

## Throughcare: Working with young women in custody

<p><b>Context: young women in custody</b> There are a number of differences between young women and young men in custody:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Young women make up 0.2% of the total prison population;</li><li>• Young women are placed an average of 60 miles from home, compared to boys who are placed 41 miles from home;<sup>1</sup></li><li>• 40% of young women in custody, compared to 25% of young men have been victims of violence at home.<sup>2</sup>;</li><li>• A higher number of young women than young men in custody have previously experienced local authority care;</li><li>• There is a higher rate of self harm amongst young women in custody than young men;</li><li>• Young women in custody are more likely to be experiencing custody for the first time than young men<sup>3</sup>.</li></ul>	<p><b>Young people's right to protection from harm within the secure estate:</b></p> <p><b>United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty</b></p> <p><i>'The detention of juveniles should only take place under conditions that take full account of their particular needs, status and special requirements according to their age, personality, sex and type of offence, as well as mental and physical health, and which ensure their protection from harmful influences and risk situations. The principal criterion for the separation of different categories of juveniles deprived of their liberty should be the provision of the type of care best suited to the particular needs of the individuals concerned and the protection of their physical, mental and moral integrity and well-being.'</i><sup>4</sup></p>
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### 'Understanding and working with young women in custody'

<sup>1</sup> Howard League for Penal Reform (2005)

<sup>2</sup> Stuart and Baines, (2004)

<sup>3</sup> Children's Rights Alliance (2002)

<sup>4</sup> UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (1990), C.28

*The Trust for the study of adolescence (TSA) was commissioned in 1992 by HM Prison Service to develop a training pack for working with young women in custody.*

*The TSA is a charitable research and training organisation based in Brighton working on topics relevant to adolescence e.g. youth justice, suicide and self harm and have carried out both research and resource development in the area of youth justice.*

*The training pack was developed in conjunction with a steering group that included representatives from Nacro, staff from the prison service and an independent psychologist.*

### **The training pack**

'Working with young women in custody' was developed as an interactive training and development tool for staff working in the secure estate. The pack aims to enable staff to 'communicate with young women and combine care and control'. The training pack consists of six modules, with each module made up of a video exercise and activities for staff to complete. Modules are also supported by additional informational resource sheets written by staff working with young women in custody which discuss in detail topics raised in individual modules.

The six modules cover:

- Young women, development and change;
- Young women and their families;
- Health and well being;
- Young women and crime;
- Staff;
- Assessment and evaluation.

Each module covers a number of issues pertaining to the needs of young women in custody for example; the module on 'young women, development and change' includes risk taking, culture, race, sexuality, and effects of family life and individual differences. Other topical issues covered throughout the pack include issues such as self harm, managing anger, bullying and young women coming into custody for the first time.

The training exercises throughout the pack are focus on both the needs and experiences of young women in custody, and developing the capacity of staff to listen and understand young women. Prison service staff who evaluated the training pack were positive about the material and reported that they now felt more confident in working with young women, and can better understand their needs.

### **Outcomes**

- Staff receive training centered around the specific needs of young women in custody;
- The training considers the wider context of young women's lives in custody;

- Staff taking part in the training have fed back positively on the training they have received.

**How is the service an example of a rights based and participatory approach?**

- The training promotes staff to be aware of the individual life circumstances of young women in custody;
- Young women were consulted in the development of the resource;
- The training encourages staff to listen to young women and employ constructive techniques in terms of working around issues such as anger management.