



## **TWP newsletter Jan 2008 Happy New Year!**

Lots of things have happened since the last newsletter: all the centres have been up and running since April 2007; Baroness Corston published her report in March 2007 and the Government responded in December 2007, accepting in principle 40 out of the 43 recommendations; NOMS became part of the new Ministry of Justice, and we have a new Ministerial Women's Champion – Maria Eagle MP.

### **The projects**

The aim of TWP is to address the needs of women offenders to prevent reoffending; to address the needs of those 'at risk' of offending; and to divert both groups from prosecution and custody. Two regions, Yorkshire and Humberside (YH) and North West (NW) were identified to set up TWP demonstration projects. In YH, a consortium of Voluntary Sector agencies, led by Foundation Housing is delivering the TWP in 3 locations: Doncaster, Leeds and Bradford. In the North West, there are 2 suppliers delivering TWP: Liverpool Lighthouse and Salford Foundation.

Both projects are receiving a consistent number of referrals from police, probation, the courts, job centre plus, substance misuse services and other voluntary sector organisations. Since they opened, the 3 centres in YH have roughly 65 active cases each and the 2 centres in NW have about 160 active cases each. In YH, there is a dedicated worker at New Hall prison to pick up referrals from prison and they are developing links with the court to pick up more referrals from there. In Liverpool, there is a dedicated court worker who attends court on a daily basis and they have made strong links with the Community Justice Centre to pick up referrals.

Both centres use key workers to work with the women and they have systems in place to recruit and train volunteers and mentors, often women who have been helped by TWP. TWP is designed to provide a wrap-around service for women with multi-complex needs, and to do this, the centres have established good links with local third sector agencies to provide services for homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction and mental health. TWP also provides services in the centres, such as 1 to 1 counselling, basis skills training including IT and group work around confidence, self esteem and parenting. There are also activities in the centres, such as acupuncture, holistic therapies, keep fit, cooking and nutrition and sewing and home furnishing. The Liverpool centre has a Primary Care nurse surgery and a GP on site, so that women can have health checks at the centre. In Doncaster the washing facilities and free clothing service are proving to be very popular.

### **Feedback**

The feedback from the women who use TWP and the key workers has been unanimously positive. 'May' (not her real name), a 58 year old probation referral with issues around alcohol that were linked to her offending and social issues, including debt, attends TWP in Liverpool. She said she feels like TWP "is a 'safe



haven' from the outside world where I feel frightened sometimes. I feel as if I'm in a small community, I know I'm not on my own and I've got someone to talk to if I have problems with my housing or my bills. I know I'm not alone." May went on to say that "since coming here I feel so much more confident and happy from coming here. I think I'd still be at rock bottom if I didn't have here or at Alternatives. I can't see myself getting in trouble anymore. I don't drink much or go out at night because I've got so much to do and learn. It's like I've seen what a dark road I was on and I'm looking towards the future now. "

A key worker from the Doncaster TWP centre has worked there for 10 months. She is dealing with 16 cases at the moment and handling issues such as accommodation, child protection, benefits, debt, social exclusion, domestic violence, mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. She said that TWP benefits the women because, "we can deal with just about everything under this one roof, which means women are not being pushed from pillar to post in order to get their issues sorted out. TWP is non judgemental, reliable and consistent. The different range of skills that each key Worker possess means that if you're unsure about a particular issue, one of your colleagues is sure to be able to point you in the right direction."

A key worker in Salford talking about the benefits of TWP said, "the project benefits women in a variety of ways depending on their circumstances. We have a lot of women who access counselling and holistic therapies to support and improve their well-being. By dealing with well-being issues, we often find that the service users are better equipped to deal with the more practical issues in order to make the necessary changes to improve their lives and stop / reduce reoffending, prevent family breakdown etc."

The centres have also been nominated for awards. Liverpool TWP has been nominated for the CSIP awards for gender innovation; TWP NW has been nominated for the UNA Padel award and Salford TWP has received a highly recommended from the LCJB. YH TWP achieved the MATRIX quality standard for information and guidance in August 2007.

### **Future challenges**

With all the good work that TWP is doing, there are still challenges ahead. Baroness Corston in her 'Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System' recommended that TWP should be extended as quickly as possible. The Government in its response accepted the recommendation in principle and added that the full evaluation of the demonstration projects in the Together Women Programme would be undertaken in 2009, but ahead of that lessons learnt on providing effective multi-agency wrap around services for women with multiple complex needs would be disseminated to other regions. We need to start taking the lessons learned and best practice from the demonstration projects and encourage other regions and ROMS to start looking at existing services in their area that can use the best practice from TWP and improve services for women.



Another challenge is that Government funding for the TWP projects runs out in March 2009. The projects need to consider how to take forward the TWP model and where to get funding from to ensure they are sustainable.

### **What to look out for**

The Action Research, which is the first phase of the evaluation strategy, will be published in the Spring. This examined the set up of TWP and emerging issues following the early implementation of the projects, and provides crucial learning points for central policy, the TWP projects themselves and for other areas looking at building on their services for women. The next phase of the strategy is planned to begin later this year and will be a process study. This will examine whether or not the key issues identified in the action research have been addressed, with a subsequent investigation of whether or not the TWP has been implemented as intended to follow once those issues have been resolved. Part of this study will involve an assessment of the feasibility of undertaking an evaluation of outcomes of the TWP.

If you have any thoughts or would like to find out more about the TWP demonstration projects, please get in touch with the contract managers – Jenny Bowles at [jenny.bowles@justice.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.bowles@justice.gov.uk) and Maura Jackson at [maura.jackson@justice.gov.uk](mailto:maura.jackson@justice.gov.uk).