Women into Work Pilot Project Evaluation Report

Peer Mentoring Support and Resettlement Pilot

SOVA

JUNE 2005

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Executive Summary

Peer Support and Resettlement Pilot – SOVA

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 SOVA run **Peer Support and Resettlement Pilot**.*

This project addressed the limitations of ETE support services through the prison gate and aimed to train women (ex)offenders as Peer Support Workers to deliver a Peer Support Service to 80 female prisoners from HMP Askham Grange and New Hall returning to Yorkshire and Humberside.

The Peer Support and Resettlement 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

- Listening to and validating women's aspirations for the future

The project has successfully engaged 65 beneficiaries from varied backgrounds and with multiple and complex needs. Our evaluation of the project has documented considerable problems in keeping women engaged with service provision. The limited number of tangible outcomes achieved indicates that the project has been about increasing *employability* rather than *employment.* However, this focus is legitimised by the original remit of EQUAL.

Objective 1: Recruit, train and supervise Staff and Peer Support Workers

Recruitment and Staffing Issues

- o The project succeeded in facilitating a recruitment process which recognised the needs of the target group and was experienced as empowering by those who were recruited.

- o It was more difficult than anticipated to obtain approval for the PSW's to work in the prisons and significant delays were experienced in obtaining security clearance. Issues included:

    - changes in prison staff

    - lack of knowledge about the project

    - initially, lack of acknowledgement of a 'common goal' in working with women (ex)offenders

    - perceptions of already established SOVA projects/staff

    - genuine concerns around prison security

- newly appointed PSW's being unable to do direct client work for the first few weeks
  - o In practice the prisons proved to be *'helpful and co-operative'* once a common understanding was reached. Key factors were:
    - establishing the *'the people with the clout'*
    - acknowledging any concerns of the prisons
    - highlighting to prison staff that they were ultimately working towards the same goal

> **Learning Point:** When employing women (ex)offenders, particularly those who may have a history of drugs misuse it appears vital that the impact of unexpected events in their worklife (e.g. delays in being able to enter the prison to conduct work) be recognised and addressed.

Training, Induction and Support Processes

- Two week training and induction process, created team cohesion, team spirit and a safe working environment

- Training Needs Analysis, followed by a range of successful courses

- Induction highlighted the need for an 'all encompassing' support system for women who had recently come out of prison, both practical and underpinning empowerment and self-esteem

- Support Structures included one to one supervision, fortnightly Team Meetings, and informal support between PSW's

- Empowering approach to management, particularly in the latter stages

> **Learning Point**: Informal and motivational training experiences and training with a 'peer element' were highly valued

Objective 2: Setting up a Peer Mentoring Support Service

Impact of wider organisational commitments to Women into Work

- PSW's felt largely unprepared for the environment which they were faced with in WiW meetings and this raises important issues about the speed at which peer workers are able to/expected to 'professionalise'.

- Dress codes and symbols associated with 'the world of work' only served to further alienate and intimidate PSW's. This was undoubtedly an extremely disempowering experience and contrary to expectations of what the job would involve.

- PSW's drew on their experience of previous employment to question the relevance and appropriateness of attending meetings, this represents a reluctance to make the shift in identity from ex-offender to 'professional'

- Despite this, improvements in confidence from some PSWs have been observed during the course of the evaluation.

> **Learning Point**: PSW's need ongoing support in the 'professionalisation process'

The Referral Process

- primary sources of referrals for the project were HMP Askham Grange and HMP Newhall

- difficulties inevitably arose around whether women should refer themselves to the project or whether the Prison should refer on their behalf

- women were referred to the project but then released without the PSW being informed, thus the beneficiary was lost

- significant discrepancies in referral rates between prisons…why?
  - less women are released from Askham Grange than New Hall
  - Askham Grange is an open prison where many women were already making considerable progress with resettlement
  - Project was promoted differently in each prison

- Negative attitude impacting upon enthusiasm for the project
- Rivalry and 'politics' between different agencies
- Drug Intervention Programme referrals had impact in **both** prisons

- rate of referrals seemed to ebb and flow throughout the duration of the project

- significant issues around *maintaining the engagement* of women in the project arose.

- on the whole the referral system has worked well and the co-operation of prison staff in this process has been greatly appreciated.

- the importance of interpersonal contact with women to promote the project was highlighted

- women beneficiaries would have diverse needs necessitating diverse levels of support and this resulted in the PSWs adopting a range of roles in their work

Learning Point: the diversity of these roles highlight the differences between peer support and more traditional support services there being substantial additional roles which PSWs are allowed to develop with the beneficiaries by virtue of the trust placed in them.

Workload of PSWs

- high level of need amongst the beneficiary group often resulted in an intensive workload for PSW's, compounded by the numerous *practical barriers*

- PSW's felt continued pressure to meet the targets set in the original tender

- the expectation of women entering employment, training or education as a result of their involvement in this project was unrealistic for the majority of this target group, properly targeted transition work was the key activity

- attempts to adopt an empowering style of support delivery (i.e. encouraging beneficiaries to do things for themselves) could clash with beneficiary expectations that things would be done *for* them

- major difficulty encountered within this project was the consistently large number of DNA's (DID NOT ATTENDS), undoubtedly stemming from the high level of drug use among the target group and the noticeable gap between drug services in prison and on release

- An important innovation to improve/increase beneficiaries engagement was to liaise closely with beneficiaries families - looking at the whole support network

- providing an end-to-end service for women must mean ensuring that, where appropriate, the PSWs know when to refer onto other agencies thus ensuring that continuity is maintained

Learning Point: the benefits of peer working for the PSW's themselves is evident. They reported increased empowerment, and self confidence in addition to the practical skills and knowledge they have acquired. All experienced considerable personal growth and positive shifts away from the 'ex-offender identity'

Project Closure and Exit Strategies

- All workers found the issue of closure difficult and felt it important that beneficiaries didn't feel as though they were being 'left in the lurch'

- the issue of mainstreaming has not been high on the projects' agenda

- the peer support element was seen as a central achievement in the project as a whole

Learning Point: Working with the 'peer' in Peer Support is an important innovation and has led to the development of a Model for Peer Support, separately documented, and drawn from the peer work in all the projects

Recommendations

- Project management needs to recognise that the 'professionalisation' of workers is an ongoing, rather than immediate process

- It is vital to adopt an holistic approach to supporting PSW's

- If possible PSW's 'external' support systems should be assessed and encouraged when employment commences

- 'Bespoke' training should be offered and Peers workers should be directly involved in designing objectives for training

- Training should incorporate a peer element where possible

- PSW's should be encouraged to communicate and share experiences with peer workers from other projects through informal peer support networks

- Managers and funders of peer support projects need to be aware of the potential risks of this way of working, as well as the benefits, and offer support

- Managers and funders of peer support projects need to acknowledge that the rehabilitation of PSW's is an ongoing process which doesn't necessarily have an endpoint

- Discussions around potential setbacks to peers own rehabilitation (where applicable) needs to be incorporated into initial and ongoing training

- Training in motivational interview techniques could usefully assist PSW's to conduct effective action planning with beneficiaries

- In order to feel an affinity with Women into Work as a whole pilot project staff and particularly PSW's will need sufficient knowledge about wider organisational structures

- PSW's need training to enable them to participate effectively in meetings.

- Consideration should be given to the most effective way of managing the multiple roles which need to be adopted when working with this client group

- Adequate time should be devoted to negotiating with partner agencies re: access to beneficiaries

- In order to assist the referral process project profile needs to be raised at those prisons which act as feeder prisons to participating prisons

- Monthly feedback on referral rates and processes should be offered to prisons

- Clear protocols re: referral procedures should be devised in order to ensure consistency within prison/project working

- PSW's need to liaise effectively with drug workers and DIPs

- Agreed systems to deal with disengagement of beneficiaries should be established

- The concept of PSW's working in conjunction with family support members should be progressed

- The impact which 'over identification' with beneficiaries may have on action planning in peer support projects should be assessed

- Projects may need advice on the role and function of the project Steering Committee

- 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.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to Women into Work Pilot Projects

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

The first phase of Women into Work involved conducting peer research in order to identify barriers to accessing Employment, Training and Education[1] 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 remit of this group was as follows:

- ➢ To determine and implement the application process for potential projects
- ➢ To identify eligibility and criteria for selection
- ➢ To ensure that projects selected meet the key themes of **Equal** (equal opportunities, empowerment, innovation, dissemination and mainstreaming)
- ➢ To ensure that the findings of the Peer Research are utilised appropriately throughout the whole process

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[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 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 the commissioning process, 5 pilot projects were ultimately commissioned. This report provides an evaluation of one of these 5 pilot projects – the SOVA Peer Support and Resettlement Pilot.

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 using a combination of both formative and summative evaluation approaches

2.2 Objectives of Pilot Project Evaluation

➢ To provide information on the progress made towards objectives as outlined in tender bid document (incorporating the five leading principles of EQUAL)[2]

➢ To identify what worked well and what did not work so well (in terms of both what was done (outputs) and how it was done (processes)

➢ To provide information on the extent to which Pilot Projects have met the needs of the target group

➢ To recommend improvements to working practices with women (ex)offenders thus assisting Women into Work in their mainstreaming and dissemination strategy

➢ To assist with planning of future projects

2.3 Type of Evaluation

The evaluation incorporated both formative[3] and summative[4] elements. The formative element employed mainly qualitative methods and involved a process evaluation which enabled an understanding of the critical factors and mechanisms

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[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.

[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 (http://www.synergyaids.com/lacriaids/glossary.asp)

that shaped the delivery and outcomes of the Women Into Work Pilot Projects. The process evaluation is valuable in helping to understand what works, for whom and why.

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

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

2.4 Methodology

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

- ➢ Analysis of project documentation including:
- ➢ Minutes/Notes of meetings
- ➢ Terms of Reference
- ➢ Recruitment/publicity material
- ➢ 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

The above data sources are used within the context of this report in order to map and describe project activity and progress.

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

Project Role	No. of Interviews	Timepoint
Peer Support Worker (1)	2	May 2004, August 2004
Peer Support Worker (2)	2	May 2004, August 2004
Peer Support Worker (3)	2	May 2004, August 2004
Peer Support Worker (4)	1	May 2004
SOVA Regional Director	1	May 2004
Project Manager (1)	1	May 2004
Project Manager (2)	1	April 2005

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

As well as one to one interviews, an 'in action' evaluation workshop was held with project workers during the final weeks of the project. Here, discussion was generated around the PSWs experiences of the project by asking them to take part in various exercises (i.e. continuums, 'four corners', timelines).

CHAPTER 2 - THE PROJECT

1.0   Project Information/Details

Project Title: Peer Support and Resettlement Pilot

Timescales: March 2004 – May 2005

Location: Yorkshire and Humberside

Funds allocated   £149,131
to project:

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

This project is being proposed as a direct response to the needs identified in the WiW peer research to address the limitations of ETE support services in prisons, transition from custody to community and the need to develop effective support within the community through trained Peer Mentors[5]. The WIW Peer Research identified a need for support from women who have been through similar experiences. The pilot will respond to this by involving disadvantaged women who will be trained as Peer Mentors who will provide support in home communities. Over the past 3 months SOVA have been collecting information about resettlement of female prisoners in the UK. In relation to New Hall and Askham Grange there are approximately 1,000 releases each year. 800 are from New Hall and 200 from Askham Grange (90% serving under 12 months and 10% serving over 12 months). Approximately 600 of these women return to Yorkshire and

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[5] Although referred to as Peer Mentors in the original tender, the title of this role was changed to 'Peer Support Worker' once the project commenced. One of the reasons for this was that the term 'Mentor' implies voluntary work and the Peer Support Workers were paid staff

Humberside each year. Additional evidence supporting the rationale for the Project:-

- Nacro's research (several reports available) and evidence from other key agencies – Prison Reform Trust (Wedderburn Report), HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (Thematic Report on Women), Joint HM Inspector of Prisons and Inspector of Probation (Report on Resettlement of Short-term Prisoners)
- Government research and recommendations published by Social Exclusion Unit in report on Reducing Offenders by ex prisoners July 2002:-
  - *41% of female prisoners have not worked in previous 5 years*
  - *60% of female prisoners rated own health bas fair, poor or very poor*
  - *33% were victims of sexual abuse*
  - *33% of women lose their homes when going into custody*
  - *90% of women had at least 1 job placement during sentence but only*
  - *30% thought it would help then pre release*
  - Only 11% of females received help with housing in Prison
- Evidence from National Probation Service:

  "We observe that women's offending can be seen in the context of a range of risk-taking and self-destructive behaviours, which cannot be separated from women's experiences – particularly of disempowerment and abuse" **(Frances Ablitt, Women's Probation Centre London)**

  "Access to community resources is required on an urgent basis: It is necessary to ensure that there are no barriers to accessing community resources by women offenders, especially those released from prison, especially for the two-thirds of women who receive no post-release supervision" **(Eithne Wallis, National Director)'**
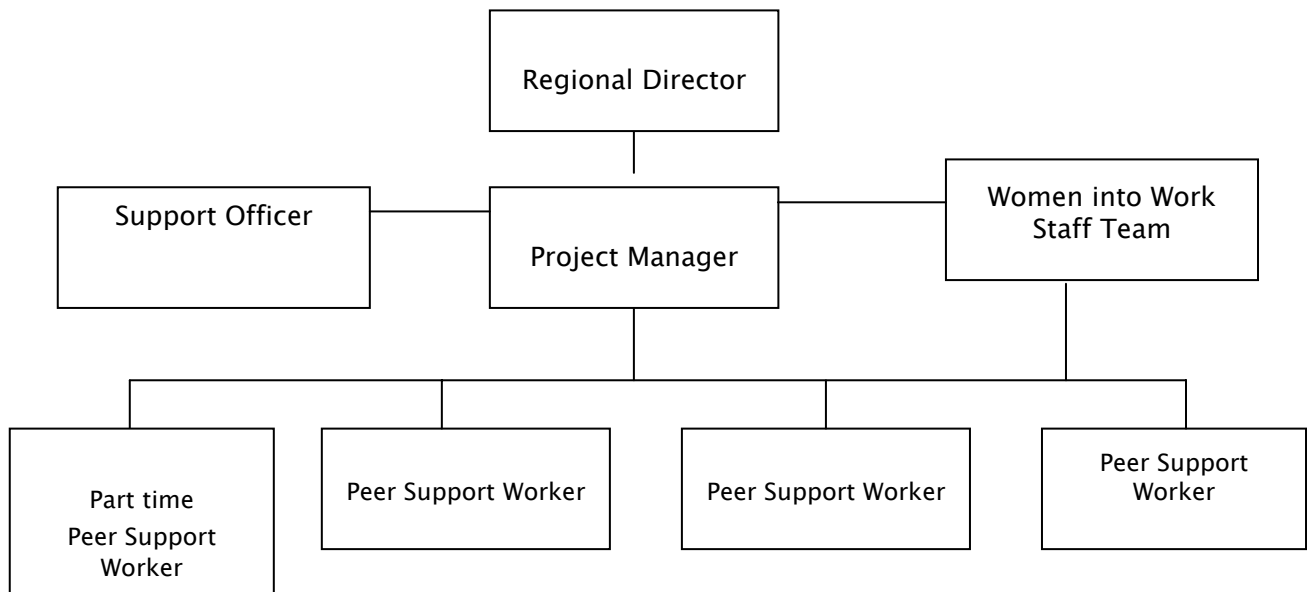
1.2 Objectives of the Programme

Specific objectives of the Mentoring and Support Scheme Pilot will be to:-

➢ Deliver a Peer Mentoring Support Service to 120 female prisoners from HMP Askham Grange and New Hall returning to Yorkshire and Humberside

➢ Recruit, train and supervise 3-6 Peer Mentors to be matched to female prisoners in Askham Grange and New Hall returning to the Yorkshire and Humberside area

➢ Produce a Report evaluating the Peer Mentoring Support Pilot – reporting on progress against overall objectives of WiW Peer Research findings in areas of Empowerment, Motivation and Confidence, Transfer from Custody, Improving ETE Support in custody and Peer Support

1.3 Partners Involved

Partner Organisation	Main Contact	Roles and responsibilities
HMP New Hall	Kathryn Dodds, Deputy Governor	Agreeing Protocol/systems/referrals/ mainstreaming
HMP Askham Grange	Andy Barber, Deputy Governor	Agreeing Protocol/systems/referrals/ mainstreaming
South Yorkshire Probation	Heather Harker Chief Officer	Liaison and mainstreaming in South Yorkshire

1.4 Management/Project Structure

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                          ┌──────────────────┐
                          │ Regional Director │
                          └──────────────────┘
                                   │
┌──────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐
│ Support Officer  │─────│  Project Manager │─────│ Women into Work  │
└──────────────────┘     └──────────────────┘     │   Staff Team     │
                                   │               └──────────────────┘
        ┌──────────┬──────────────┼──────────────┬──────────┐
┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ Part time    │ │ Peer Support │ │ Peer Support │ │ Peer Support │
│ Peer Support │ │ Worker       │ │ Worker       │ │ Worker       │
│ Worker       │ │              │ │              │ │              │
└──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
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1.5 Target Group

The target group is similar to the WiW peer research target group i.e. Female prisoners and ex-offenders. They would benefit from activity to address issues identified from the Peer Research in relation to *"improving self concept",* *"managing the transition from custody", "obtaining accommodation"* and *"mentor support".* The target group of disadvantaged women for the SOVA Mentoring Support & Resettlement Pilot would be:

  ➢ Main Beneficiaries: (total 120)

  Women Prisoners (from HMP New Hall and HMP Askham Grange) who are returning to the Yorkshire and Humberside region will be offered a trained Peer Mentor who can meet them whilst in custody and provide support in implementing their Employment, Training, Education and Resettlement plans in their home communities (via the existing SOVA Yorkshire Prisons Scheme and Barnsley ETE Scheme). This assistance could be practical (e.g. accompanying to interviews or "emotional" when building confidence, motivation and self esteem. (120 women)

  ➢ Secondary Beneficiaries (3-6)

  "Disadvantaged" women (particularly those with a criminal record and who have experienced prison) living in Yorkshire and Humberside will be giving

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the opportunity of being trained (and accredited) and paid as Mentors in Yorkshire and Humberside communities. (3-6 depending on whether they are full or part time)

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 Peer Mentoring, Support and Resettlement pilot will be managed via the existing SOVA Barnsley ETE Scheme. However, it will work closely with the SOVA Yorkshire Prison Scheme. The pilot aims to deliver the following service:

➤ Peer Mentor Support to women in HMP Askham Grange and HMP New Hall who will be released into the Yorkshire and Humberside Region. Where possible Peer Mentors will be matched in prisons by experienced SOVA staff with female prisoners before they are released. They will then assist them to implement their ETE action (designed by SOVA Yorkshire Prisons Scheme any Resettlement Plans) in their home area. Whilst the pilot will be based in Barnsley women across Yorkshire and Humberside will be recruited as Peer Mentors[6]

A Report will be produced at the end of the Pilot indicating the success of these activities in addressing the Peer Research findings.

Priorities for Action will be:-
➤ Recruit and induct suitable staff/mentors
➤ Establish 'operating' protocols with the Prison Service, Probation Service, Job Centre Plus and Women into Work

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[6] Hereafter referred to as Peer Support Worker (PSW)

- ➢ Establish effective referral systems with Prisons
- ➢ Liaise with Women into Work partners (e.g. NACRO) in collating relevant UK information on resettlement
- ➢ Establish an effective monitoring system and criteria for evaluation with Sheffield Hallam University

CHAPTER 3 – TARGET GROUP RESULTS[7]

1.0 Beneficiary Profile

1.1 Number of Beneficiaries Participating Over the Lifetime of the Project

	Target Set	No. achieved
Unemployed or not active in the labour market	0	0
Employed		
Other* (incl ex-offenders)	80	72
Total	**80**	**72**
*Please state	Prisoners	

1.2 Ethnicity of Beneficiaries

Ethnic Group	Target Set	No achieved
White-British	33.3	63
White-Irish	5.3	0
White-Other	1.3	0
Mixed-White and Black Caribbean	7.3	2
Mixed-White and Black African	7.3	1
Mixed-White and Asian	0.6	1
Mixed-Other	0.6	1
Asian or Asian British -Indian	0.6	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0.6	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0.6	0
Asian or Asian British - Other	0.6	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	3
Black or Black British	7.3	0

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[7] The target number for beneficiaries engaged during the lifetime of the project was adjusted from 120 to 80.

Thus in the tables below there are instances where the target set is reported as a figure less than 1 (i.e. 0.6).

This is because the original target was 1 and has been adjusted to reflect the new overall target.

– African		
Black or Black British – Other	0.6	0
Chinese	3.3	0
Other**	0	1
Not Known	2	0
Totals	**80**	**72**
** Please State	Lebanese	

1.3 Disabilities

	Target Set	Actual Number Engaged with
Physical disability	4.6	5
Mental Disability	4.6	2
Learning Disability	11.3	4
No Disability	59.3	40
Professional Support	0	21
Total	**80**	**72**

1.4 Background (NB. Women were able to tick more than one box)

Background	Target Set	Actual Number Engaged with
Ex-offenders	80	63
Homeless People	20	41
Refugees	2.6	1
Asylum seekers	1.3	1
Drug and alcohol misusers	33.3	61
16-17 year olds in danger of being excluded from school	0	0
Gypsies and travellers	2.6	3
People over 50	8	0
Labour market returners	33.3	0
Those from disadvantaged areas (i.e. the 10% most deprived wards)	46.6	18
Job seekers with low basic skills	20	15
Lone parents/ care responsibilities	40	20
Prison leavers/ those under statutory supervision	80	72
Others*	0	45

Total	**386**	**268**
* Please state	20 Prostitution / 25 Domestic Abuse	

1.5 Qualifications

Please estimate how many beneficiaries will have the following qualifications <u>before</u> engaging with the project)

Qualification Level	Target Set	Actual Numbers
No qualification	56	31
Qualifications below NVQ 1 (or equivalent)	14	0
NVQ1 or equivalent	10	13
NVQ2 or equivalent	0	24
NVQ3 or equivalent	0	4
NVQ4 or equivalent	0	0
NVQ5 or equivalent	0	0
Other **		0
Total	**80**	**72**
**Please state		

1.6 ETE Outcomes

What will happen to beneficiaries following their involvement in the project activities?[8]

	Target Set	Actual Number*
Full-time employment	7.3	
Part-Time employment	12.6	
Self-employment	1.3	
Voluntary work	6.6	
Further education, training	10	1
Government programmes e.g. New Deal	12.6	
Unemployment	29.3	

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[8] Although the project had clearly defined targets regarding ETE outcomes, it has not been possible to ascertain the extent to which these were met due to the lack of Exit Forms received from beneficiaries on their departure from the project

Other**		
Not known		
Total	80	
** *Please state*		

2.0   <u>**Workplan Results**</u> (see Appendix A)

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

In the following 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 encountered 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 and Staffing Issues

The project succeeded in facilitating a recruitment process which recognized the needs of the target group and which was experienced as empowering by those who were recruited. All PSWs spoke of their surprise and ultimate delight in discovering that Women into Work were actively looking to recruit women with a criminal record. This in itself promoted a feeling of empowerment and faith that they would not be discriminated against when in post. The impression was that this would be a 'progressive project', radically different from previous work experience.

It was significant for all women that they felt their life experiences could be valued by an organisation such as SOVA rather than used against them. The way in which the posts were so explicitly advertised meant that women did not have the usual anxieties around attending interviews and disclosing their conviction.

Perhaps as a direct result of this, PSWs reported their interviews to be *'not as hard as some of them'*, *'quite informal'*, *'very smiley, very comfortable, very relaxed'* and thus they were able to perform to the best of their abilities.

This is in stark contrast to previous experiences:

> *'(In past interviews) I felt I had the experience because I'd worked in the drugs project full time and I'd got me a lot of training and I did feel confident in meself that I could do it but it was just the point of getting to interviews and being turned down because of me record like'* **(PSW)**

Once offered the job women felt they had the opportunity to reach their full potential, again an opportunity denied them in the past on account of their criminal record.

> *'I felt like I'd won lottery it was just best feeling in world cause I've had jobs in past and I've never like them or enjoyed them but done them like for money...I've always thought well I never went to college I never did owt really. But it felt like all that hard work had been worth it'*

It is significant that all four PSWs have remained constant throughout the lifetime of the project despite some considerable upheaval in personal circumstances at times. Although one PSW went on maternity leave during the project, the part time worker was happy to step into her shoes in a full time capacity for the duration of this, thus reducing the impact on client work.

1.2 Security Clearance Issues

It was more difficult than anticipated to obtain approval for the PSWs to work in the prisons and significant delays were experienced in obtaining security clearance.

> *'I contacted the prisons and they said "Well, we did hear about Women Into Work, but we're talking about women that have got offences, aren't we?" They've been in prison some of these women. "Well, you've got no chance*

with that." And so I had a … It was a case then of going … starting with the person that I'd first contacted and saying, "Well, who do I need to speak to about this moving it on?" and it took longer than I'd hoped. **(Project Manager 1)**

Within interviews several possible explanations for this initial reluctance were flagged up:

In spite of these perceptions, the SOVA Regional Director (who was heavily involved in these negotiations) reported that on reflection it didn't seem to be the case that the prisons had negative attitudes to the concept of peer support. Indeed, she reported that she has experienced more problems in getting volunteers access to other prisons, who don't have a criminal record! Indeed, the prisons proved to be *'helpful and co-operative'* once a common understanding was reached about the objectives of the project and role which the prison was expected to play. Key factors in arriving at this understanding were:

> - establishing the *'the people with the clout'* (i.e. Heads of Learning and Skills and Heads of Resettlement) and addressing them directly
> - acknowledging any concerns of the prisons
> - highlighting to prison staff that they were ultimately working towards the same goal (i.e. the successful rehabilitation of women offenders)

This delay had the knock on effect of the newly appointed PSWs being unable to do direct client work for the first few weeks that they were in post. This proved to be a very de-motivating experience for them. PSWs reported being *'frustrated', 'bored stiff' 'unsure', 'lacking in confidence'* and *'depressed'* at this point. They were advised to use this time constructively by researching the available services in their areas which future clients would be able to access. This proved to be useful 'groundwork' but contradicted the expectation of doing client work from the start. One of the PSWs did voluntary work in the evenings during this time as a way of *'keeping busy'* and *'having contact with people'*. When employing women (ex)offenders, particularly those who may have a history of drugs misuse it appears vital that the impact of unexpected events in the worklife be recognised and addressed.

1.3 Training and Induction Process

As soon as the PSWs came into post, a two week training and induction process was facilitated by Project Manager (1). The training package was loosely adapted from the SOVA training for volunteer mentors and aimed to equip PSWs with the necessary knowledge to undertake their role. Issues covered included:

- ➢ Health and Safety
- ➢ Appropriate/inappropriate working practices
- ➢ Issues around boundaries
- ➢ Confidentiality
- ➢ Differences between peer support/non peer support
- ➢ Working in an empowering way (i.e. supporting women in doing things for themselves)
- ➢ Monitoring and Evaluation requirements

Key features of the training (deemed by Project Manager (1) as being as important as the content) were:

- ➢ the encouragement of team bonding
- ➢ enabling discussion around hopes and fears for the new job

Project Manager (1) felt this to be particularly important due to the geographical dispersion of workers and the desire to establish a system of 'peer support' among workers throughout the lifetime of the project. This was described as being of long term benefit by the PSWs. Indeed a great strength of this project was its team cohesion and team spirit.

> *'It doesn't feel like there's any sort of problem. No one's uncomfortable. Yeah, that was probably the most important thing about the induction'* **(PSW)**

The importance of creating a 'safe' working environment for women was recognised from the beginning by project management and this enabled PSWs to play to their own strengths and obtain support with their weaknesses in their interactions with each other:

> *'We are the jolliest group and we're always laughing and you know so yes we work well together we know I mean if I've got any problems I would go to someone or ask anybody here. I'm not frightened'* **(PSW)**

It was proposed in the original tender document that the training delivered to the PSWs would be OCN accredited. However once they were in post Project Manager (1) decided this would be inappropriate as the necessary portfolio building involved in gaining achieving the OCN qualification would appear overly bureaucratic:

> *'I felt they would spend a lot of time shuffling paper work and it would give them the wrong impression of what this job was going to be'* **(Project Manager 1)**

This flexible approach to staff development is commendable and the validity of this decision is borne out by interviews with the PSWs where they consistently describe a dislike of paperwork and a preference for 'hands on' client work.

1.4 Continued Professional Development of PSWs

The Women into Work staff team conducted a Training Needs Analysis amongst project staff once workers were in post. PSWs have been offered and taken up the opportunity to engage with a number of training courses to enhance both professional and personal development. Most of these courses have been provided by SOVA and the Women into Work team and they include:

➢ Peer Research Methods
➢ Domestic Violence Awareness
➢ Dealing with Challenging behaviour

- ➢ Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- ➢ Learn Direct Computer Training
- ➢ Victim Awareness
- ➢ Report Writing
- ➢ Presentation skills
- ➢ Women and the Criminal Justice System: a gender perspective
- ➢ Cultural Awareness and Diversity

Additional training was offered by the Women into Work staff team (i.e. Communicating with Confidence) but it proved difficult to get PSWs together for this event. Indeed there were ongoing problems with getting staff together for training events and in balancing training with client work.

The Programme Manager for Women into Work delivered a particularly well received piece of 'impromptu' training to help prepare PSWs for delivering a presentation to a meeting. The Programme Manager picked up that they were feeling extremely anxious about this exercise and thus conducted an informal training session. It is significant that the purpose of this was to *'explore how they felt about presentations as opposed to the content of the presentation'*.

This enabled the PSWs to explore their own worries and insecurities about presenting which alleviated much anxiety and enabled them to 'perform' effectively. This minimised the potential for damaging self confidence/esteem. It is significant that this training could be described as *'reactionary'* (i.e. it reacted to a specific piece of work which was causing anxiety) rather than *'anticipatory'* (i.e. anticipating what workers needs may be by conducting a formal training needs analysis). PSWs valued this training very highly:

> *'She must have understood what we were all like, we were so scared...but she made us feel better, she's brilliant she really lifted everybody up and you know it helped a lot'* **(PSW)**

The usefulness of informal and motivational training experiences should not be underestimated particularly as more formal training environments were at times experienced as intimidating by PSWs. Training with a 'peer element' was also particularly highly valued and provided valuable pro-social modelling (i.e. the

challenging behaviour course was run by a man who had himself been in prison and had experienced drink and drugs issues).

Project Manager (1) and one of the PSWs also stated that the following training would have been helpful:

- ➤ motivational interviewing techniques
- ➤ understanding empowerment in working practices
- ➤ guidance on form filling (i.e. client contact sheets)

1.5 Supporting Peer Working

This project has identified specific issues concerned with coming off benefits and entering paid employment and highlighted the specific support needs around this, particularly for women who had recently come out of prison. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that PSWs may potentially have similar needs to the client group that they are working with:

> *'I haven't even got a bed...I'm in a bed sit so I need a bed so I said just so long as I can get one room comfortable I don't mind then starting on the rest cause I'd rather do that anyway but so long as I can get one room settled'* **(PSW)**

The Women into Work team showed a proactive and supportive approach by providing advanced payment to PSWs once they had come off benefits.
Financial constraints made it difficult for the PSWs to purchase clothes appropriate for duties expected of them (e.g. attending meetings, delivering presentations) during the early stages of the project. It proved extremely disempowering for the PSWs to go into a meeting where people were smartly dressed in suits and carrying brief cases and immediately created an obvious gulf between themselves and the 'professionals'.

> *'It's obvious that these are the women that are PSWs because you can spot the way that they're dressed and that is what they feel and its added to because they now have to give a presentation'* **(SOVA Regional Director)**

> *'There was a big problem being more presentable like presentation wise because with me only being released in September and having to start again like trying to build up a decent wardrobe'* **(PSW)**

> *'If you go somewhere and you don't feel comfortable you just don't feel right...but if you've got something on you're a different person'* **(PSW)**

Whilst unfortunate that the PSWs found themselves in this difficult position, it is encouraging that this issue was recognised by the Regional Director, Project Manager (1), and the Women into Work staff team as not simply a practical problem but an important empowerment issue with the potential for reducing self esteem/self worth. The Women into Work Finance Manager explored the possibility of providing the PSWs with a clothing allowance but unfortunately according to the ESF guidance this was not possible. It does however provide a useful learning point for future projects.

The evaluation has revealed that ensuring an 'all encompassing' support system which recognises the reality and totality of women's lives is an essential starting point for a successful peer led project. It is encouraging that Project Managers recognised the potential impact which 'outside' issues could have on PSWs experience of the world of work. It is apparent that managing the support needs of peer workers is likely to be somewhat different and more demanding/challenging than more traditional line management arrangements. The upside of this is the potential for forging a relationship which is rich and deep:

> *'She is like my second mum she's great... if we need 'owt, we can phone her a hundred times a day. She's always there to help us'* **(PSW)**

Interestingly the support was not perceived by all the PSWs in this way. One of the PSWs saw line management support as for only 'practical matters' and sought

support from elsewhere for more complex issues which may have required a more personalised response:

> *'You do need that support from somewhere, but you wouldn't necessarily want it from your line manager'....I'm not saying she's not one of us but she's 'a manager'.... some people just don't have that connection with you and that's fine'* **(PSW)**

Such differing expectations of management may be attributable to differing personalities and support needs, being at different stages in one's own rehabilitation or differences in the perceived 'gap' between oneself and a 'professional' management role.

Project Manager (2) had herself been in prison. There was a general consensus among PSWs that this represented a positive shift in management style and appeared to inject new life and momentum into the project. PSWs felt that she had a significant personal investment in the project thus the distance between PSW and manager was considerably reduced:

> *'She rolls her sleeves up with us and is really passionate whereas before were left to own devices'* **(PSW)**

1.6 Support Structures

Formal one to one supervision was conducted with PSWs every eight weeks, however the support most valued by PSWs was that from fortnightly Team Meetings:

> *'We can sort of feed off each other more...that relationship and support from each other is more useful. Because you can bounce off ideas...the other women know more about prison and drugs than I know'* **(PSW)**

Initially there was going to be one Team Meeting per month but it was decided that fortnightly a minimum requirement bearing in mind the 'newness' of this kind of

work and also the fact that things were changing week by week. The location for meetings was rotated between the PSWs' offices and PSWs were also encouraged to take it in turns to chair the meetings.

The informal support which PSWs gave each other between meetings was also highly valued. Key to this was a recognition and sharing of each others skills and knowledge. Such informal support networks proved extremely empowering and enabled truly effective team working. This is particularly helpful in a project which was geographically dispersed.

> *'We get on brilliant you know we have a right good laugh...we always talk to each other on the phone as well if we need to know anything and it's in their areas or we've just had an idea, we just phone each other and talk'*

1.7 Empowerment in Management

Interview data reveals numerous examples of an empowering approach to management, particularly in the latter stages: This was facilitated by:

> ➢ prioritising the views of PSWs in deciding the direction of work
> ➢ identifying strengths and addressing weaknesses of PSWs
> ➢ acknowledging achievements, no matter how small
> ➢ giving praise in abundance
> ➢ constant communication via e-mail and phone
> ➢ considering the whole person (not just within this role)
> ➢ encouraging future career development

As stated by Project Manager (2):

> *'They've got to explore their own abilities and stuff and it's recognising 'okay I can do that, I can do this' that's when they become empowered'* **(Project Manager 2)**

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It also appears that understanding and empathy of PSWs needs may come more naturally with a peer approach:

'One [PSW] has turned round and said 'you understand where we are coming from' There hasn't been too much sort of conversation about it but one did mention that and from what they have said about the predecessor in terms of how she responded to some things...I think maybe because I have been there I have a little bit more sort of understanding and empathy towards that situation' **(Project Manager 2)**

2.0   Non Client Based Project Activity

It is important to recognise that the PSWs were expected to be involved with a significant amount of 'organisational' activity in addition to actual client work. Such activity included:

- ➢ attendance at Women into Work meetings
- ➢ giving presentations at meetings
- ➢ attendance and input into Women into Work monitoring visits
- ➢ attending additional Women into Work events
- ➢ attendance of project Steering Committees

Such work was at times made difficult due to the confusion from PSWs around the wider structures of Women into Work and the functions and objectives of the different committees and groups with which they were expected to engage, as illustrated in the exchange below:

Have you been to any of the Project Steering Committees?

What's that? I think where we were in Norwich I think I went to one in Norwich

Oh that was the Pilot Project meeting that was something different

Right OK I've been to a couple of meetings (PSW)

The evaluation reveals that these additional activities were largely perceived as a 'necessary evil'. Interview data suggests that that this may be a result of:

➢ lack of knowledge of different committees and links between them
➢ lack of understanding of the 'jargon' used in meetings
➢ lack of understanding of why their presence was required
➢ lack of understanding of what the benefits of attendance may be (i.e. in terms of skills, knowledge, assistance with their future work)
➢ lack of knowledge around what they are expected to contribute
➢ a strong preference for 'hands on' client work.

The PSWs felt largely unprepared for the environment which they were faced with in meetings and this raises important issues about the speed at which peer workers are able to/expected to 'professionalise'.

'They were total strangers to us and they were talking about finance and things that we didn't understand....I didn't have confidence then to say what do you mean what are you talking about?....I think it was daunting at first because we had just come out of lifestyles that we were in and going into meetings with people' **(PSW)**

The impact of being thrust into an intimidating environment such as this with inadequate preparation has the potential to have a hugely detrimental impact on particular women and runs the risk of bringing back very negative and possibly traumatic experiences as is eloquently highlighted in the statement below. The importance of this cannot be overstated:

'I felt like I were at a case conference for myself – you know, when I've been to them when I were in care and saw all these people sat there' **(PSW)**

Dress codes and symbols associated with 'the world of work' only served to further alienate and intimidate PSWs. This was undoubtedly an extremely disempowering experience and contrary to expectations of what the job would involve.

> *'It was all just really daunting and seeing all them big men in suits and all these briefcases that was I think it was everything really and we went into the meeting after everybody else so we were new to meeting yes I think it was everything...'* **(PSW)**

The PSWs did acknowledge that the Project Manager (1) had explained what was likely to happen in the meeting and also that on the whole attendees were supportive but this wasn't sufficient to overcome feelings of difference and inadequacy.

Also, PSWs drew on their experience of previous employment to question the relevance and appropriateness of attending meetings, this represents a reluctance to make the shift in identity from ex-offender to 'professional':

> *'It's like working in a factory and being called to all these big board meetings and you're only a packer.....I really just don't want to go to meetings I just want to work with the women and do what I've got to do I want to do it all properly and that's it'* **(PSW)**

However, it is important to note that for at least two of the PSWs, improvements in confidence when engaging in such work have been observed during the course of the evaluation.

> *'I think I realised that you know people are not looking at me like that any more and you know what I have to say is important so'* **(PSW)**

3.0   The Referral Process

The primary sources of referrals for the project were HMP Askham Grange (an open establishment in North Yorkshire) and HMP Newhall (a closed establishment in West Yorkshire).   Staff from already established SOVA projects within the prisons were designated as the preferred referral route. Prior to the project going 'live' a referral form was developed by Project Manager (1) to be completed on referral and offering project staff basic information about the beneficiary (release date, convictions, name of probation officer, licence). In the very early stages of the project, beneficiaries were referred to Project Manager (1) who would then allocate them to a PSW. This was to ensure an even distribution of workload during the early stages of the project. As the PSWs built up closer relationships with the prison based staff, beneficiaries were referred to them directly.

There appeared to be an issue around whether women should refer themselves to the project or whether the Prison should refer on their behalf, the consensus reached among project staff is reflected in the comments below:

> *'I don't want them to think that they can refer because they think it'd be a good idea for this woman because unless she wants a peer support worker, we can't actually do anything. You can't refer people. They have to want this'* **(Project Manager 1)**

> *'They were choosing women who they thought that you know would be suitable for it...but that's not right because they don't know what kind of women are suitable for it I didn't think anyway because like you know they put a few women on to us and they thought they were brilliant and really ready for this and it's turned out when they've got out they've gone straight back on to drugs and they are not ready so you know I think they shouldn't be picking out women I think it's just if women ask about it then they should have you know they should be able to get to see us'* **(PSW)**

When relying on sources external to the project for referrals, difficulties inevitably arise. The Project Manager recognised that this can be a difficult tension to overcome and needs to be very carefully and tactfully managed.

'It's going to be very hard to go back to those prison workers that I said, "Look, why aren't the referrals coming through?" and say, "In actual fact can you stop referring now." So I do need to be careful how I manage that' **(Project Manager 1)**

The issue of self referral vs prison referral may have particular implications for the workload of PSWs and the likelihood of engaging women in the long term, at times resulting in wasted time and resources:

'I think [PSW] had somebody as well who said they didn't even ask for one...and I had one and when I was sat with her filling forms, she really couldn't be bothered and I always give them the option if they want you to come and meet them, you know, and she said yeah and then when I got up there her boyfriend were there and she really weren't arsed really' **(PSW)**

Another frustrating issue for the PSWs was that on some occasions women were referred to the project but then released without the PSW being informed, thus the beneficiary was lost.

There were significant discrepancies in referral rates between prisons with New Hall referring more women to the project than Askham Grange. The evaluation has revealed several possible reasons for this:

- Considerably less women are released from Askham Grange than New Hall
- Askham Grange is an open prison where many women were already going out to work and making considerable progress with resettlement issues thus the need for help may be minimal (may already have appropriate support mechanisms in place)
- Project was promoted differently in each prison:
  'At Newhall [worker] will sit down and talk to women about the project rather than just handing out a leaflet. There's a power structure at Askham which didn't exist at Newhall' **(PSW)**

- Negative perceptions of prison staff member responsible for referral of beneficiaries impacting upon perceptions of and enthusiasm for the project
- Rivalry and 'politics' between different agencies in Askham Grange which impacted upon the willingness to refer to a new and untried project
- Drug Intervention Programmes having an impact on numbers of referrals from **both** prisons

The rate of referrals seemed to ebb and flow throughout the duration of the project. Project Manager (1) reported that before the project had even begun delivering a service, Newhall had 20 women wanting to be referred. In addition, following a promotional presentation in Askham Grange in early March 2005, 9 women were signed up in one evening. However, in the latter stages of the project, and largely due to the continuation of low referrals from Askham Grange the following organisations were contacted in an attempt to generate more referrals to the project:

- Probation: - Barnsley & Sheffield
- Drug Intervention Programmes: - Doncaster
- Turning point: -Adult drugs & alcohol services, Sheffield/Rotherham

In addition to issues around the *referral* of women, significant issues around *maintaining the engagement* of women in the project arose. These are discussed later. Despite a few problems project staff report that on the whole the referral system has worked well and the co-operation of prison staff in this process has been greatly appreciated. In addition it should be noted that the issue of referrals remained consistently high on the projects' agenda and ways of improving/balancing out referral rates were frequently discussed. Ongoing discussions also took place between the project and prison staff.

4.0   Promoting the Project

In the very early stages of the project one of the PSWs took the initiative to design flyers and posters to promote the project in prisons. This promotional material is

colourfully presented with careful attention paid to language and wording. It states that PSWs are 'women who have been through similar experiences' and that the aim of the project is to *'support you through the adjustments needed from prison to living on the outside'.*

Although such material is a useful promotional tool in itself, the importance of interpersonal contact with women to promote the project has been highlighted. In addition to materials, a promotional event was held at Askham Grange towards the latter part of the project**.** As this is an open prison with many women working during the day, the event was held in the evening in order to maximise attendance and refreshments were also provided. This proved a particularly effective way of recruiting women.
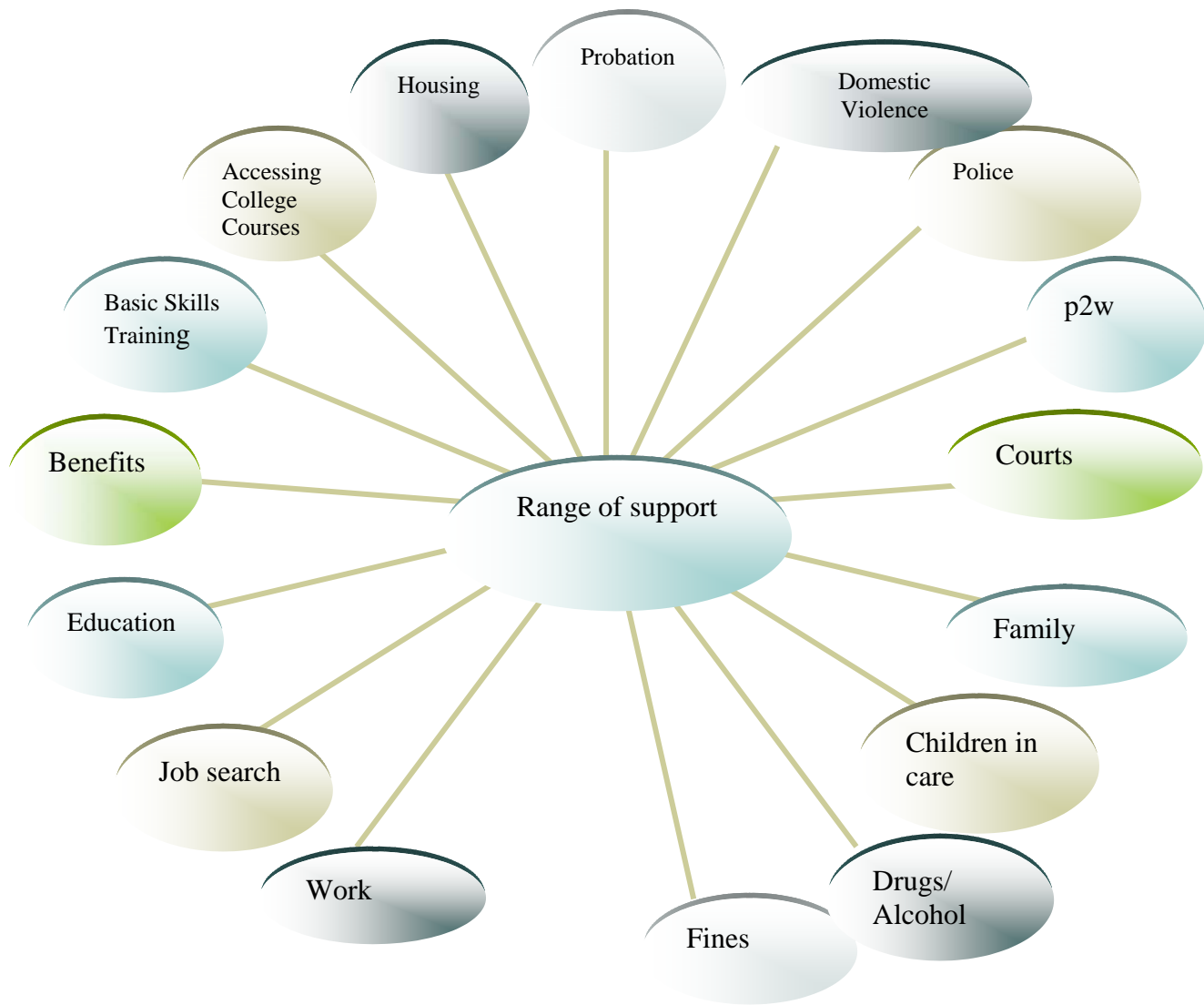
5.0   PROVISION OF BENEFICIARY SUPPORT

5.1 Diversity of Needs

It became apparent very quickly that the women the project would be working with would have diverse needs thus necessitating diverse levels of support.

> *'All women don't always need the same sort of help and support. Everybody needs different....some just need you know a little bit of help because they don't know what to phone who to phone and some women need absolutely everything because they haven't got a clue so they are really scared and timid, you know'* **(PSW)**

Such diverse needs are reflected in the wide range of support delivered during the lifetime of the project. These included help with the following (as defined by Project Manager (2) in the project closure report:

Range of support:
- Probation
- Housing
- Domestic Violence
- Accessing College Courses
- Police
- Basic Skills Training
- p2w
- Benefits
- Courts
- Education
- Family
- Job search
- Children in care
- Work
- Drugs/Alcohol
- Fines

In relation to the above, specific activity involved:

➢ help with form filling

➢ finding out information

➢ signposting/referring to other agencies

➢ accompanying to appointments.

5.2 Roles adopted by PSWs

During the 'in action' evaluation workshop the PSWs were asked to consider the different 'roles' which they had been required to adopt in their work with beneficiaries. The roles described included the following:

- Counsellor
- Personal Assistant
- Dietician
- Drug Worker
- Role Model
- Fashion Advisor
- Job Advisor
- Friend
- Fitness Advisor

- Benefits Advisor
- Mother
- Diplomatic middle (wo)man (e.g. when dealing with families)
- Make up and hair advisor
- Health Advisor
- Mother Figure
- Pissed Off, Stood Up Date
- Health and Safety Officer (Clean needles)

The many roles described reflect very clearly the wide range of support which has been offered to beneficiaries and also the wide range of skills which PSWs have had to develop in order to deliver the service. The diversity of these roles highlight the differences between peer support and more traditional support services as well as the close relationships which PSWs developed with beneficiaries. This is an important finding. It appears that there are substantial additional roles which PSWs are allowed to develop with the beneficiaries by virtue of the trust placed in them. This suggests that a distinctive set of skills and attributes need developing in PSWs so that they can undertake their role adequately. It also offers a benchmark by which traditional mentors can judge their own work and recognise when additional skills sets are needed which may only be provided by the PSWs. Further research is needed but this is encouraging endorsement of the empowering role which PSWs appear to play.

5.3 Workload of PSWs

The high level of need amongst the beneficiary group often resulted in an intensive workload for PSWs:

'It can feel like a lot because you sort of see a client that's released from prison and it's a day job and then there might be something else the next day. Like her in Bradford – I had like 3 full days with her' **(PSW)**

Such workload difficulties were compounded by the numerous *practical barriers* when attempting to support women in their transition from prison to the local community. The inaccessibility of the prisons themselves (bearing in mind that all travelling was conducted on public transport) was the first of these barriers. Also as Askham Grange is an open prison it often proved difficult to meet with women during 9 - 5 hours. The wide geographical spread of women once released into their communities again posed problems and resource issues for the project.

In addition PSWs felt continued pressure to meet the targets set in the original tender:

'They want to have these outcomes and everything and I think well sometimes it's just impossible for us you know you can get women like I said and they are just not ready' ' **(PSW)**

Limitations within the closed prison environment was another practical barrier. In the early stages of the project in Newhall a member of staff was required to sit in on the first meeting between PSW and beneficiary. Also the chairs were fixed to the floor and could not be moved and there were cameras in the room, posing a direct contrast to the supposedly empowering nature of the work! At times this made it difficult to build up a rapport with the client and also to sell the project as being totally different from statutory agency support.

The issue of 'readiness' was key for the beneficiaries of this project. It soon became apparent that the expectation of women entering employment, training or education as a result of their involvement in this project was unrealistic for the majority of this target group. Indeed PSWs report that the very term 'Women into Work' was off putting for many beneficiaries coming out of prison as they felt themselves to be so far from even considering this path.

Properly targeted transition work was the key activity. The majority of support offered involved encouraging women to take their first tentative steps in the 'outside world' e.g. supporting them to attend appointments with various agencies. Such a lack of 'readiness' had implications when attempting to conduct action planning with beneficiaries:

> *'Well, I always take the action plan with me in the first contact...but I never really get to … It's just that they can't see as far ahead as next week or something. Only most of them are always, you know, 'stay off drugs' and 'get kids back'. I don't think I've had one that's been any different really.'* **(PSW)**

> *'I feel pressure to write stuff on contact sheets but often it's just 'went for coffee, went for coffee, went for coffee'.* **(PSW)**

The project attempted to adopt an empowering style of support delivery, this was discussed in the initial training and adhered to throughout the project.

> *'Say a woman needs to send a letter to the housing... instead of doing it for her, equip her with the skills so she can do it herself...my philosophy is, you know, you could have a man and his family you know required to eat, you can provide them with fish all day long or you could provide him with a fishing rod the tools and the know-how to do it so that's how I would apply it'* **(Project Manager 2)**

However this kind of approach was sometimes in contrast to expectations of some beneficiaries who expected the PSWs to act as their 'Personal Assistant', arranging their diaries and being overly prescriptive and directive in their approach. It took considerable negotiating and interpersonal skills on the part of the PSWs to find an acceptable compromise between the two approaches.

5.4 Managing beneficiary disengagement from project

The major difficulty encountered within this project was the consistently large number of DNAs (DID NOT ATTENDS). Women frequently failed to keep appointments, giving very little notice and also disappeared unexpectedly from the project after a promising start.

It came as no surprise to the PSWs that although women may appear highly motivated to change their lifestyle on release when still in prison but:

> *'When they come out it's a different story. They may take the first steps and drop back down'.* **(PSW)**

Such difficulties undoubtedly stemmed from the high level of drug use among the target group and the noticeable gap between drug services in prison and on release. PSWs report that blockers which women need often aren't prescribed pre-release thus increasing the likelihood of women starting using immediately on release thus disengaging with the project. This has been a particular problem for those women who have served very short sentences and have not had the opportunity to address their drug issues before release.

> *'In the beginning when they were just coming out and not turning up at all. Like now they're turning up, but they're either like smashed or they'd ring and say they couldn't get there'* **(PSW)**

This has raised the important issue of whether PSWs can/should engage with women who are clearly still using drugs. It was not clear to PSWs what the project protocol was around this issue:

> *'I can obviously tell that they're under the influence of drugs and I think when I mentioned it when we first did us induction, we were working with these people obviously using drugs…. I'm sure it was said – but I can't remember – that we couldn't work with them'* **(PSW)**

Perhaps because of their own experiences, the PSWs felt strongly that it was neither desirable or possible to exclude women using drugs from the project:

'Just 'cos they're using it don't mean that one day they couldn't still move forward ….. I can understand…when I was using drugs, so, you know, I still got to me appointments…was obviously still using, but I knew I had to get there. Do you know what I mean? And it's alright saying well, you shouldn't work with people if they're under the influence, but it's not practical' **(PSW)**

Again, perhaps because of their own backgrounds and thus an ability to identify with beneficiaries the PSWs had clear ideas about the level of 'chasing' which is appropriate:

'I see for myself they really don't want bothering and I don't think … for the drug agency I worked at, if somebody didn't turn up for an appointment, they sent them a letter and if they didn't reply, they don't reply. To run people down I don't think's a very good idea. If they don't turn up – they don't. If they're using drugs we're the last people they want to see' **(PSW)**

The project team constantly reviewed their work with beneficiaries to seek creative ways in which to offer support. An important innovation taken by the project in order to improve/increase beneficiaries' continued engagement in the project was to liaise closely with beneficiaries' families - looking at the whole support network. Also where possible the PSW visited the woman twice in prison before her release in an attempt to build up some kind of rapport to increase the likelihood of staying engaged upon release. Sometimes a PSW would meet the woman at the prison gates.

It is clear that providing an end-to-end service for women must mean ensuring that, where appropriate, the PSWs know when to refer onto other agencies thus ensuring that continuity is maintained and women are enabled to move through various issues which they may face. For instance links with the Drugs

Interventions Programme may have benefited some women who did not maintain contact.

As a result of brainstorming sessions with PSWs and Project Manager (2) the following ideas were considered to keep beneficiaries engaged but unfortunately not implemented due to the tight timescales of the project:

➢ 'Awareness days for beneficiaries - group sessions to increase awareness and self confidence (e.g. preparing for work, communicating with confidence, holding down a job, confidence building)
➢ Informal coffee mornings
➢ Implementing a 'matching process' between beneficiary and PSWs

It should be noted however that even when all possible steps are taken to maintain engagement in the project, beneficiaries will still disengage, as illustrated by the example below:

'I went to see her about 4 times in New Hall because you know she needed loads of help she were really low she got her children taken off her and everything so we did everything for her we got her an house actually for when she walked out the gates ….I picked her up and we went straight to her house we did loads of work I went to probation with her, we got her into a drugs project for her blockers…and she disappeared and I was in touch with her social worker as well you know liaising with them and the probation officer but nobody knows where she is' **(PSW)**

And finally:

'A thing can't empower people. If they're already empowered enough to be involved in the project then they will make progress. It's really hard for people at the bottom who need more specialised help. It's a long process' **(PSW)**
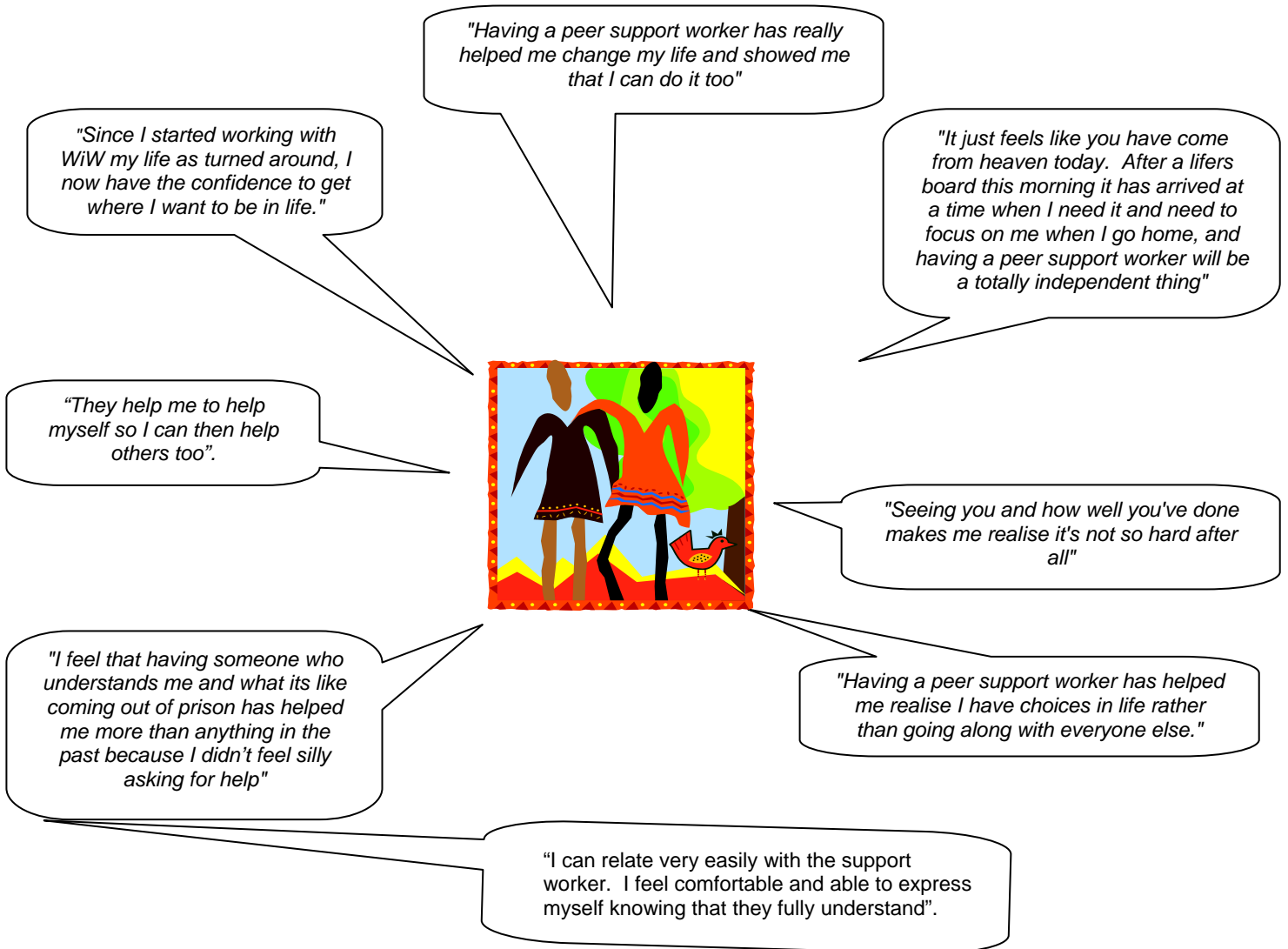
5.5 Snapshot of Successes Exercise

During the 'in action' evaluation workshop, PSWs were asked to identify what they felt were the key successes of the project and the following list was compiled:

- Staying off drugs
- Moving on from abusive relationships
- Sorting out business plan
- Being in a film
- Getting house and children back
- Having counselling
- Going for interviews
- Sorting out benefits
- Enquiring about college courses (even if don't apply)
- Joining a women's football team
- Woman reading bedtime story to her kids
- Asking for help/turning up

5.6 Beneficiary Perceptions of Projects

It is unfortunate that there is such little empirical evidence around beneficiary perceptions of the project. However below is some anecdotal evidence contained within the project closure report:

"Having a peer support worker has really helped me change my life and showed me that I can do it too"

"Since I started working with WiW my life as turned around, I now have the confidence to get where I want to be in life."

"It just feels like you have come from heaven today. After a lifers board this morning it has arrived at a time when I need it and need to focus on me when I go home, and having a peer support worker will be a totally independent thing"

"They help me to help myself so I can then help others too".

"Seeing you and how well you've done makes me realise it's not so hard after all"

"I feel that having someone who understands me and what its like coming out of prison has helped me more than anything in the past because I didn't feel silly asking for help"

"Having a peer support worker has helped me realise I have choices in life rather than going along with everyone else."

"I can relate very easily with the support worker. I feel comfortable and able to express myself knowing that they fully understand".

5.7 Benefits for PSWs

In addition to the benefits of peer working for beneficiaries it is also vital to acknowledge the significant benefits of this way of working for PSWs themselves. Despite numerous hurdles (both personal and professional) which PSWs have had to overcome during the course of their employment on this project, all have reported increased empowerment, and self confidence in addition to the practical skills and knowledge they have acquired. Importantly, all experienced considerable personal growth and positive shifts away from the 'ex-offender identity'.

> *'Having this job has given me loads of confidence, increased choices and made me see what I can get out of life… I've realised I can juggle my life, work and family'*

> *'My confidence has grown so much, having money, paying my own rent….it's brought me to a different stage in life…..I've never stuck with a job before'*

> *'I feel like a totally different person now… I mean I've come to this house and I love it here…it's brilliant just to… when I look back and like a few years ago I've been off drugs now for like for 3 years so'*

> *'They [prison staff] are not putting us on a different level to them they are not looking at us as like ex junkies, ex prisoners or you know so you don't feel like people are looking at you like that…. that was quite uncomfortable at first you know when I went to meetings and things like that that were really scary because I was like oh maybe they know that I have been in prison what are they going to think'*

5.8 Project Closure and Exit Strategies

The short term nature of this pilot project and the vulnerability of the client group necessitated careful thought being given to closure. All beneficiaries were sent a letter from their PSW informing them of the imminent closure of the project and

where possible, those who were still engaged with the project were signposted to other agencies. All workers found the issue of closure difficult and felt it important that beneficiaries didn't feel as though they were being 'left in the lurch'. This was particularly the case where PSWs had built up close relationships with the women they were working with.

Project Manager (2) also organised a 'Celebration of Achievement' event for beneficiaries in order to bring a sense of closure to the project. However, unfortunately this event was not attended. The numerous successes of the PSWs were celebrated at a special lunch.

There was some confusion regarding closure or continuation of project beyond May 2005. Acting on information given by the Women into Work team that there was a strong possibility that employment opportunities would continue after May, Project Manager (1) wrongly informed staff that the project would be continuing beyond this time. When PSWs were then told that this was not the case, it proved very difficult for them to feel motivated and there was a sense of *'deflation'* within the project. On a more practical note, one PSW went out and bought a computer based on the promise of future steady income. Once clarified that the project would not be continuing, all staff were issued with redundancy notices and privy to future employment opportunities with SOVA.

It is interesting when asked about 'exit strategies', staff talked in terms of staff members and beneficiaries rather than the 'entity' of the project itself. This indicates that the issue of mainstreaming has not been high on the projects' agenda and little attention paid to the possibility of transferring policy lessons, securing funding to continue particular activities or ensuring that mainstream agencies adapt and reproduce examples of good practice. Although this evaluation report will provide an impetus for this work, it was hoped when projects were commissioned that mainstreaming and dissemination would be a key feature of all projects.

6.0   Peer Support

6.1 Working with the 'peer' in Peer Support

One of the key innovations of the SOVA project was of course the 'peer' support which it offered - part of this was about challenging attitudes to women (ex)offenders.   Interestingly though the evaluator picked up a good deal of confusion around whether the project was being explicit about the 'peer element'. This left them unsure about whether or not their background had been disclosed to different workers:

> 'Its been kept low key that we are ex offenders you know what I mean you start getting a bit confused if you know what I mean cause on the leaflet it says PSWs. 'I do get confused me sometimes because I'm very open and I'd rather people say how it is rather than go round houses because. I don't know sometimes ...and then nowts sort of said about owt' **(PSW)**

Interviewer:
> 'So some of the staff at Newhall aren't aware? Oh right! Okay.'

PSW:
> 'Which has been on purpose because they think it's going to cause uproar.'

Interviewer:
> 'But the governor must know because you perhaps get the approval to go in and everything.'

PSW:
> 'But I guess people at the bottom just locking and unlocking doors don't.'

At some point during the project there was some debate between the PSWs and the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Manager around whether the 'PSWs were happy to be identified as 'Peers' in their job title and the offer to change was made. However, all wanted to keep the original name.

PSWs could draw on their own experience of non peer support when considering the benefits which it may bring for clients:

'I've dealt with professionals at the addiction unit and I'm not saying they don't care but its like.....somebody who's read it out of a book, do you know what I mean? There is some of them who did help me I suppose in practical ways but.....basically they didn't have a clue' **(PSW)**

One of the more obvious benefits is increased rapport and identification with clients and enabling clients to remain in their comfort zone whilst still getting the help that they need.

'It is easier for them to talk to me because they know that I'm not going to judge them in any way they can use words you know just like swear words that they can just relax and talk to me....I know what they are going through and I know what's like to be locked behind a door at night and not have nowhere to live and to be on drugs and so on'

This can of course be a negative too as an over-identification with the individual beneficiary can reduce the potential for effecting change. Careful support is needed fore any PSW to manage the tensions she may face.

6.2 Overcoming Resistances to Peer Support Work

Some resistance to the peer support approach was encountered by prison staff.

'When we went to New all other day and there's a guy there whose governors security resettlement and he just I don't know I didn't like him and he came across like he didn't like us.....he was just basically looking down his nose and he was asking one of the women how long she'd been out of prison and she said two year and he's like 'only two year', you know what I mean, his attitude was a bit off putting' **(PSWs)**

'He was just directly asking, "So how long were you in prison for?" without any sort of, "Look, would you mind if I ask?" He was talking the way screws talk to cons' **(PSW)**

This was certainly the exception rather than the rule. However, it is still important to recognise the very negative impact which this may have on workers and the potential for negative past experiences to resurface:

> *'You're in **that place** again...its hard to sort of... I haven't said owt to anybody but I felt like you're in that place, you're in that police station and....you're going in there prepared for the job, you want to do it, you want to do it properly you know what I mean and somebody like that you know...'*

Staff on the whole reacted very positively to the PSWs, treating them as 'normal' colleagues and with respect. For one PSW the experiences of re-visiting prisons where she had once resided was overwhelmingly positive, offering an opportunity to reaffirm feelings of self acceptance and show to others how far she had come:

> *'Yes it's brilliant I love going back into prison. Even some of the officers recognise me and say 'ooh you used to be in here' but then they ask me what I'm doing and have I got a job and I just tell them you know I'm not ashamed of what I used to be because now I've put it to good use'* **(PSW)**

It also proved particularly empowering for PSWs to be viewed as 'equals' by prison staff:

> *'We've had a lot of support off everybody and you know like New Hall or Askham Grange they just phone us and people talk to us about their problems at New Hall and everything so'* **(PSW)**

6.3 Benefits of a peer approach

Benefits of a peer approach were perceived as numerous. It facilitated increased honesty and openness from beneficiaries about their feelings about accessing/needing help (especially those who have gone back to drugs). This is particularly important when considering the high number of DNAs on the project.

'They can just be more open and say like if they're using, you know, or like the girl the other day who said she just weren't ready kind of thing. They couldn't say that to their probation officer I suppose' **(PSW)**

PSWs also showed increased empathy and understanding when women drop out of the project. This PSW is talking about the effect which this can have on a personal level:

'It's just feeling sad for them at times....losing their kids and just stuff like that, just feeling a sadness really … knowing what it feels like. You know, they've been and they can't do it, when they could if they wanted to, but they don't feel they can, you know' **(PSW)**

'So anyway when I went on holiday I got a phone call off her because I wrote to her and you know I said you don't have to worry about anything if you don't want to see me anymore that's fine and so she phoned me and she says well I got back on gear and she says and I felt a bit daft and I said to her there's no need to feel like that I said do you know how many times it took me before I were alright and she went well that's what I thought she says that's why I've rung you'
(PSW)

Increased trust and being perceived by beneficiaries as less judgemental, led to a more open and honest relationship:

'I think people lie to people that they think are going to judge them or look down on them and then you've only got a relationship that's based on a falseness. The women that I've been to see have been pretty relaxed with me, about as relaxed as I was with them' **(PSW)**

Such openness was particularly helpful when considering the issue of women not turning up to appointments:

'I think we've got that relationship where she can say that rather than just have me on and have me stood and waiting in places and me trailing up there and her being in bed' **(PSW)**

The PSWs were able to develop positive role models for their beneficiaries:

'I don't always tell them when I first meet them but they know we are PSWs so they usually ask me have you been in New Hall or have you been in Askham Grange and then yes I don't lie to them I tell them the truth and I tell them what I had to go through to get where I am now and I think that helps because you know they can see well yes it can be done' **(PSW)**

6.4 Risks to the peer support role

In addition to the benefits of Peer Support it is also necessary to consider the risks:

'One of the PSWs spoke to me this week and she said she went to meet a beneficiary in her home...and when she got there was loads of people in the house smoking all sorts of drugs' **(Project Manager 2)**

Although this in no way posed any threat to her own drugs rehabilitation, this understandably proved a difficult situation for this PSW. Fortunately, she was able to talk through the issues which it raised with a member of staff from a drugs project at which the PSW used to volunteer.

There is also a need to consider the potential cost to the individual of expecting them to reveal their background in order to promote a particular way of working:

'I went in to ask them you know New Hall prison and as a formality I was requested or I was asked to by my line manager to inform them of my previous background...that's not a problem although I don't want to keep doing it, you know. Do I have to keep disclosing, you know? I'm in there within a role and when I spoke to the Head of Resettlement I think he was

more interested in how prison affected me or what I got out of the prison or what the prison service did for me than my role as project manager on this project' **(Project Manager 2)**

Following another episode of disclosing background when at Askham Grange to promote the project the feelings were particularly evident:

'Then I came out I felt completely deflated ...I did I burst into tears I felt sick to the stomach...And I think what it was it was like talking about it all again to try and sort of promote a project' **(PSW)**

Thus the 'professionalisation' of PSWs has shown to be a complex issue and the following questions have been raised during the course of this evaluation:

> - Do PSWs see themselves as professionals?
> - How long does this process take?
> - At what stage do PSWs *accept themselves* as professionals or (ex)offenders?
> - At what stage do PSWs become *accepted by others* as professionals
> - At what point does it become unacceptable to expect women to disclose their backgrounds in their professional role?

There also exists a danger that Peer Support Workers will be seen as a homogenous group with shared experiences and shared knowledge. For example, one PSW reported that she was at times expected to be aware of prison terminology when in fact, she has never been in prison and often found it confusing. Also because PSWs can often identify very strongly with the experiences and feelings of beneficiaries there is a possibility that they may be less pro-active with action planning and the 'chasing' of beneficiaries who drop out of project work than non-peers. Indeed in interviews PSWs frequently talk about their reticence in these activities because they 'know how they would have felt' if someone was asking them to do something they didn't want to do.

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 SOVA Peer Support and Resettlement Pilot has engaged in the following activities with other Pilot Projects:

- Participated in Pilot Project meetings
- Liaising and networking at other Women into Work events including the conference and transnational events (see below)
- Conducted a visit to the CAST Pilot Project and witnessed the work of the Network Club
- Shared paperwork (e.g. client forms etc) with the Norwich Pilot Project

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

- a number of training events (as detailed in earlier section)
- met with the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Manager during induction
- had ongoing support from the above 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
- presented to and developed materials for Swedish partners about the SOVA pilot project
- PSWs participated in a visit to Gothenburg to share good practice in the area of peer support with our Swedish partners (all staff were invited to participate in this event)
- Project Manager (1) attended transnational event in Sheffield in March 2004
- Project Manager attended the Mikiri Transnational Conference in January 2005

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

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

However, it is very encouraging that one PSW took up the valuable opportunity to travel to Gothenburg to share knowledge around peer working with the Swedish partners.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

1.0   Summary of Results

The Peer Support and Resettlement Pilot has effectively responded to the Peer Research recommendations contained within the Moving Mountains report by:

- ➢ Offering peer led 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
- ➢ Listening to and validating women's aspirations for the future

The project has successfully engaged 72 beneficiaries from varied backgrounds and with multiple and complex needs. Four Peer Support Workers have delivered support services ranging from the provision of intensive emotional support through to assisting women with various practical issues e.g. finding accommodation. A striking feature has been the wide range of support offered and the multiple and diverse skills which the PSWs have drawn upon/developed in order to deliver such services. It is commendable that PSWs have shown a passion and commitment to their roles and have themselves overcome numerous personal difficulties in order to deliver an effective service to their peers.   However, the evaluation has revealed that re-entering the 'world of work' involves a considerable identity and lifestyle shift and ongoing support and training is necessary in order to facilitate the 'professionalisation' process.

This evaluation of the project has documented considerable problems in keeping women engaged with service provision. However, a benefit of the peer approach is that beneficiaries have been able to be honest and open about reasons for this without fear of being judged and this can provide useful lessons for further work. The project has also highlighted the need for further debate around the extent to which women should be 'chased' once leaving projects and how continued drug use may/may not affect support given. The project has also demonstrated the

potential for working in conjunction with family networks where possible in order to increase the effectiveness of support given.

The evaluation identified useful learning points for peer working in the prison environment including the need for extensive negotiations and protocols prior to projects going live and the need for ongoing debate around referral procedures.

The limited number of tangible outcomes achieved indicates that the project has been about increasing *employability* rather than *employment.* However, this focus is legitimised by the original remit of EQUAL. Due to the lack of direct beneficiary outcomes and feedback this evaluation has largely focussed upon process issues and issues around peer working. The considerable benefits of peer working have been clearly documented however this evaluation has also raised awareness of the potential risks of this approach which can usefully inform future peer working projects.

2.0   Recommendations

The preceding chapters have set out key successes and barriers to success encountered during the SOVA Peer Support and Resettlement Pilot. 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.

➢ PSWs may be undertaking a dramatic *lifestyle and identity shift* when entering the workplace. Project management needs to recognise that the 'professionalisation' of workers is an ongoing, rather than immediate process which requires ongoing recognition and support

- It is vital to adopt an holistic approach to supporting PSWs which addresses 'life' as well as work issues
- If possible PSWs' 'external' support systems should be assessed and encouraged when employment commences (e.g. their engagement with other agencies, family support etc) in order to minimise risks to well being
- Where possible 'bespoke' training should be offered which responds directly to the ongoing needs of the job
- Peer workers should be directly involved in designing objectives for any training undertaken and non traditional training methods should be encouraged
- Training should incorporate a peer element where possible (i.e. employing trainers from the target group) and allow for discussion of shared experiences
- PSWs should be encouraged to communicate and share experiences with peer workers from other projects
- Informal peer support networks among workers are effective and should be encouraged. The skills which can be developed as a result of supporting colleagues should be acknowledged
- Managers and funders of peer support projects need to be aware of the potential risks of this way of working, as well as the benefits, and offer support accordingly
- Managers and funders of peer support projects need to acknowledge that the rehabilitation of PSWs is an ongoing process which doesn't necessarily have an endpoint. Support systems which accommodate these needs should be developed
- Discussions around potential setbacks to peers' own rehabilitation (where applicable) needs to be incorporated into initial and ongoing training
- Training in motivational interview techniques could usefully assist PSWs to conduct effective action planning with beneficiaries
- In order to feel an affinity with Women into Work as a whole pilot project staff and particularly PSWs will need sufficient knowledge about wider organisational structures and how their project fits into these
- PSWs need training to enable them to participate effectively in meetings. Here, consideration should be given to fears based on past experiences and expectations of their role in meetings

- Ongoing consideration should be given to the most effective way of managing the multiple roles which need to be adopted when working with this client group
- Adequate time should be devoted to negotiating with partner agencies re: access to beneficiaries. This needs to happen before projects 'go live'
- In order to assist the referral process project profile needs to be raised at those prisons which act as feeder prisons to participating prisons (i.e. in this project, HMP Buckley Hall and also Low Newton)
- Monthly feedback on referral rates and processes should be offered to prisons
- Clear protocols re: referral procedures should be devised in order to ensure consistency within prison/project working. Clear guidelines should be developed around self vs prison referral, matching PSW with beneficiary etc.
- PSWs to liaise with drug workers and DIPs where relevant before beneficiaries are released
- Future discussion of stakeholders re: ways of keeping women engaged (sub group)
- Agreed systems for how to deal with disengagement of beneficiaries should be established
- The concept of PSWs working in conjunction with family support members should be progressed and perhaps formalised
- The impact which 'over identification' with beneficiaries may have on action planning in peer support projects should be assessed
- Projects may need advice on the role and function of the project Steering Committee. Steering Committees could have a potentially useful role in mainstreaming and dissemination strategies
- Prison service in regions 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.

Objective	Tasks	Equal Theme	Evidence of Achievement	Barriers to Achievement
1 **Recruit, train and supervise Staff and Peer Mentors to be matched in Askham Grange, New Hall to female prisoners returning to the Yorkshire and Humberside area**	1.1. Recruit Co-ordinator, Admin Assistant and 3-6 Support Workers (Mentors)		• Project Co-ordinator recruited via internal advert. Came into post ?? • 4 Peer Support Workers (3 full time, 1 part time) recruited via advert in Yorkshire Post. All in post by 5th April 2005	• Project Co-ordinator (1) left post in December 2004 to pursue a different career path • Replaced by Project Co-ordinator (2) in January 2005 • One of the full time PSW's went on maternity leave Nov 2004 • Part time PSW increased her hours to cover work during this period
	1.2. Process Criminal Record and security checks		• CRB checks completed. PSW's stated that not having to worry about criminal records was extremely empowering • Security clearance for work in prisons achieved following negotiation	• Problems initially with achieving security clearance for PSW's to work in prisons • Client work began later than anticipated as a result

	1.2. Deliver training to Mentors and process OCN accreditation		• Induction and initial training conducted during first 2 weeks of employment • Further training opportunities were offered throughout lifetime of project.	• OCN accreditation not achieved. Felt by Co-ordinator to be inappropriate for this group • Ongoing training at times difficult to facilitate due to geographical spread and the demands of client work.
	1.3 Provide supervision and support to peer Mentors		• Team meeting held every 2 weeks • Individual formal supervision given every 8 weeks • Support delivered which considered the 'totality' of PSW's lives • Informal support networks between PSW's proved particularly effective.	• Geographical dispersion of staff team at times meant that face to face support was difficult. • PSW's had different support needs which had to be carefully managed/balanced

2. . Deliver a Peer Mentoring Support Service to 120 female prisoners from HMP Askham Grange and New Hall returning to Yorkshire and Humberside	2.1 Agree referral procedures, monitoring systems and protocol for Peer Mentors within Prisons		• Successful negotiations with prison staff re: referral issues • Referral form developed and referral system set up with already established SOVA project staff	• Some differences in opinion around self vs prison referral • Some confusion around disclosure of own background when working in prisons amongst PSW's
	2.2 Accept referrals via SOVA Yorkshire Prison Scheme, Prisons and self referrals		• Good co-operation of prison staff • Xx women referred from HMP Askham Grange and xx women from HMP New Hall	• Considerable discrepancies in referral rates from HMP Askham Grange and HMP New Hall
	2.3 Match with trained peer mentors		• Effective relationships built up with prison staff and PSW's • Prison worker made subjective decision re: who women should be referred to	• No formal matching process occurred

	2.4 Promote peer mentoring support service to induction groups		- Promotion leaflets produced and distributed in prisons - A limited number of promotional events held in prisons	Project would have benefited from more proactive promotion within prisons
	2.5 Support women to achieve ETE action plans in home communities		- A wide range of support activities undertaken with 65 women from target group resulting in a number of successful outcomes - Project staff team undertook ongoing reviews of how to improve support offered to beneficiaries	- A large number of women disengaged with project with no notice - PSW's had to contend with numerous practical constraints 'Soft' rather than 'hard' outcomes achieved with many women - High level of drug use and lack of support with this hindered progress in many cases
3. Produce a Report evaluating the Mentoring Support Pilot progress against overall objectives of Peer	3.1Collate all information from key elements of Pilot - Peer Mentor Support		Comprehensive closure report produced and delivered to Women into Work team	Was not necessary to produce and disseminate a full evaluation report as this was conducted by Sheffield Hallam University

Research findings in areas of : ❏ **Empowerment** ❏ **Motivation and Confidence** ❏ **Transfer from Custody** ❏ **Improvement of ETE Support**	3.2 Conduct evaluation of activity with Peer Mentors, Exoffenders, Prison Service, Probation, Job Centre Plus			
	3.3 Analyse results along with processes			
	3.4 Final Report			
	3.5 Disseminate findings to Prison Service, Probation Service, JSP and other key agencies			

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