

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**

**Housing and Health Committee**

**27 August 2014**

**Support Services for Women at Risk of Offending in Perth City**

**Report by Executive Director (Housing and Community Care)**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the work being undertaken in the implementation of the One-stop (previously known as Offending) Women's Learning Service and mentoring service for female offenders in the criminal justice system in Perth and Kinross.

**1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

- 1.1 The One-stop Women's Learning Service (OWLS) was set up in response to a recommendation within the report from the Commission on Women Offenders chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini. The report recommended the establishment of a Community Justice Centre staffed by a criminal justice social worker, nurse and addictions worker to reduce re-offending and bring about behavioural change. This was supported by other national developments and research which highlighted the need for a different approach to be taken when working with vulnerable women offenders. The Angiolini report reinforced this approach commenting that services '...need to be tailored to the multiple and complex needs of women offenders to achieve reductions in reoffending and better outcomes for local communities'.
- 1.2 In addition, the Angiolini report recommended that the work delivered by the Community Justice Centre should be complemented by '...intensive monitoring to women offenders at risk of re-offending or custody to support compliance with court orders'.
- 1.3 Funding for both OWLS and women's mentoring was secured from Tayside Fire and Rescue requisition monies. This amounted to a commitment of £180,000 over a three year period for mentoring and befriending services. An additional £90,000 was provided over three years to fund GP input to the Central Health Care Team to support its wider work and secure an initial base for the development of OWLS.
- 1.4 The OWLS service was set up in consultation with NHS Tayside, Drug and Alcohol, Housing and Criminal Justice Services who formed the core group for service design and development. In preparation for this, two of the services noted in the Angiolini report were visited including the 218 project in Glasgow and the Women Offenders Team in Dundee. Cognisance was taken that

these services are located in an urban area and that a service for Perth and Kinross must also consider the challenges of a rural population and how this can be best addressed, while taking account of the current developments in locality working. Given the service has initially focused on women who have been convicted of offences, they have expressed the desire for a centralised service in Perth to allow them to have anonymity from their local communities.

## **2. OWLS SERVICE**

- 2.1 The initial focus for OWLS was on women who are subject to a Community Payback Order (CPO), those who had served a short term prison sentence, and those subject to a Supervision Licence after release from custody. The implementation of OWLS was planned, in part, to address the nationally recognised concern of the 'revolving door' of those subject to short term prison sentences and their propensity to re-offend and return to custody.
- 2.2 OWLS initially operated every Thursday and specific rooms at Drumhar Health Centre were utilised both for appointments and as a drop-in facility. The service has subsequently expanded to three days across three sites and now involves the following agencies:
  - Criminal Justice Social Worker (services the CPO/Licence, group work delivery and individual programmes of work, e.g. anger management; managing violence and aggression)
  - Criminal Justice Assistants (mentoring if required and practical interventions including group work delivery)
  - Drug and Alcohol Team Social Worker (substance misuse interventions, Blood Borne Viruses and Naloxone awareness as well as participation in group work delivery)
  - Tayside Substance Misuse Service
  - Housing Options Support Worker (including benefit maximisation)
  - General Nurse (holistic health check including sexual health)
  - Community Psychiatric Nurse (assess to mental health allowing access to community mental health services)
  - Podiatrist
  - Dentist
  - Optician (when required)
  - Tayside Council on Alcohol (mentoring service)
  - Churches Action for the Homeless (Facing Change Befriending Project)
  - Barnardos (Change Is a Must) (group work delivery on parenting skills and positive relationships)
  - Cornerstone (literacy and numeracy work)
  - Soroptomists (group work delivery and volunteering)
  - Police Scotland
- 2.3 When a woman is made the subject of a CPO or released from custody, then they attend OWLS the following Thursday and are escorted to the service either by a mentor or a Resettlement worker (criminal justice assistant). They are given a 'Welcome Pack' which contains information about the mentoring scheme, a leaflet about OWLS and a diary where they can record their

thoughts. They receive a full health check (physical, psychological and sexual) and appointments are scheduled with other health professionals or services as required e.g. drug and alcohol services for substance misuse, or a housing options support worker for all housing and financial matters.

- 2.4 There are currently 50 women attending OWLS with ages ranging from 19 to 58 years. The women have committed offences including misuse of drugs, dishonesty, assault and offences against children, i.e. neglect and physical abuse.
- 2.5 It is important to give women a say in determining some of the group work activities. This helps to promote group cohesion and ownership as well as promoting the participants confidence, self-worth and communication skills. Women are given the opportunity to make suggestions about any activities or changes they think would be appropriate. This was evidenced by the group's desire to develop a video diary facility, a portable Library and a 'Thought Tree' often used in recovery with those who misuse substances or for those with mental health problems. The women find this helpful in articulating their current thoughts and feelings as well as their future hopes and desires.
- 2.6 There have been group work activities to improve mental wellbeing including alternative therapies, e.g. aromatherapy, Reiki and Mindfulness meditation. Initially these were met with scepticism, but feedback after these sessions has been very positive and the openness of the women to participate in spite of their initial comments is commendable.
- 2.7 Skinnergate Hostel has also been utilised as a venue for the group work programme by permitting the use of their kitchen facilities for cookery classes. This has helped improve the women's skills in meal planning and promoting healthy eating and lifestyle which they practise when planning and buying the food to make their lunches at OWLS. There is also an emphasis on promoting a physically active and healthy lifestyle and at the end of a specified number of group work sessions, the women plan an activity, for example cycling.
- 2.8 A concurrent and prevalent theme is the nature of abusive relationships experienced by women attending OWLS both past and present. The women are supported to attend Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (WRASAC) and seek appropriate advice and support.
- 2.9 There are women who have been convicted of offences against their children and on reflection of their offending want to repair and improve their relationships and parenting of their children. The Barnardos service, Change Is A Must are therefore involved in delivering group work sessions and interventions about parenting skills, attachment and how to manage relationships with their children.
- 2.10 There are now opportunities through group work to enhance the women's educational and vocational skills as well as their employability. This includes access to agencies including the third sector as well as further education and employment.

- 2.11 To date, there has been full engagement from the women attending OWLS. Feedback is obtained after each group work session which is analysed and used to develop and improve the service. The feedback allows staff to modify and tailor the service ensuring the women's needs are met and they feel empowered to take control of their lives. Group work also provides a safe place for women to express themselves, develop new skills and helps improve their self-confidence and self-esteem.

### **3. OUTCOMES**

- 3.1 The outcomes to be captured reflect those of the Angiolini report. OWLS' endeavours to demonstrate the following outcomes for the project, all of which can be linked to each woman's perception of their achievement through the Rickter assessment and include:

- Reduction in offending and re-offending
- Reduce and stabilise substance misuse
- Improved physical health
- Improved mental well being
- Access to appropriate accommodation
- Improved employability opportunities
- Income maximisation and improved financial wellbeing

- 3.2 In analysing the Rickter information after one year of operation in February 2014, the analysis demonstrated the following results:

- 90% consider have improved their employability of which some have already achieved their goal
- 80% think their accommodation has improved or is satisfactory
- 80% think they are in control of and managing their finances
- 80% think how they manage their relationships have improved
- 100% think they have reduced or stopped offending
- 90% think that their leisure interests have improved either through involvement in group activity or the mentoring service
- 80% think their consumption of alcohol and/or drugs has reduced or under control
- 100% think that their health has improved both physical and mental health through direct access to specific services
- 70% think their independent living skills have improved which relates to their increased self-confidence and self esteem

- 3.3 From the feedback sheets, the women have made the following comments...'I realise I have qualities that are needed by others'...'I've learnt more about the skills I have and to recognise them more',...'everybody was able to express their opinions',...'everyone is involved',...'being in a group made me realise other people are similar to me'.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 Although the project has only been operational for 18 months, the plan by the end of 2014 is to expand the remit to women at risk of offending and re-offending. The intention is to make links with women known to wider services, including drug and alcohol and housing services, which will open up the OWLS approach to a wider and more diverse group of vulnerable women.
- 4.2 In response to what has proved higher than projected demand for this service, larger premises are now being actively sought. It is, accordingly, proposed that responsible officers endeavour to identify larger, appropriate premises from the Council's property register.

#### **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 The establishment of the Offending Women's Learning Service was the response by Perth and Kinross to a number of recommendations in the report by the Commission on Women Offenders published in April 2012. The report clearly stated that the lives of women offenders are characterised by multiple complexities and their potential to offend and re-offend links directly to their chaotic lives and lack of social supports.
- 5.2 The Commission endorsed a holistic approach to working with women across services by delivering interventions which address their immediate needs and bring about behavioural change to improve the quality of their lives. A fundamental part of this is the practical support and guidance provided through the mentoring service, progressing to social support via befriending. This should allow women to build their self confidence and self-esteem and to live more productive and fulfilling lives as valued members of their families and communities.
- 5.3 Housing and Health Committee are invited to note this report, the achievements to date and the positive impact on women's lives.

##### **Author**

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##### **Approved**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Date</b>
John Walker	Executive Director (Housing & Community Care)	5 August 2014

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>Yes</b>
Workforce	<b>None</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>None</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>None</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>None</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>None</b>
Risk	<b>None</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>Yes</b>
External	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	<b>None</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1. The delivery of a service to women offenders and those at risk of re-offending and the extension of the capacity at Drumhar Medical Centre assists in the delivery of both the Perth and Kinross Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement in respect of the following local outcomes:
  - (i) People in vulnerable circumstances are protected
  - (ii) Resilient, responsible and safe communities
  - (iii) Longer healthier lives for all
  - (iv) People are ready for life and work
  - (v) Nurtured and supported families

#### Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The Councils Corporate Plan 2013 – 2018 lays out five strategic objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. The relevant strategic objectives in respect of this report are as follows:
  - (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
  - (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
  - (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
  - (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

## 2. Resource Implications

### Financial

- 2.1 While funding for this service has already been secured from Tayside Fire and Rescue requisition monies to support the GP service at Central Health Care and the development of a peer mentoring service, sustainable funding requirements will form part of the ongoing evaluation as currently three temporary criminal justice assistant posts are being used to support delivery of this service. The funding for these posts ends on 31 March 2015 and sustainable funding beyond this date will require to be addressed.

### Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications arising from this report. The current work force has been found within existing resources.

### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no Asset management implications arising from this report.

## 3. Assessments

### Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Act, however, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.



### Sustainability

- 3.3 There are no issues in respect of sustainability.

### Legal and Governance

- 3.4 This report contains no issues which would have a legal or governance impact on the Council.

### Risk

- 3.5 There are no issues of risk arising from the proposals in this report.

## **4. Consultation**

### Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Finance and the Head of Legal Services were consulted in the preparation of this report.

### External

- 4.2 NHS Tayside and Tayside Council on Alcohol were consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **5. Communication**

- 5.1 There are no communication issues in respect of the proposals in this report.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 6.1 Support Services for Women at Risk of Offending in Perth City and Extension of Capacity at Drumhar Medical Centre to Support Vulnerable City Centre Residents (7 November 2012) - Community Safety Report No: 12/500.

## **7. APPENDICES**

- 7.1 There are no appendices attached to this report.

