



**PLYMOUTH REDUCING OFFENDING  
THROUGH MEANINGFUL  
INTERVENTIONS SERVICE**

**Work Based Learning Report**

***Rebecca West***

**[Note from the Editor:** Part of the assessed work for Criminology and Criminal Justice students who undertake work based learning as part of their final year studies is a poster presentation. The students submit their posters together with a brief overview of their time in placement and the issues that they found particularly interesting. Rebecca undertook her placement with Plymouth Reducing Offending through Meaningful Interventions Service (PROMISE), which is a project which supports female ex-offenders. Rebecca was particularly interested in how organisations such as PROMISE are developing as a means of support to particular groups.]

As part of my Criminology and Criminal Justice Degree I selected a module in which I undertook over 80 hours of work experience with Plymouth Reducing Offending through Meaningful Intervention Service (PROMISE). During my time at the agency I shadowed many of the project support workers and had hands on experience with the female clients, many of whom were women offenders or women at risk of offending. I was also involved in the general day to day running of the service as well as the setting up of a new part of PROMISE aimed at domestic abuse. The most valuable experience whilst I was there was working with the clients themselves and seeing how my work made a difference to their lives. I was involved in running activities for the women, such as steering groups and coffee mornings, as well as supporting them in on going cases. I also spent time applying to charities on behalf of the women for financial support. The work I did gave me a real insight into these women's everyday lives and how the nine pathways of offending affect them (Gelsthorpe, Sharpe and Roberts, 2007). I was able to build up trust and rapport with

these women and help them with the necessary tools to reduce their risk of re-offending.

Whilst working for this agency it became apparent that many of the issues experienced by the service were attributed to the lack of funding provided by the government and bigger agencies to support this sector. I witnessed the sheer determination and effort made by the service to ensure they would receive funding for the following year. PROMISe are currently part funded by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) something that changes the entire dynamics of the service as targets are set and made to ensure the standard of work is met, this results in only the most successful agencies receiving funding (Travis, 2011). Whilst I was at the service it became clear how much work the manager had to put in to trying to attain the expected standards and securing the various small budgets. The main issue with a target based work ethic is the expectation of fast results something that I experienced as being extremely difficult when working with a client group that take a long time to build up the support and rapport needed for successful outcomes.

Previous reports undertaken on voluntary services for women offenders such as The Asha Centre in Gloucestershire (Gelsthorpe, Shape and Roberts 2007) made me realise that the issues surrounding the lack of funding for these services was on a national level. It was the realisation of this that prompted me to choose this issue as my poster presentation. The Work Based Learning Module gave me invaluable experience in an area that greatly interested me. I would encourage all students to take this module as it really opens your eyes to what is involved in this type of work and enables you to attain practical knowledge as well as giving you the confidence for future work. The experience I gained from working in this placement gave me the opportunity to become a relief project worker for the service as well as a service specialising in supported housing.

## **References**

Gelsthorpe, L. Sharpe, G. and Roberts, J. (2007), *'Provision for Women Offenders in the Community'*, London: Fawcett Society

Travis, A. (2011), 'Women Offenders' Support Network Faces Funding Crisis', *The Guardian* [online], Available at:  
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jan/18/women-offenders-support-network-funding>> [Accessed: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2012].



# Plymouth Reducing Offending through Meaningful Interventions Service



A Support Service for women by women

**What we do:**

- ❖ Support women who offend or who are at risk of offending
- ❖ 9 pathways of offending
- ❖ Provide 1:1 support working and home visits
- ❖ Advice line and telephone support
- ❖ Tailored support to meet the needs of each individual
- ❖ Floating support
- ❖ Use a multi-agency approach

**Female  
Offender  
Specified  
Activity  
Requirement**

“ I tried to get help before but no-one would help me. So I committed a crime and finally I got the help I needed”



“ Promise has helped me get back on track, I wonder if without it I would still be here”



**Placement Tasks:**

- ❖ Designing FOSAR exit questionnaire
- ❖ Reports
- ❖ Discussion sessions at steering groups
- ❖ Client work
- ❖ Helping to set up Domestic Abuse service
- ❖ Questionnaires
- ❖ Charity applications



**Issues**



**The Client's View**



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References:  
Carlen, P. (2002), 'New Discourses of Justification and Reform for Women's Imprisonment in England', In: P. Carlen. *Women and Punishment: The Struggle for Justice*, Devon: Willan Publishing.  
All images accessed via <http://www.google.co.uk/imghp?hl=en&tab=wj> searching: Women Offenders and Sad women

