in delivering services:

'I was kind of surprised at that because I thought they couldn't expect us just to go in and you know what I mean, we're supposed to deliver courses to these women and I'm not very confident at that' **(Project Worker 1)**

- a lack of proper induction within the prison setting:

'Induction probably was a bit of a problem because they were told that it wasn't appropriate for them to attend and as a result they never received full training and as a consequence of that there were certain things they weren't aware of' **(Programme Manager)**

1.2 Staffing Problems and Changes

This project experienced significant staffing changes during its lifetime, not just within the project team but also within the prisons on which they were relying to facilitate and support the project. One of the two Project Workers initially employed (Project Worker 2) left after just 2 and half months following a number of irreconcilable issues which arose around appropriate boundaries and security issues. These were compounded by the fact that the worker had previously resided in HMP Send and was known to the staff there:

'She had been in custody in that establishment and it was her attitude towards staff who were still there and there were a few sort of confrontations or exchanges of words....Other things were not really understanding regime and security issues and then just issues in and around relationships towards staff, relationship towards prisoners and the boundaries....they were very weak or non existent in some cases' **(Project Manager)**

The Project Manager took a very proactive approach to ensuring that effective systems were in place to meet the support and supervision needs of staff. However, attempting to manage this difficult scenario effectively whilst still

adhering to an empowering way of working proved incredibly stressful and time consuming:

'Too much of my time was getting sucked into actually, you know, patching up what was happening' **(Project Manager)**

Following a period of intensive support and activity to assist the worker to cope, it was agreed that the worker should be redeployed to a vacant post in a community based NACRO project. Although unfortunate for the individual worker and the project itself, this experience provides useful learning around the potential problems of Project Workers carrying out a professional role in prisons where they had once resided. These issues are discussed in more depth later, in section 5.2.

There was a gap of some months before another worker (Project Worker 3, who had also previously served a custodial sentence) came into post. When she did finally come into post in November 2004 there were then further delays in getting security clearance in Send prison. Thus she spent much of her time working 'behind the scenes, conducting research on behalf of beneficiaries and liaising with potential employers, a key element of the projects work.

These staffing problems had a considerable impact upon the remaining Project Worker (1) who had to pick up an additional caseload of beneficiaries and deal with paperwork which had not been completed. However, it is important to note that the impact of this event was minimised due to the impressive commitment to the project by the remaining worker. Due to her own experiences of attempting to access support whilst in custody, she viewed the job as a 'vocation' and was willing to do 'whatever it took' to get the project back on track. At all times she clearly considered the needs of beneficiaries above her own needs as a worker:

'Yeah, it was definitely more work, but I just felt like ... I just felt bad for the women that didn't get as much help as what they could have, but there was nothing I could have done about it' **(Project Worker 1)**

'I have to sort of discipline her a bit about taking her holidays because she's bunking holidays and coming in on them. So I'm saying, "You must have your holidays!" It's due just to enthusiasm' **(Project Manager)**

Indeed, being a lone worker for a considerable length of time appeared to spur on Project Worker (1) to work even more effectively. Also the Project Managers time was freed up considerably through not having to provide such intensive support to Project Worker (2). Thus the staffing issues appeared to have little impact on the productivity of the project.

The most sudden and unexpected staffing change was the departure of the Project Manager two months prior to the project end date. This impacted upon the support received by Project Workers during the final weeks of the project and was particularly difficult for Project Worker (1) with whom she had developed a strong bond:

'Obviously I really miss her and she was really supportive and brilliant as a manager. She wasn't just a manager she was more like a friend as well. I came to London on my own straight from prison and she's been there for me if I need advice or help...[Project Manager] was like my support really, sort of like a mentor even, you know?' **(Project Worker 1)**

NACRO's Resettlement Manager took over the role of managing the Project Workers in addition to further developing the strategic direction of the project. It proved challenging to gain the trust of Project Workers which is unsurprising bearing in mind the close relationship forged with the previous manager.

Staff changes in HMP Send where the project was primarily based also occurred (a common feature of work in prison according to NACROs experience), leading to a lack of consistency in levels of support for/commitment to the project amongst staff. There were differing levels of understanding about the aims of the project and the potential benefits of offering peer support. When staff changes occurred relationships had to be rebuilt which proved time consuming and disruptive:

'The staff had changed three times at Send so that did hold us back a bit because the member of staff had to know what the project was about and how it was going to be done' **(Project Worker 1)**

'I was a bit annoyed because I thought I've just worked and got all my sort of relationships up to date and with that it wasn't just a case of losing him, [Head of Resettlement] but the Principal Officer who was going to be dealing with us was also moving into a different post so it meant it was a whole new set of relationships to build' **(Project Manager)**

However the excellent reputation which the project soon gained proved helpful in terms of rebuilding relationships. Also, previous experience of working in prisons by the Project Manager meant that such obstacles were not unexpected and a pragmatic approach was adopted which was helpful to the progress of the project:

'It's all about working within their constraints, within the prison, so that was ok, we just had to work around it' **(Project Manager)**

2.0 Working with the Prison Service

2.1 Barriers to Collaborative Working Methods Between Prisons

A key innovation of this project was its intention to 'test out' collaborative working systems between HMP Send, HMP Holloway and HMP East Sutton Park. This proposal was largely driven by the Prison Service. As already mentioned it was hoped that:

- Short term prisoners would be transferred from Holloway to Send where intensive support would be offered to address their resettlement needs
- The VISION Team (a peer led resettlement service at HMP East Sutton Park) would provide advice, consultancy and role modelling for beneficiaries and project workers and would also be involved in working with employers to challenge perceptions of (ex)offenders

However in practice getting this work off the ground proved to be one of the main challenges for the project. The Head of Resettlement at Holloway demonstrated a willingness to support and facilitate the collaborative working, however numerous problems were encountered in working with beneficiaries at Holloway. These included:

- Very fast turnover of remand prisoners in Holloway making it difficult to engage potential beneficiaries
- Lack of knowledge of project among prisoners and staff 'on the ground'
- Lack of direct access to potential beneficiaries and having to rely on ill informed prison staff to recruit beneficiaries
- Remand prisoners (i.e. those who have yet to be convicted) being understandably reluctant to 'action plan' for when they may be convicted

Project Worker (1) felt that collaboration with Holloway would have been more successful, had she been able to speak to potential beneficiaries directly:

'If I could get on the landings and talk to the girls I think it would be more effective, but at the moment I can't do that. I haven't got keys and I don't know if it's ... Because it's high security I don't know, because I'm an ex offender, if that's the reason why. But if I could get down there and talk to the girls ...' **(Project Worker 1)**

She also clearly outlines the problems of women being referred to the project by prison staff as opposed to self referral:

'The officers, they go to the women and tell them, "Oh, can you go up to see the NACRO Project" and some of them don't even want to be there or whatever.....but some of the officers have made them sort of thing....the officers probably don't know what it's for and how to explain it' **(Project Worker 1)**

The issue of self referral vs prison referral was also raised in interview with the Principal Officer at HMP Send. Although he acknowledged the benefits of self referral, he had made it a requirement that all women moving to the resettlement wing had to make an appointment with the NACRO project. Clearly, careful consideration is needed of the relative merits and pitfalls of both approaches.

Negotiations with HMP Holloway staff took place throughout the lifetime of the project in an attempt to address some of these difficult issues. Eventually discussion took place with a worker from a SOVA project working in Holloway (STEP) and some referrals were generated in this way. In addition Project Worker (1) was able to refer women from HMP Send to the STEP project on release.

Despite these minor successes there is no evidence contained within data sources used in this evaluation that any women were *successfully transferred* from HMP Holloway to HMP Send. Also, it appears that HMP Send's criteria and capacity for accepting new prisoners was not considered during project planning stages:

'I had about, say, 6 women that were happy to be transferred and I passed on the details and I don't hear nothing again. But what it is as well – it's Sends criteria. They've got a certain criteria for what girls they will accept' **(Project Worker 1)**

It also appears that considerable time and resources were utilised by Project Workers in trying to develop this work.

'I haven't been in Holloway for about a month, 6 weeks now because it's just been pointless and I've got more work to do and it's just a waste of my time when I could be getting on with other things' **(Project Worker 1)**

As many of the problems encountered in working in Holloway were largely due to 'static' factors, some of these could perhaps have been foreseen prior to the start of the project. The NACRO National Resettlement Manager later reflected that the project team was always sceptical about the extent to which collaborative work within Holloway could be delivered and had the Prison Service not insisted that they test this approach, they may not have chosen to use this model.

Collaborative working with HMP East Sutton Park also proved problematic:

- Plans to recruit a Vision team member to conduct voluntary work on the Going Straight to Work project were not actioned as the potential volunteer became unavailable after finding paid employment. It is unclear as to why a replacement could not be found but it seems possible that other areas of work simply took priority. A change in management at HMP East Sutton Park was also a factor
- There were practical difficulties in enabling women to travel from HMP East Sutton Park to HMP Send (both prisons being in rural areas, thus necessitating extensive travel time).

Indeed the involvement of the Vision team appears to have been limited to attending Steering Committee meetings and also a number of meetings held to attempt to progress the involvement of HMP East Sutton Park.

2.2 Project Recruitment at HMP Send

Due to the problems of collaborative working outlined above, the project was largely based at HMP Send (a women's training prison near Woking) where demand for the project was huge and recruitment was far more straightforward. Staff at HMP Send proved instrumental in promoting the project to prisoners:

'There's one called [name] he's all for it as well, he comes in and sees how we're getting on, he advertises for us and tells the girls about us....' **(Project Worker 1)**

'[Name] is absolutely great, he's really supportive and really wants the project to work, like he's incorporated, he's got a new contract together that like anyone moving has to see NACRO, they have to come through us' **(Project Worker 1)**

This project has highlighted the need for pro-active marketing of support services within prisons. This resonates with the findings of the 'Moving Mountains' peer research. Based on her own experiences Project Worker (1) acknowledged the ineffectiveness of 'passive marketing' i.e. use of posters on notice boards:

'I used to walk down the corridor, you'd just see loads...its just full of so much different information and a lot of it doesn't change, so you just walk by' **(Project Worker 1)**

Thus, the project ensured that recruitment took place mainly by word of mouth. A 'snowball effect' occurred whereby women told their friends about the excellent service they had received from the project. This worked well

with news of the project *'spreading like wild fire'*, not least because of Project Worker (1)'s excellent reputation amongst prisoners.

2.3 Experiences of Working within the Prison Regime

Although work at HMP Send proved considerably easier than at other prisons there were still some practical barriers to consider. One of the main problems was that the project office was located on the resettlement wing and women on the main block were unable to access it. Ironically, those women on the main block were mainly women serving short sentences who do not progress to the resettlement wing, therefore likely to be most in need of support. These were also the women that the project was originally hoping to target.

'Ladies can't walk down here. We've got to rely on officers to say, "Oh, you're needed down in E and F wing to see [Project Worker]." They forget, it doesn't get delivered, can't be bothered possibly. You know, its human nature at times. So that's a difficulty as well' **(Principal Officer)**

Once again, Project Worker (1) showed impressive initiative and commitment in attempting to overcome this significant barrier:

'During the lunch hour what I do is I drag myself over to the main block and reach out to the women there and word's got round. So when I'm taking back any information for the girls, what they've requested, there's always someone that stops me in the corridor, "Can you help me with this? Can you help with that?" **(Project Worker 1)**

The peer support element of the project undoubtedly made it easier to do this informal networking with beneficiaries 'on their own territory'. Indeed the worker may have felt it was her territory too, to a certain extent. The Principal Officer suggested it would be helpful to allow Project Worker(1) to have keys to enable ease of access around the prison when trying to support beneficiaries from all areas. This signifies the trust invested in Project Worker

(1), herself an ex-offender. Interestingly though, Project Worker (1) was resistant to this idea fearing that it would symbolise a distance between herself and beneficiaries:

'I prefer really not to have keys cause I think once we have keys it puts a distance between you, I know I've got to distance myself from the prisoners anyway but the key, being a prisoner it just symbolises a different thing and I prefer not to have keys as well, like if anything did happen I think we'd be first to have the fingers pointed at us as well so I think that, that's in the back of my mind' (Project Worker 1)

Additional barriers of working within the prison environment included:

- Not having an office phone. Phone calls by/on behalf of beneficiaries had to be conducted using prison officers telephones. This raised issues of confidentiality and having to rely on the goodwill (or not!) of Prison Officers reduced the empowering element of the work
- Sometimes delays occurred in processing applications for ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) which meant that women were prevented from attending job interviews/ placements etc
- Problems with security issues (e.g. a pre-arranged open day to a college had to be cancelled due to a prison escape which had recently occurred). Although totally unrelated to the women involved in the visit, security was heightened as a precautionary measure
- Beneficiaries were sometimes transferred to other prisons without notice. This meant that good work which had begun could not be followed through
- 'Lock up' and other prison regime requirements sometimes prevented women from being able to see Project Workers
- It was difficult for those women working 9 – 5 (either inside or outside the prison) to have face to face appointments with Project Workers

Attempts were made to overcome such barriers (e.g. extensive negotiations with prison workers, talking to women through cell hatches etc). However, in

the main these problems were out of the control of project workers and this at times proved frustrating and demoralising:

'This is meant to be a resettlement unit...and the girls are working hard on themselves, we are giving them the information, they're really working hard on it and then you just get a brick wall' **(Project Worker 3)**

Encountering such barriers in their work with beneficiaries re-awoke feelings of frustrations which they had felt as prisoners. However, their own experiences of prison regimes and staff created a certain resilience in coping with such disappointments:

'You know you have to grit your teeth and you have to smile and you do have to humour them [prison staff]. You just think 'okay, fine' **(Project Worker 3)**

This resilience and pragmatism in approach resonated throughout the project:

'There's issues of security that will prevent us performing in our job and we have to just accept that because we have to appreciate what the business is of running a prison and I think [Project Worker 1] understands that and so do I' **(Project Manager)**

Despite these difficulties it is encouraging to note the goodwill and support of the key members of prison staff. This played a huge factor in not only the success of the project but also the positive experiences of individual workers:

'It was very important for me to support [Project Worker] by going to meetings and saying 'NACRO are on board, this is the lady and I expect nothing but 100% support for her, ease of access to see prisoners etc' **(Principal Officer)**

'I will observe [Project Worker 1] and say, "Are you okay today?" It's just having a word. "Well, you know where I am, you know." I leave my office door open because they haven't got a phone in there. I leave the office door open. To me it defines that I trust her' (Principal Officer)

2.4 Integrating with the Prison Service

Considering the success of the NACRO project and the positive way in which it was received by beneficiaries, it is not surprising that prison staff were keen for the project's work to be integrated into core resettlement work within the prison. It is clear that being aligned with a peer support project could have significant benefits for the image of the prison service and the way their services and staff are perceived by women residing there:

'I wanted it to be seen as part of the re-settlement process. I think it's very, very key. The work that they do, that NACRO do, you know, the information for the client group...that communication process with outside agencies I thought was very, very important to what I would consider to be the re-settlement process' (Principal Officer)

'They could see that we agree with each other, but they can also see the humanising aspect of it in that they will know that the NACRO worker may have spent time in a prison and they can see how I as a Prison Officer have accepted that their time was done and they've now moved on' (Principal Officer)

If such integration doesn't occur and innovative, offender centred 'outside' projects become perceived as the main providers of resettlement services, a 'them and us' situation could be created which could impact negatively on the Prison Service and prison staff development:

'There's a danger that if we push a lot of our work into other areas like the NACRO because ladies are more comfortable with it, then we lose

the 'Investors In People' side of our own staff because we're not utilising their skills' (Principal Officer)

Interestingly, for beneficiaries, the NACRO project was seen as entirely separate from the prison service and this was considered to be one of its key strengths: benefits.

Interviewer: You know, you've mentioned that NACRO obviously is separate from the prison. Do you think that that's a good thing – that it is seen as totally separate?

Respondent: *'Yeah, definitely. Because you know that they're not going to, if you say something, they're not going to run back and tell the parole board. They're kind of separate and you know that they're helping you genuinely. They're not helping you because they need to tick some boxes' (Beneficiary)*

'It's a positive thing, yeah. It's a positive thing. I think that's got a lot of impact with the girls, you know, because it's a separate issue from the jail' And because a lot of the girls have got trust issues with prison, it makes NACRO stick out a little bit more' (Beneficiary)

This raises interesting issues for debate around the wants and needs of the prison service vs the wants and needs of women for whom they are providing a service. It also reveals reluctance on the part of the Prison Service to acknowledge this.

3.0 Beneficiary Support

3.1 Designing Project Interventions

The original plan was to develop and conduct a programme of group work with beneficiaries. However despite this plan of action gaining approval at an

early stage of the project, staff changes later on meant that this was impossible to implement:

'When we were speaking to [original Governor] we had the approval to do it as a group exercise so when we were designing the material we designed it as group work and group exercises. But when the new guy came along , he didn't want it done as a group, 'cos another Governor from another prison raised the issue that its going to affect his purposeful activity...and he said "this is not an accredited scheme so we're going to have trouble keeping up with the stats" (Project Manager)

Once this objection was raised the programme was substantially changed to offer largely one to one support to beneficiaries which was tailored to their individual needs. However, where there were several women with similar needs, small workshops were run. Also some external trips (i.e. open days at colleges) were conducted in groups. This offered a peer support element amongst beneficiaries when engaging in potentially daunting activities.

Also, some of the original material designed for group work was incorporated into the one to one materials (i.e. confidence building, interview skills, overcoming barriers/negative attitudes). In addition Project Worker (1) compiled a portfolio of ETE information which could be utilised by beneficiaries. Interestingly, much of this material was adapted from her own experiences of training in custody so in a sense it was already 'tried and tested' with this client group. She was able to select the material which she had found most useful and was able to target the information at exactly the right level. This work was largely undertaken under her own initiative but was also supported by the Project Manager. Ongoing, informal consultation with beneficiaries occurred to ensure their input into the design of interventions.

Due to the hugely diverse needs and differing levels of support needs for women attending the project, the one to one tailored approach proved to be effective.

'You can't define the women and, you know, everybody has very different experiences, very different knowledge, very different needs so a tailored approach is basically in some ways the only approach. It's not just a sort of blanket thing or generic thing that you can just say, "Yeah, all go and do this!" **(Project Manager)**

Beneficiaries certainly valued the individual attention they received. Also due to a lack of training received in delivering group work, the project worker felt much more confident working in this way. From the start the project worked closely with other agencies within the prison (e.g. housing advice, CARATS, Job Centre Plus) thus contributing towards a joined up and holistic approach to the resettlement of women (ex)offenders. One example of this is the way the project worked with the JobCentre Plus worker:

'There's a very good link there, what's happened is that before she didn't maybe have as many referrals as she needed but now there's a nice steady flow of referrals from the Women into Work project to Job Centre Plus, so the lady there, she's very happy with that and its really you know, relationships at both ends' **(Project Manager)**

Where appropriate, project staff also liaised closely with staff in the prison education department to ensure the effective signposting of women to existing services.

3.2 Summary of Support Offered⁸

The main priority of the 'Going Straight to Work' project was to work with the women as part of the resettlement process and to offer them support through motivational interviewing, advice and guidance and confidence building. Activities included:

⁸ Most of the information contained within this section is extracted from the Project Closure Report

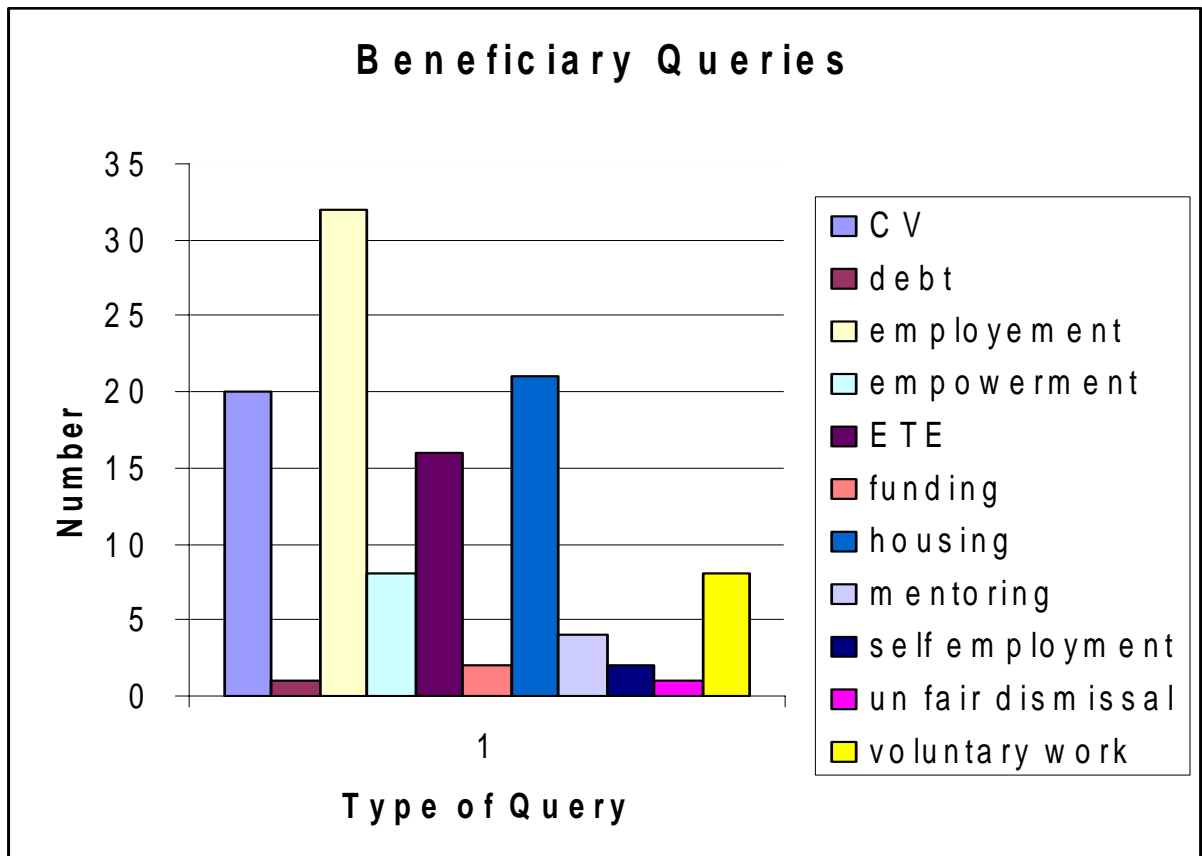
- CV writing
- Application completion and preparation for interviews
- Presentation skills and promotion of transferable skills
- Confidence building and recognising strengths and weakness
- Applying for employment and training
- Disclosure of convictions
- Researching training and job opportunities for the women
- Contacting and challenging employers
- Helping with work and training placements on ROTL's (Release on Temporary Licence)
- Accompanying them to interviews for training, employment or housing
- Recognition and prevention of discrimination of faith, colour, race, sexuality, disability and disadvantage

Beneficiaries requested information and support on the following topics:

- CV preparation
- Interview skills
- Spent convictions
- Disclosure of convictions/covering letters
- Jobs information via newspapers and websites for vacancies in and around Woking/Surrey/opportunities back into their own communities
- Housing information and referrals to hostels
- Confidence building
- College information and assistance enrolling at college
- Driving licence queries and fines (obtaining funding to pay)
- Car insurance information
- Funding availability for a variety of needs
- Agencies in their area that could offer them support
- Type of barriers they may face and ways around them
- Business Plans

- Attending housing appointments, job interviews and exiting the prison
- Opening bank accounts
- Information from and to their community based probation officer.

Below is a graphical representation of the number of general beneficiary queries by topic:



Small workshops were held on: -

- What do employers want?
- Interpersonal skills
- Empowerment
- How to apply for a job
- How to complete a job application form
- Letter writing (examples were given)
- Information on having an interview

- A guide to self development
- Looking at your interests
- Skills they enjoy using
- Task list exercises
- Public speaking

In addition to the above, two Confidence Building courses were run in the prison by an outside trainer.

Women have been placed into many employment and training and education opportunities as a result of the project. These have included

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Treetop Kennels
- Guildford Council
- I.N.T Management Centre
- Woking Mental Health Unit
- The Sandwich Board Woking
- Old Hall Care Home
- Holiday Inn
- Portobello Business Centre
- Enrolled in various colleges upon release . for example hairdressing/book keeping & tax at Guildford and Woking College
- Camden Garden Centre; training and work placements
- Various voluntary work placements, for example Debra Charity, Painshill Park, outside garden work in care home and homes for the elderly, Ripley Parish Council

What is striking here is the wide range of support offered to beneficiaries. This reflects the findings of the 'Moving Mountains' peer research that in order to become 'job ready', there are numerous 'stepping stones' which need to be crossed and also the need for women to receive both emotional and practical support.

3.3 Beneficiary Perceptions of Support Offered

For some women, involvement in the project represented a significant and positive shift in their motivation and hopes for the future:

'I feel like it's definitely benefited me and it's given me reasons to wake up and think, "Right, I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that!"... especially where I'm at now in my state of mind. It's given me that ... That's my thing to aim for. Do you know what I mean?' (Beneficiary)

Women interviewed felt let down by the prison service in their attempts at resettlement. In particular they expressed how requests for information took a long time to materialise. Thus one of the key successes of the Going Straight to Work project was the speed of service offered, this was crucial in terms of maintaining women's motivation to progress:

'They [beneficiaries] just think it's really good because they say they've been trying for months trying to get certain information. They might think, "Oh yeah, I want to do this," but because it's took so long they think, "Oh, I'll just forget it." Then they see me and they've got it. Like if I see them on a Thursday, they'll get it on a Wednesday when I'm back in' (Project Worker 1)

'When your control's taken out of your hands, all your confidence goes... but she brings all that back to me. She enlightens me with opportunities that's out there for me. She makes me feel like it's not the end of the world' (Beneficiary)

In addition, the accessibility of Project Worker and the amount of time willing to devote to beneficiaries was important:

'She's in here so much and even during her lunch hour she's sitting and speaking to people and I've never seen her once say, "Oh no, no. I can't talk to you. I'm busy." She gives time and that's what matters and it's brilliant' (Beneficiary)

It is very clear that the project filled a much needed gap in resettlement support for women and made a real and significant difference to women's lives. The women on the resettlement wing who were able to access the project easily, appreciated the 'open door' policy of the project and the accessibility of staff. Women also commented upon the '*polite, helpful and easy to approach*' manner of project staff. This is reflected by women stating that they wished the project had more staff, and could become a permanent fixture at HMP Send. The numerous other benefits of the project, relating specifically to *peer support* are discussed in Section 5.0.

4.0 Engaging Employers

This aspect of work gained momentum as the project progressed and a significant impact was achieved in a relatively short space of time. A key event was an 'Employers Information Morning' in March 2005. The aim of the event was:

- To raise awareness amongst employers of the potential of women in prison as employees and to break down the barriers of finding and securing employment

During an extensive marketing exercise, over 100 employers and training and educational services were invited to attend the event. It proved challenging for Project Workers to attempt to co-ordinate this event whilst simultaneously conducting intensive 'hands on' work with beneficiaries, particularly as the preparation period for the event coincided with the sudden and unexpected departure of the Project Manager. Although not explicitly stated, in interviews there was a sense that this was a somewhat less pleasurable part of the job compared with beneficiary work. It was therefore disappointing that despite the huge amount of 'groundwork' conducted, only ten organisations/companies attended the event:

'We didn't get the people we wanted to but we have got a few people.... I've been lying in bed thinking 'oh gosh, what about the tables, what height are the tables' and thinking to myself 'oh I've got to ring so and so' so yes, I just can't wait for it to be over with now. It's time consuming what with trying to do everything else and with everything else that has gone on with [Project Manager] my head hasn't been right' (Project Worker 1)

Attendees of the event were given a comprehensive information pack which was compiled by Project Workers. The material contained was geared towards awareness raising and challenging misconceptions of women (ex-offenders) in addition to providing practical information. The packs included:

- Information regarding resettlement regimes in prisons including information about the provision of licence enabling women to work
- Information regarding Women into Work and the pilot project itself
- NACRO publications re: recruiting ex-offenders
- Factsheets re: prisoners and employment
- A personal account of imprisonment and resettlement from a Women into Work employee
- Quotes from employers re: their experiences of employing ex-offenders
- Report from a Trainer who had conducted a self defence course in Send prison about her experiences
- An 'Are you an Offender' quiz, highlighting the fact that most of us break the law at some/many points in our lives!!

Despite low attendance, the event was a success. Of particular note:

- Camden Garden Centre offered two one year work placement opportunities
- Portobello Business Centre expressed interest in running a course on self employment for beneficiaries

- Trinity expressed interest in taking on ten women as a pilot project to see them through from prison to training and employment

During the day awareness was also raised around the crucial link between gaining housing and gaining employment:

- Eaves Housing also expressed an interest in returning to HMP Send to offer further support to women returning to the London area.

Another significant piece of work around engaging employers was a visit by Royal Mail to HMP Send, also in March 2005. The Head of Social Responsibility for Royal Mail visited the prison and met with members of the resettlement team, NACRO staff and 15 prisoners to engage in discussion around the difficulties which women face in finding employment and the negative attitudes which they often experience.

A very lively and productive debate took place where women ex-offenders had a valuable opportunity to contribute directly to the 'social responsibility' agenda of this major employer. Royal Mail expressed that in a proposed pilot project, opportunities would be made available for women, initially in sorting and delivery positions. Significantly, the prison also expressed a willingness to amend ROTL arrangements to facilitate this work.

Finally, as a result of these effective links already established, NACRO were also invited to attend Royal Mail's 'Dining with a Difference' workshop held at Cotton House in Rugby. Here, project staff ran a workshop on employing women ex-offenders which was attended by 22 employees. NACRO's Director of Community and Criminal Justice also attended this event, thus representation at all levels was achieved. This also provided an excellent dissemination opportunity as information packs were once again distributed. More importantly however, as a result of this workshop the Director of Social Responsibility gave his approval to the aforementioned pilot project and asked it to be approved.

Although work around engaging employers did not occur on the scale indicated by the original tender document, it is highly commendable that this productive work with employers was able to take place alongside managing a large beneficiary caseload. NACRO originally requested funding for three Project Workers, one Manager and one Finance post. Costs had to be scaled down and staffing reduced. This obviously had an impact on capacity to deliver. It is also encouraging however, that the work conducted is ongoing (see Section 6.0) and has provided excellent groundwork for a potential Round Two Women into Work project.

Although it is not possible to ascertain if *attitudes actually changed* as a result of this work it was undoubtedly a vital awareness raising exercise which could lead to real change/opportunities for (ex)offenders in this area. Also, crucially, some very exciting outcomes were achieved. Enabling beneficiaries to be involved in this work will have made women realise that they *are* employable and this is likely to prove a hugely significant turning point.

Finally, in addition to the above work, it is interesting to note that Project Worker (1) also adopted a somewhat non-traditional but very effective approach to attempt to engage employers!:

'I spoke to the Manager where I get my hire cars from. He thinks it's a brilliant idea [employing ex-offenders] because I told him they could do three months voluntary unpaid work... when I said voluntary his eyes opened even wider! But I said to him you'd have to pay them after 3 months and take them on in a paid job. So our main thing now is concentrating on employers and tackling that and, you know, trying to spend more time in Guildford and Woking dropping into different places to find out what we can make available for the women' (Project Worker 1)

5.0 Peer Support

5.1 Benefits of Peer Support

Benefits of a 'peer led' approach were perceived as numerous. It facilitated increased rapport, openness and a strong interpersonal connection with beneficiaries:

'If a normal person went in – and I'm not saying I'm not normal – but if someone went in from another agency and whatever, the girls ain't going to interact as much because the person's not going to understand as I understand' **(Project Worker 1)**

Project Workers were also able to provide positive role models and inspiration for beneficiaries:

'The fact that they know that I've been in prison, served time and come out and got a job, that's really empowering for them' **(Project Worker 1)**

'Because she's only just left and she's in this position now and you can see she's doing so well for herself – especially in a women's prison and she's a black woman as well – and for me that has kind of "Well, if you can do it, in that short space of time, then I can do anything!"' **(Beneficiary)**

'I think it's because she's been where I've been. You know, she's served time, but she's done something positive with that and that's what I'm looking for. That's what I've been striving for' **(Beneficiary)**

Peer Support overcomes the immediate barrier created by prison uniforms, the fact that they are not viewed as authority figures again creates a climate of openness and trust:

'The lack of uniform made it easier for prisoners to make that contact during the re-settlement process. That physical barrier wasn't there – you know, black and white. It was far more relaxed. Prisoners were more inclined to go and see [Project Worker]. They could be a bit more open and honest about their circumstances' **(Principal Officer)**

There is also an inherent value for beneficiaries in being able to learn from the direct experience of Project Workers who are able to provide a 'personal reference' for services:

'I wouldn't have known the exact places to go....the hostel that I was in before I came into prison was dreadful....and like [Project Workers] spoken to me and said there's hostels that are ok ...I mean the one that she's in at the moment is just like a flat share' **(Beneficiary)**

Project Workers' commitment and dedication to their role is immediately proven in the mind of beneficiaries by virtue of their decision to come back to work in the prison environment post release. This was perceived as hugely impressive by beneficiaries and undoubtedly contributed to effective relationships. They felt it provided evidence of genuineness which is vital for building trust:

'I mean [Project Worker] seems like an absolutely wonderful person anyway and to have come out of prison and want to come back into the prison environment anyway, that's just like ... that shows complete dedication. You only meet people like that every now and then that are willing to give themselves totally' **(Beneficiary)**

Knowledge of prison processes and protocols and how to work effectively within the prison system was also appreciated:

'She's been through it all already and she must know the red tape...and where you can't go and she knows the ways to get around

things, which maybe someone who hasn't been in prison wouldn't know' **(Beneficiary)**

Personal experience of 'trying to get things done' in a prison environment offered a unique insight into how to form effective relationships with staff/colleagues which a non-peer worker would not have. This means that peer workers can be particularly effective in their negotiations with staff and this will impact upon the effectiveness of service which they are able to deliver:

'I think my experience of being a prisoner helps me because it has given me the patience and it has given me the insight and it has given me that look on my face that says "that's okay not a problem I will come back when it's convenient for you"' and just to you know, try and calm the girl [beneficiary] down as well and say "look you know this is how you've got to play it", you know it's a bit like a game, you have to play a game' **(Project Worker 3)**

Beneficiaries felt they were 'heard' by peer workers in a way that doesn't occur within more traditional services. 'Being heard' is characterised by acknowledging experience and feeling and being prepared to act on what is said:

'She can hear what we're saying. I'm a really educated woman, it's just that I'm not given the chance to prove myself...it's really holding me back and none of the staff are hearing me. Do you understand? You can talk till you're blue in the face in here. They're not hearing you' **(Beneficiary)**

Although peer workers can play a key role in motivating beneficiaries and increasing confidence, their own experiences of being released from prison meant they were able to offer a realistic perspective on the difficulties which beneficiaries may be faced with:

'I don't try and pretend to the girls that it's easy I want them to know that coming out of prison is actually worse than going in because you look through that window through rose tinted glasses. You think to yourself 'I am going to do this when I get out, I am going to do that'...there was no one there to explain to me or warn me that's why I think it is so, so important that you know not just for getting them into work and that but for the whole peer support thing to explain that whilst freedom is your dream the reality is that it's just like another prison but the rules are harder' (Project Worker 3)

Finally, the potential for peer support to have a wider organisational impact within the prison service was perceived as considerable:

'I mean what it also does really is it opens the minds of the institution. I'm more open minded and then I can cascade that down to my managers, my senior officers and the staff on the floor as well. So the knock-on effect hopefully in the next 12 months to 2 years will be a more ... we all embrace the opportunity. We have to take it on. It's the way forward. There's no turning back and this is a stepping stone'

5.2 Risks of Peer Support

One of the key innovations of the 'Going Straight to Work' project was of course the 'peer' support which it offered. A key feature of this approach was about challenging attitudes to women (ex)offenders and also promoting a working environment where women (ex)offenders would feel accepted and valued. Interestingly though the evaluator picked up some confusion around whether the project was being explicit about the 'peer element' of the work and this could be potentially disempowering for workers:

'I think its just nice, I'm just being myself and I tell them [beneficiaries] about it, I mean at first I was a bit confused, its like I was told not to say that I was in prison but I thought that's the whole idea!!... And I think it would have been difficult anyway because I'm going to see people that

knew me anyway so I'm going to look an idiot trying to hide it when they was doing the sentence with me' **(Project Worker 1)**

As with any innovative way of working which goes against the status quo there is the potential for resistance among certain staff members, particularly those who feel they have little influence over decisions made to implement such initiatives. To a small extent this appears to be the case in this instance:

'The resistance here I think was maybe, you know, half a dozen people predominantly on the ground floor with no managerial influence, who expressed a negative view of the ladies who'd been selected to deliver the programme...and the difficulty with that of course is that they network with others. The resistance was probably because some staff had the knowledge that one of them actually had served some time here. That was difficult' **(Principal Officer)**

At times this resentment was evident in the behaviour of individual officers towards project staff:

'One day I wanted to get through the gate and he didn't want to let me through and made me wait, there was three of them stood there and I was just stood at the gate waiting but I don't let them know that they're upsetting me' **(Project Worker 1)**

It should be noted however that this can be an issue for Voluntary/Community Sector workers generally and prison culture can be obstructive to staff perceived as 'outsiders'.

As already mentioned, the problems encountered with one of the original workers (Project Worker 2) has raised important issues around the 'readiness' of women to re-enter prison establishments where they had once resided:

'She was too fresh, she knew some of the ladies here, she knew a lot of the staff her ...you could certainly look maybe 3 or 4 years down the

road if somebody had left and there was a change of staff and there was a change of regime and a change of culture as we all expect, and that would have made it easier....both for their sake as well as the sake of the establishment' **(Principal Officer)**

Coming back into prison in a 'professional' role too soon after leaving as a prisoner may result in a blurring of personal and professional boundaries:

'There were external meetings arranged [by Project Worker]. I don't know whether there were personal issues that were being exorcised] at these meetings or whatever...it just caused like complaints that filtered through to Women Into Work and then back to me, it was completely inappropriate, but the individual couldn't understand where she was wrong' **(Project Manager)**

The experiences of this project also guard against assuming that a shared experience of custody will automatically ensure a sensitive response when working with beneficiaries. The particular character of individuals will always have an impact on ways of working:

'Eventually it got to the stage where there were prisoners from [SEND] who were highlighting to me that her approach was not acceptable and that she was quite condescending and some of the staff also said that she was too aggressive in her approach. They were surprised when they overheard her working with the women' **(Project Manager)**

It is possible however, that this particular staff member was judged more harshly for being an ex-prisoner.

5.3 Benefits for Peer Workers

In addition to the benefits of a 'peer approach' to service delivery for beneficiaries it is also vital to acknowledge the significant benefits of this

approach for the Project Workers themselves. On a practical level, Project Worker (1) was enabled to access the following training:

- NVQ 3 Advice and Guidance at City and Islington College

And a number of SOVA training courses:

- Benefits and Welfare Knowledge
- Delivering to Employers
- Communication skills
- Diversity and Cultural Awareness
- Presentation skills
- Domestic Abuse Awareness
- Peer Research Skills (OCN accredited)

Despite having to overcome a number of hurdles (both personal and professional) during the course of their employment on this project, Project Workers 1 and 3, have reported increased empowerment and self confidence in addition to the practical skills and knowledge they have acquired:

'I can remember like when I'd first go into meetings like with Women Into Work I was like ... I used to be so nervous and not speak a word and now I'll talk' (Project Worker 1)

'It's great when I get comments from girls and their appreciation of what I've done for them and they tell me 'Oh, you've done a brilliant job' and whatever. It's empowering for me and I'm giving them empowerment as well. It's like empowerment bouncing off each other! They're getting empowered and I'm getting empowered and more confident as I go along. All of it is just great' (Project Worker 1)

Importantly, their employment enabled workers to experience considerable personal growth and further positive shifts away from the 'ex-offender identity'. Specifically, 'peer working' stood them in good stead for future employment in different fields.

'I've got the record there still, but I've proved myself to be trusted and whatever because I've been allowed back in an establishment which is the best proof I could have....so I think I'll be more confident going for another job after' **(Project Worker 1)**

On a more personal level Project Worker (3) eloquently outlines how being able to support women (ex)offenders in a professional role has played a crucial role in *her own* resettlement:

'I'm still resettling myself now 3 years later and I think the one thing that has kept me from going over the edge is the focus I've had on my job and the responsibility I felt....getting feedback from the girls was the most amazing high, you feel such a sense of achievement and if you help just one person if you can stop one person from going back, if you can give one person self esteem and the chance of entering a job....that in itself means you have achieved something and that means it [peer support] works . I really do find that by throwing myself into it...I know it sounds madness...but it heals me at the same time' **(Project Worker 3)**

6.0 Project Closure and Exit Strategies

The closure of the 'Going Straight to Work' project certainly left beneficiaries wanting more. It was considered a great shame that a project which was so in demand was closing after a relatively short lifespan. This is, of course a continual concern within the Voluntary/Community sector. Project Workers also expressed concerns around raising unrealistic hopes of women regarding future support provision:

'As a pilot project it just seems to me that you are going in and you are testing this and testing that and you are leading the women into a false sense of security. What happens now? Do we say sorry we can't help you any more?' **(Project Worker 3)**

In terms of individual beneficiaries, project staff were keen to offer some 'cushioning' during the difficult process of exiting the project. Where possible, women were told face to face about the imminent closure of the project, where not, by letter:

'They're just really sorry because they say they need agencies like this in all the prisons' **(Project Worker 1)**

Project Workers also reported that due to the huge workload during the final stages of the project, they did not have as much time as they would have liked to facilitate the closure process for beneficiaries. They also reported a sense of powerlessness regarding the project closure:

'It's difficult because I haven't had chance to get in as much but I've sort of told some of them that it is going to finish soon, you know, it's just how things are at the moment, there's nothing you can do'
(Project Worker 1)

The need for the continuation of support was clearly highlighted:

'This isn't something that should be a pilot project this is something that should be a permanent on-going thing that is now say, spread out to two or three prisons....then roll it out because the one thing that does work and the one thing that is needed is peer support. Support should be there from the day you step into prison not 6 weeks before you come out' **(Project Worker 3)**

During the lifetime of the project, strategic links with key influential individuals and agencies have been forged including:

- Governors and Heads of Resettlement within the Women's Estate
- Resettlement Advisor for Women's Prisons
- Women's Policy Team
- Job Centre Plus

- The Fawcett Society
- Charities Trust

It is encouraging that such strategic links will be maintained and further developed through the NACRO Strategic Workplan for Women (ex)Offenders. The NACRO Resettlement Manager and her team have a very strong commitment to disseminating and mainstreaming the work of 'Going Straight to Work' and continue to promote it's work at national conferences and meetings with numerous organisations within and beyond the Criminal Justice Sector. In addition, Project Worker (3) is still employed by NACRO, her main remit being to continue the work begun with employers on this project, thus filling any gaps in the achievement of objectives outlined in the original tender document. As part of this role and based on work conducted in the 'Going Straight to Work' project, Project Worker (3) has developed two dissemination leaflets:

- One leaflet which Resettlement Teams will give to employers outlining the needs and potential of women (ex)offenders in the workplace
- Another aimed at women (ex)offenders designed to ease anxieties which they may have about re-entering the workplace

Project Worker (3) will be conducting a tour of all prisons in the Women's Estate to distribute the leaflets and raise awareness of the work conducted on the project. She will also be having meetings with all Resettlement Teams.

Project Worker (3) has also forged excellent links and begun development work with Morrison's supermarket chain and the NHS, to promote the recruitment of women (ex)offenders.

Additional developments are as follows:

- the peer service delivery model has been incorporated as one of NACRO's standard methods of service delivery

- peer research methodology is currently being employed on a piece of research, commissioned by the Prison Service, to map the resettlement needs of Young Women.

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 'Going Straight to Work' Pilot has engaged in the following activities with other Pilot Projects:

- participated in Pilot Project meetings
- contributed to a Women into Work promotional video alongside other pilot project staff
- Liaising 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:

- a number of training events (as detailed in earlier section)
- had ongoing support from the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Manager and also the Programme Manager
- had ongoing support from the Finance Manager re: any financial concerns and submitting claims
- participated in Pilot Project meetings
- participated in and presented at the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Group
- Project Manager attended NACRO Women Offenders conference in June 2004 with Women into Work Acting Programme Director and facilitated a workshop on recruitment issues for female ex-offenders.
- Project Worker participated in a visit to Gothenburg in May 2005 to share good practice in the area of peer support with our Swedish partners

- Project Manager attended transnational event in Sheffield in March 2004
- Project Manager attended the Mikiri Transnational Conference in January 2005
- Participation in the Capital Women's Day London conference in March 2005 with Women into Work team

The project had specific objectives related to transnational work. However, in reality there was limited opportunities for project staff to become involved in Transnational Work. This reflects the limitations of funding available for the Pilot Projects and the timescales for delivery. 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 a Project Worker given the valuable opportunity to travel to Gothenburg to share knowledge around peer working with our Swedish partners.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

1.0 Summary of Results

The Going Straight to Work Pilot has effectively responded to the Peer Research recommendations contained within the Moving Mountains report by:

- Offering peer led mentoring support to women (ex)offenders
- Tailoring support according to individual need
- Offering peer led mentoring support to women (ex)offenders
- Acknowledging the ‘stepping stones’ route which needs to be taken into account when working with women recently released from custody
- Engaging employers in understanding the particular needs and potential of women ex-offenders

The project has exceeded all expectations in terms of beneficiary target numbers and this reflects the huge demand for peer support projects and also the excellent reputation which the project gained among both prisoners and staff in HMP Send. Despite the significant staffing problems experienced the project has been kept ‘on track’ thanks to the very high commitment levels of key workers, particularly Project Worker (1) who has demonstrated great passion and flair in her work with beneficiaries.

Useful lessons have been learnt in relation to collaborative working between prisons which can be transferred to future work. It has been extremely encouraging to witness the Prison Service support for the peer approach to service delivery and this will be crucial for the development of future work. The project has clearly outlined the benefits but also some of the potential problems in peer working which again, provide important learning points.

The mainstreaming potential of this project has been highlighted as considerable and it is vital that current momentum is maintained and developed.

2.0 Recommendations

The preceding chapters have set out key successes and barriers to success encountered during the NACRO 'Going Straight to Work' 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.

- In the development phase, projects need to negotiate closely with prisons to ensure that the set objectives are realistic and ensure prisons have a role in designing these objectives
- Formalised service level agreements should be developed between prisons and project of this kind to ensure effective working
- Be prepared to work flexibly within the constraints of the prison environment
- Ensure effective handover in terms of prison – knowledge of project
- Negotiate carefully access arrangements with the prison and ensure prison staff at all levels understand the role of the project workers
- Ensure induction and support of project staff is carefully managed and ensure new project staff are ready to (re)-enter prison
- It needs to be recognised that peer workers are likely to have more intensive support needs than non peer workers. Thus it is necessary to ensure an 'all-encompassing' package is in place to support workers in transition from offender to professional worker
- Referral processes need to be established including consideration of the relative merits of self-referral v. prison referral
- Collaborative working between prisons will take time to negotiate and the commitment of all parties to make it work

- Pro-active marketing of services is essential, including word-of-mouth information within the prison
- Where the project office is located will have a significant impact on the ability to work with the target group - negotiate this carefully
- Peer Support processes will enable good networking with the beneficiaries
- One-to-one tailored approach enabled 'stepping stones' to change to be achieved
- Negotiate carefully the place of this support work in the prison's resettlement strategy - there are potential gains and limitations in being identified as a prison service facility
- Working with employers is an essential bridge to enabling re-engagement of beneficiaries to the world of work
- Peer Support should be developed across all prisons as a distinctive part of the provision for beneficiaries
- The human impact of short term funding (i.e. on peer workers and beneficiaries) needs careful consideration and management
- Peer supporters across pilot project should be encouraged to network with each other, management need to facilitate this process
- The Prison Service need to consider developing a positive and empowering policy to enable ex-offenders to work effectively and in a positive and non-discriminatory atmosphere within prisons
- Prison service has the potential to play a vital role in mainstreaming activity
- Short term prisoners are unlikely to receive the support they need whilst in prison thus community based support avenues need to be explored.

Appendix Two - Workplan results

Objectives	EQUAL Theme	Evidence of Achievement /Barriers to Achievement
<p>1. To deliver resettlement support to a group that is not currently catered for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovation ➤ Empowerment ➤ Equal Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This objective largely concerned with setting up project systems in order to facilitate peer support approaches to resettlement ➤ 3 Project Workers recruited from target group over lifetime of project. Peer support added significant value to service offered ➤ Project workers were offered training opportunities to enhance personal and career development ➤ Significant staffing changes (in both project team and prison) occurred. However impact of these on project activity/productivity was minimal due to the impressive commitment of remaining workers ➤ Project publicity designed and distributed but main promotion of project occurred via 'word of mouth' among prisoners ➤ Prison introduced system whereby all women coming onto the resettlement wing were required to visit the NACRO project. Beneficiary self selection also took place.
<p>2. To test collaborative working methods between 3 women's prisons (HMP Send, HMP Holloway, HMP East Sutton Park)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Significant barriers were encountered in attempting to establish collaborative working systems between prisons. These

		<p>included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very fast turnover of remand prisoners in Holloway ○ Lack of knowledge of project among prisoners and staff 'on the ground' ○ Lack of direct access to potential beneficiaries ○ Remand prisoners (i.e. those who have yet to be convicted) being understandably reluctant to 'action plan' for when they may be convicted ○ Geographical dispersion of prisons making transport issues problematic <p>➤ Important to note that there was a willingness among prison staff to engage in collaborative working but prison systems regimes and systems were the main factor in preventing this</p>
<p>3. To design project interventions in collaboration with target group of beneficiaries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovation ➤ Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programme of group work originally planned was not developed due to prison restrictions and lack of experience in delivering group work on the part of project workers ➤ Tailored one to one support was mainly designed by project staff with some input from beneficiaries ➤ Many resources developed were adapted from Project Workers own experience of training and education in custody thus

		could be 'pitched' at exactly the right level
4. To ensure that equality and diversity issues are central to the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Equal Opportunities ➤ Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Workers demonstrated good knowledge of equal opportunities issues throughout ➤ Were regular attendees of SOVA EODAG meetings – a presentation was also delivered at one of these meetings ➤ Diversity achieved in beneficiary target group in relation to ethnicity, background etc
5. To engage with BME groups and obtain advice and guidance on Equality and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Equal Opportunities ➤ Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No specific evidence of this activity although ongoing debate was held with beneficiaries from BME groups around how to best address their needs
6. To engage successfully with employers and achieve their participation in the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dissemination and Mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Employers Information Morning held in March 2005, attended by 10 employers ➤ The Head of Social Responsibility for Royal Mail visited the prison and met with members of the resettlement team to discuss a potential pilot project involvement employment of (ex)offenders in sorting and delivery positions ➤ Project workers attended Royal Mail's 'Dining with a Difference' event and ran a workshop on employing ex-offenders which was attended by 22 employers ➤ One project worker has been retained by NACRO to continue this valuable work even though the 'Going Straight to Work'

		project has ended
7. To improve levels of self confidence, knowledge and skills in the target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Two Confidence Building Courses were delivered to beneficiaries by an outside trainer. These were rated very highly. ➤ Interviews have also revealed increased levels of confidence, knowledge and motivation among the target group (both beneficiaries and peer workers)
8. To enable beneficiaries to achieve outcomes in employment, training, learning and voluntary work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Empowerment ➤ Equal Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Successful 'hard' outcomes achieved with numerous beneficiaries due to the range of support, counselling, guidance and advice offered ➤ Many beneficiaries disengaged from the project unexpectedly so did not complete exit forms following their involvement thus there is a lack of evidence on some of the outcomes achieved ➤ Some beneficiaries engaged in the project as a 'one off' event so less likely that specific outcomes would be achieved ➤ Soft outcomes also achieved (see above)
9. To produce materials to raise awareness and improve recruitment of ex-offenders	Dissemination and Mainstreaming Innovation Equal Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attendees of the Employers Information Morning were given a comprehensive information pack which was compiled by Project Workers ➤ The material contained was geared towards awareness raising and challenging misconceptions of women (ex-offenders) in addition to providing practical information ➤ These packs were also disseminated at

		Royal Mail's 'Dining with a Difference' event
10. To positively influence employer attitudes to recruiting ex-offenders	Dissemination and Mainstreaming Innovation Equal Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Successful awareness raising activity took place with employers and positive feedback was received from employers ➤ However, it is not possible to ascertain whether attitudes have been positively influenced as no measure was introduced to measure this ➤ Attitudinal change likely to occur over a number of years rather than during a year long pilot project. However, project has provided an excellent 'springboard' for this work



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



Sheffield Hallam University