'Time Out' for Women: Innovation in Scotland in a Context of Change

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'TIME-OUT' FOR WOMEN:
INNOVATION IN SCOTLAND IN A CONTEXT OF CHANGE

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Abstract

The 218 Centre was set up following consistent concerns about the increasing number of women in prison in Scotland and the high-level needs of many of these women. It is an innovative and high profile attempt to develop appropriate responses to women in the criminal justice system. It offers women an opportunity for 'time out' of their normal environment without resorting to 'time in' custody, providing both residential and community-based services. This article outlines some of the issues and challenges which characterised the early development and operation of the 218 Centre. It illustrates the ways in which some of the issues that arose during the evaluation resonate with current and ongoing debates within criminology and draws attention to the difficulties in using the criminal justice system to address other issues.

Key words: time-out centre, women and justice, community support

Introduction

The 218 Centre[4] is an innovative resource which was set up in Glasgow in 2003 for women in the criminal justice system. 218 was established in response to a number of concerns about the response of the criminal justice system to women in Scotland and, in particular, the appropriateness of imprisonment for many women. By the mid 1990s practitioners and academics were increasingly questioning the appropriateness of existing sentences and the use of disposals for women (in particular, the overuse of prison and under-use of community disposals; McIvor, 2004; Rumgay, 2004). As had also occurred across other Western jurisdictions, an increasing number of young women were appearing before the Scottish courts and were receiving custodial

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sentences, with this being attributed to increasing levels of drug use (primarily heroin) among young women. The increased use of women's imprisonment did not appear to reflect an increase in the seriousness of women's offending: most women were imprisoned for relatively minor offences and the sentences imposed tended to be short (less than six months; McIvor, 2007).

Perhaps most influentially, a series of seven suicides in 30 months from 1995 to 1997 by prisoners at HMP and YOI Cornton Vale (Scotland's only dedicated female prison) had shocked the general public and the establishment, prompting a joint review by the Social Work and Prisons Inspectorates of the custodial and non-custodial sentencing of women. The resulting report, published in 1998 (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland, 1998) concluded that *"the backgrounds of women in prison are characterised by experiences of abuse, drug misuse, poor educational attainment, poverty, psychological distress and self harm"* (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland, 1998: 13). It also noted that:

> *"Almost all women offenders could be safely punished in the community without major risk of harm to the general population. A few are in prison because of the gravity of their offence but the majority are there because they have not complied with a community disposal"* (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland 1998: 42).

The report contained a number of recommendations aimed at improving the conditions within which imprisoned women were detained and reducing the use of imprisonment for women in Scotland, including the development of a dedicated resource in Glasgow, from where a significant number of women in prison in Scotland originated at that time. The report also recommended that the daily prison population in HMP and YOI Cornton Vale should be reduced from over 176 to 100

and that no young women under 18 years of age should be held in prison by the year 2000.

An outcome of the Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates' Report was the establishment in August 1998 of an Inter-Agency Forum to develop services for female offenders. The Forum included representatives of criminal justice agencies as well as organisations employed in areas of health, housing, employment and drugs rehabilitation. The Forum's recommendations included the creation of 'Time Out' Centres to provide a wide range of residentially or non-residentially based support services for women. Its work was subsequently taken forward by a ministerial group charged with turning the Forum's proposals into practical measures. The resulting report (Scottish Executive, 2003) concluded that greater emphasis should be placed upon alleviating the social circumstances that lead some women to offend, intervening early to ensure that women's needs can be met without recourse to imprisonment, promoting the use of the full range of community disposals (including the 'Time Out' Centre advocated by the Inter-Agency Forum) and shifting the penal culture away from punishment and towards rehabilitation and 'treatment', with a particular emphasis upon the development of gender-responsive provision (see also Bloom et. al., 2003).

While these proposals were clearly innovative, some of the original emphasis of the Inspectorates' report was omitted from these later developments. In particular, the emphasis given to poverty and its impact on female offending was reduced (Tombs, 2004b). Similarly, arguments for the operation of a 'twin-track' approach which consisted of developing and operating community based services as

alternatives to custody, paralleled by a cap on prison numbers and reforms to sentencing practices were not repeated in the later policy (see Tombs, 2004a). This article argues that this is a crucial issue for consideration and the following discussion is concerned with identifying and discussing the political and philosophical tensions that have impacted upon the 218 Centre in its initial years of operation. In particular, the tension between providing a service that is responsive to women's needs while fulfilling justice-related policy objectives has been an ongoing feature of the service and of debates about how its effectiveness should be defined and assessed.

The Development Of The 218 Centre

The development of a Time Out centre was seen by policy makers as an opportunity to substantially reduce the number of women who received custodial sentences, with particular recognition of the link between women's offending and drug misuse. Such a resource was also expected to address the needs of women who came into contact with the criminal justice system by responding to issues such as experiences of abuse, poverty and psychological distress. The need to address similar issues has also been raised in relation to the Home Office Women's Offending Reduction Programme (2004) which identified drug use and mental health problems as particular priorities for intervention and, more recently, by the Corston Report on the treatment of female offenders in England and Wales (Home Office, 2007).

The model for the 218 service was developed by multi-agency collaboration, with funding provided by the Scottish Executive Justice Department (this is significant in itself and is a point we will return to later in this article). The main service providers were Turning Point Scotland (a social and health care charity with

previous experience of providing services to female drug users in contact with the criminal justice system), and the National Health Service, which provided a range of health professionals and medical resources including substitute prescribing practices. Although not directly involved in service provision at 218, the local authority social work department (criminal justice services) was also involved in the strategic and operational commissioning of the service.

The broad aim of the 218 Centre was to provide residential and community based resources in a safe environment to women aged 18 years of age or over who had involvement in the criminal justice system, who were assessed as particularly vulnerable to custody or re-offending[5] and who may have a substance misuse problem. To achieve this aim, the project provides a day service which offers assessments, support-work, both individual and group-work and referral to other services as appropriate. In addition a supported accommodation unit contains 12 beds with support available 24 hours a day. Both the residential and day services provide multi-agency support for women including health care, prescribing, psychological and psychiatric services, alternative therapies (including acupuncture and head massage), and emotional support.

Programmes provided by 218 aimed to help women progress through three successive phases: providing safety (survival phase); connections (stabilisation); and loss (self-sufficiency). The importance of understanding and responding to trauma was reflected throughout the process (eg Herman, 1992). The day programme initially consisted of a flexible package of services and sessions intended to meet the

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[5] One of the criteria was that women should have had previous experience of custody but in practice this often included police custody.

needs of individual women. SAFE was an introductory programme that centred on substance misuse, offending and stabilising and aimed to support the women to work with a key worker, obtain substitute prescribing if required, find suitable accommodation, reduce offending, claim benefits and begin the process of self-maintenance/care. CONNECTIONS provided the second stage of programme work and enabled women to work toward reducing or ending their use of substances and/or offending behaviour. Work on developing relationships also aimed to enhance women' networks of personal supports and to prepare them for a life without substance abuse. The final stage, LOSS, more actively helped women prepare for an independent life through training, education or employment, as well as therapeutic support to addres underlying difficulties (see Loucks et al, 2006; Malloch and Loucks, 2007).

A central element of the service offered by 218 was the adoption of a gender-responsive approach to women involved in the criminal justice system. This was to be reflected in the service setting and environment, while provisions were based on an acknowledgement of women's pathways into the criminal justice system (Bloom et al, 2003). Developing personal skills and nurturing self-efficacy were seen as key ways of supporting women to make changes in their lives.

While a key objective of 218 was to provide a specialist facility for women who were brought into the criminal justice system it was anticipated that, in line with the intended shift from 'punishment' to 'rehabilitation and treatment', 218 would also provide a safe environment for women in which to 'address offending behaviour, tackle the underlying causes of offending, help women to avert crises in their lives and enable women to move on and reintegrate into society'. The model of

intervention 218 developed was based on a recognition of the needs of women in the criminal justice system and attempted to respond to those needs by tackling the root causes of offending behaviour. To achieve this, 218 operated with a support team which included project workers, team nurses and support workers. The diversity and complexity of the services provided by 218 had implications for its evaluation[6].

Evaluating 218

Because of the uniqueness of this service and the significant resources which were allocated to it, the Scottish Executive Justice Department decided that the Centre would be evaluated from the outset[7]. This provided the commissioned research team with an opportunity to be involved at an early stage in the development and operation of the Centre. Although the terms of the evaluation had been set by the commissioners of the research ongoing discussions were held around appropriate ways to measure the 'effectiveness' of this unique and complicated service and to determine what could constitute models of 'best practice' and 'what works' when considering 'holistic' services within the auspices of the criminal justice system.

The main aims of the evaluation (as specified by the Scottish Executive) were to evaluate the operation and effectiveness of 218; highlight examples of good practice and identify areas for improvement; determine the extent to which addiction and offending can be addressed together; assess the success of 218 in linking women into mainstream services on departure; assess and determine the effectiveness of the

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[6] The evaluation was commissioned and funded by the Scottish Executive. The views presented here are those of the authors alone.
[7] The evaluation started in January 2004 and the final report was published on 28 April 2006 (Loucks et al., 2006).

Centre in relation to costs, outcomes and overall effectiveness in achieving its stated objectives.

The evaluation was conducted through an analysis of material from relevant documents and project records; focus groups and individual interviews with service users; and interviews with project staff and key stakeholders[8], with interviews repeated after one year where possible. In total 5 focus groups and 66 individual interviews were conducted with women who were using the service. Twenty-four interviews were conducted with staff at 218, and an additional 80 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders (including criminal justice professionals, social workers, housing and drug agency workers and members of other partner agencies such as the Routes Out of Prostitution Social Inclusion Partnership[9]).

When it was established, 218 was (and indeed still is) an innovative project, there being no directly comparable service in Scotland or elsewhere in the the UK. The innovative nature of the project meant that the service continued to develop on an ongoing basis. Programmes provided by 218 developed pragmatically as the service evolved, responding and adapting among other things to shifting policy aims. As a consequence the service as it began in December 2003 was quite different from the one which was operating at the end of the evaluation. This added further to the complexity of the evaluation and required the adoption of a flexible approach.

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[8] Agencies or organisations known to have an interest in the operation of 218 i.e. courts, police, addiction teams and relevant voluntary organisations.
[9] The Routes Out Social Inclusion Partnership was established in response to growing concern about the scale of the problem of street prostitution in Glasgow and the subsequent problems experienced by the women involved resulting from vulnerability, abuse and multiple deprivation.

Women's Experiences Of 218

When 218 was initially established, the majority of referrals of women came from a range of welfare agencies (for example drug services, social work services and housing organisations) or involved self referrals. By contrast, criminal justice agencies - such as the courts – took time to become aware of 218 as a resource, and referrals from key criminal justice sources such as sentencers did not begin until 218 had been in operation for over a year. This meant that initial referrals often related to women who were considered by stakeholders to be 'on the path' to custody rather than at immediate risk of imprisonment. That said, the women referred to 218 were involved in the criminal justice system, and all were clearly vulnerable women at (usually immediate) risk of physical and psychological harm. The characteristics of women assessed as suitable for the services of 218 were very similar to those of women who end up in prison in Scotland (Loucks, 2004). The 343 women referred to 218 between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005 were 30 years old on average. Two-thirds (67%) had at least one child, though only 15% were primary carers on entry to 218. Few had experience of employment, and educational achievements were low and almost half (44%) had no fixed address or were in temporary accommodation. Many women suffered from poor physical health while 83% suffered from depression and 45% had self-harmed or attempted suicide. Of women who engaged with 218, 97% had used heroin, and 52% had problems with alcohol. The average cost of their substance use was £61 per day[10], ranging from 0-£500 per day. The majority of women (70%) had committed offences of shoplifting or other theft. All had been in police custody at some point but only 40% had been remanded or sentenced to custody while around half (49%) had previously been or were currently on probation.

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[10] This figure includes alcohol use, which tended to cost much less or be acquired through theft.

When interviewed, women were more likely to say that they were in fear of their safety (and indeed their lives[11]) rather than that they were afraid of going to prison[12].

When established, 218 was a distinctive service aiming to provide 'holistic' care for women involved with the criminal justice system. Project workers expressed a clear commitment to delivering a unique and effective service, and women using the service commented that 218 addressed their needs and expressed a willingness to accept associated restrictions placed upon them[13]. Although some members of staff were concerned that a time-limited service relegated the residential unit to crisis intervention, longer-term support was available through the day programme. In particular, support was made available from both health and addiction workers to enable women to address problematic substance use. Service users and staff viewed this as a crucial component of the service. The availability of ongoing support was regarded as being particularly important in preventing and responding to relapse. Fifty-two women (83% of those interviewed) said their drug use and/or alcohol use had decreased or stopped (mostly the latter) since they had engaged with the services provided by 218 . Reducing and/or ending substance use was considered an important way of reducing and/or ending offending behaviour[14].   However it also had a clear impact on other areas of the women's lives, with 42 women (67% of those interviewed) providing specific examples of direct improvements to their health and well-being as a result of attending 218. This included improvements in physical well-

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[11] Several women identified severe health problems related to substance misuse. As one woman observed, *"… 218 saved my life. It really saved my life, because I don't think I would be here anymore…"*

[12] Stevens et al (2007) also highlight the increased vulnerability of victimisation among women drug users and other sub-groups of dependent drug users notably sex workers, the homeless and those with poor mental health.

[13] For example, strict policies regarding family contact and time out of the building for residential service users.

[14] See for example Hough et al. (2003) and McIvor (2004b) who found reductions in recidivism among offenders who accessed drug treatment via Drug Treatment and Testing Orders.

being and self-care (i.e. they were now eating), improved mental health and a cessation in self-harm or suicide attempts. As one woman commented:

> *"I feel like it has [worked].... I couldn't have asked for more help, they have done everything I came in and asked them. I wanted to put more weight on, I have done it, I wanted my tenancy, I have got it, I wanted to be stable, I am."*

Creating an holistic service to address the needs of this group of women is an ambitious prospect and not without its difficulties. It is reliant upon the range and quality of resources that can be drawn upon to meet women's needs and support their reintegration. Twenty-one of the women interviewed indicated that they had been referred to other services from 218 (including counselling, training or other support) and that they had valued this aspect of the service. Links with services to support women and to enable them to move on from 218 were generally good, with important links having been established, in particular, with social work departments and the local Routes Out Social Inclusion Partnership network. More consistent problems existed in finding suitable housing for service users[15] and (to a lesser extent) accessing community-based prescribing services and addiction workers, particularly at short notice. Even so, 16 women who had previously been in temporary or otherwise unsuitable accommodation said that 218 had helped them find somewhere more secure and stable to live. More generally, integration with community resources improved over time. This was particularly true of links with criminal justice social work and community addiction teams. Protocols were developed to allow women to be fast-tracked into community addiction services and this led to a considerable reduction in the number of women receiving prescribed medication at 218.

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[15] Macrae et al. (2006) found that drug misuse and housing were the main problems facing female prisoners in Scotland on their release.

A number of factors seemed to set 218 apart from other services. For instance, staff believed that the nature and level of support offered at 218 was appropriate to the women's needs and that the Centre's strength derived to a large extent from the emphasis placed on relationships with service users. The elements of 218 provision that were regarded most positively by women and by professionals alike were often the less tangible ones that derived from or reflected the quality of the relationships between clients and staff. First, there appeared to be a shared ethos and orientation amongst the staff hired at 218, with one member of staff describing the "*the indefinable 'other'-ness of the project*" as "a *shared value system*" (Loucks et al, 2006; Malloch and Loucks, 2007: 98). Secondly, the fact that some staff were themselves 'recovering' from addictions allowed for a shared experience that was greatly appreciated by the women. Thirdly, the project's focus on women was reflected in a dual emphasis on delivering a programme designed specifically for women and, at least as importantly, creating a safe environment in which to deliver it (e.g. Bloom et al, 2003). Overall, both clients and staff were supportive of a women-only service (see also Rumgay, 2004)[16].

The effectiveness of a service like 218 is, however, difficult to measure in quantifiable terms, particularly in light of its broad remit and pragmatic development. For example, with respect to diversion from prison, there was evidence that in individual cases referral to 218 may have prevented female offenders from entering custody in the short term either directly (though the use of bail) or indirectly (through

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[16] Although 218 was not a woman-only space; a small number of men were employed in various capacities.

the use of diversion from prosecution[17]). Interviews with sentencers and prosecutors indicated that, once aware of 218, they made use of it and valued it as a resource. It was also evident that women who engaged in services at 218 had a similar profile to female offenders in custody (Loucks, 2004). In general, however, the time-span of the evaluation was too short to identify whether it had succeeded in bringing about changes in hoped for sentencing patterns or reductions in recidivism[18] and whether it could, as a consequence, demonstrate 'value for money' in comparison with imprisonment. Estimating the cost effectiveness of 218 was particularly difficult since it provided women with a range of (immeasurable) benefits that would not be available to women serving short-custodial sentences.

Drawing upon the evaluation of 218 and on related literature, it would appear that to reflect best practice, community-based services for women should, wherever possible, be based on multi-agency co-operation, particularly in terms of the integration of mental health and substance abuse services and should be focused upon individualised treatment informed by care plans derived from comprehensive assessments. The environment where support and intervention takes place should be 'safe' and aftercare should form a key element in service provision. The significance of effective relationships between women and workers is also crucial. These broad conclusions indicate that the resources and ethos of 218 resonates strongly with Bloom et al's (2003) theoretically derived principles of gender-responsive services.

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[17] In Scotland procurators fiscal (prosecutors) have available a range of options that they can use instead of prosecution. This includes diversion to social work or other relevant service agencies accompanied by a deferral or waiver of the decision to prosecute (Barry and McIvor, 2000).
[18] Other definitional and methodological issues aside, it is generally accepted that a follow-up period of at least two years is required for reconviction studies (Lloyd et al.,1994).

Issues And Tensions

While there were clear indications that women referred to 218 valued the services and supports provided, as is inevitable with any innovative service its establishment as a credible and effective resource was not without challenges. We begin by considering some of the practical issues the project faced before turning to some of the more fundamental challenges that derived from attempting to provide gender responsive services within a criminal justice framework.

Inter-agency working

The range of in-house services that was available was valued by service users, who were able to access support from different agencies in a single location. However, the provision of a 'one-stop shop' was associated with practical difficulties related to the organisational structures and professional mix that it required. 218 drew together staff with a range of professional backgrounds who were accountable to different management structures, which resulted in occasional confusion regarding roles and responsibilities. This is a common feature of multi-agency working and the management of multi-professional teams, which has been well-documented elsewhere (e.g. Ovretveit et al., 1993; Roberts, 2004; Rumgay, 2004), and which was, for example, also evident in Scotland in the early stages of the pilot Drug Courts in Glasgow and Fife (Eley et. al, 2002; Malloch et al., 2003). Initial difficulties in communication with external agencies – resulting at least in part from the absence of dedicated outreach workers within 218 to serve as a primary point of contact for external service providers – also improved over time and inter-agency working was viewed positively by staff both from 218 and from other agencies.

Arguably, practical and organisational issues of this type would have been an appropriate focus for discussion at 218's multi-agency Advisory Group. This was set up to monitor and steer 218 and to take forward the work that had previously been undertaken by a Commissioning Group set up to guide the initial focus and implementation of the project. However delays in the establishment and convening of the Advisory Group meant that it had not become fully operational throughout the period of the evaluation. This meant that no real forum existed (beyond the immediate staff group) to discuss practical issues that arose, to help provide some clarity with repsect to 218's operational objectives or to address some of the important philisophical and ideological issues that had to be debated and negotiated on an ongoing basis.   For example, a concerted approach was required by senior managers in different organisations to develop protocols to avoid women being imprisoned during or after successful engagement with 218 as a result of historical warrants.

Criminal justice priorities

A fundamental tension for 218 (and for the evaluation) arose as a result of different aims and objectives being accorded different priority by the various agencies and stakeholders involved. While 218 was operated by a voluntary sector organisation in partnership with health and social work, it was wholly funded by the Scottish Executive Justice Department. A key influence upon evolving practice in 218 was the increasing emphasis policy makers placed upon criminal justice objectives, in particular maximising the potential for the project to demonstrate value for money by diverting women from sentences of imprisonment. This increasing emphasis upon criminal justice objectives was manifested in a number of ways.

First, the efforts of 218 staff to increase awareness of the project among criminal justice professionals (including sentencers and prosecutors) were rewarded by an increase over time in referrals from these sources, though this was at the expense of self-referrals by women and referrals from welfare-based organisations, with the latter declining and the former ceasing to be accepted in this format altogther. While this development was consistent with the aim of promoting 218 as a direct alternative to custody (and increasingly women are admitted on court orders), it also meant that the emphasis shifted away from preventative work with women who, without support and links into 'pathways out of crime', were at risk of imprisonment in the longer term.

A second consequence of the increased emphasis on criminal justice objectives was a heightened focus upon the provision of programmes aimed at addressing offending behaviour. As previously indicated, the programmes initially developed by 218 had focused on Safety, Connections and Loss, with no typical pathways through the service, progression being based instead on individual needs. Towards the end of the evaluation these programmes increasingly emphasised other elements for example, reoffending and victim-awareness - key elements of intervention with women on probation orders. Subsequently, the extent to which workers at 218 have been directly involved in programme provision has been reduced, with much of this work now taking the form of probation-led groupwork. This could arguably be viewed as a useful way of streamlining and creating coherence in groupwork provision as well as freeing up 218 workers to carry out other roles. However, at the time of writing protocols were being developed to clarify roles and

responsibilities in this area to address some of the confusion that flowed from this change in policy and practice. At the same time, and despite being initially lauded for its extensive resources, the level of project funding has been reduced with attendant reductions in staff at different levels. This has required a redefintion of staffing roles and may have as yet unevaluated consequences on the ability of staff to develop the quality of relationships that women using 218's services so valued.

Follow on support

After-care is a third area in which practice has changed over time, bringing it in line with voluntary throughcare provision more generally. Where previously women could participate in an after-care service for as long as they deemed necessary (involving up to one year ongoing contact through the 218 drop-in service) this has now been reduced to 12 weeks. Such a development appears to represent something of a shift from an initial unequivocal commitment to gender responsive provision. As Bloom et al (2003: 43) indicate, women drug users tend to have a *"greater number of life problems than do most male substance abusers. Such problems may be related to employment, family issues, child care and mental health"*. These issues are exacerbated when women are drawn into the criminal justice system, and their effective resolution is likely to require relatively long-term support. Indeed Rumgay (2004a) refers to evidence from interventions where aftercare services available for women on completion were insufficient, noting that it was not uncommon for women voluntarily to repeat programmes to access the support they considered necessary. In such cases, workers often try to be 'creative' with resources to ensure women are not abandoned by services due to funding criteria and limitations. The importance of ongoing support

with reintegration has been well documented (see Wilkinson, 2004; Sheehan et al, 2007).[19]

Projects such as the 218 Centre in Glasgow demonstrate the value of a woman-centred approach to the clients who use it, even where its impact is difficult to measure in quantifiable terms – and herein lies the problem with evaluations charged with measuring 'success' or 'effectiveness' since they mean different things in different contexts to different people. Definitions of success vary across and between agencies and can include reductions or cessation of offending, abstinence, controlled drug use and 'recovery'. While it is possible to argue that this is the case with every evaluation, in this context it reflects a philosophical and political approach as much as it does methodological issues. It was hoped by policy makers that the service offered to women in Glasgow by the 218 Centre would highlight elements of practice which could be replicated across the country, should the establishment of similar 'time out' centres not prove feasible elsewhere. Key points for consideration would include: consideration of the time required to establish services and the effective management of inter-disciplinary teams; the importance of gender-responsive and gender-sensitive practice; ongoing staff training and support. While there is no indication at present that this is likely to happen, the development of Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) in Scotland may herald a useful opportunity for sharing such practice and co-ordinating resources for women who have been identified as one of the designated groups the CJAs will be expected to prioritise[20].

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[19] Most of the literature on reintegration issues has focused on women liberated from custody, indicating a significant need for effective support services. For example, Pratt et al (2006) note that women who have been recently released from prison are 36 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population, compared to men who are eight times more likely to commit suicide on release from prison.

[20] See the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders launched in 2006 (Edinburgh: Scottish

For the women and the majority of workers from 218 and elsewhere, the quality of relationships was central to keeping women engaged with the service. Programmes in themselves were viewed to be of limited use unless the context of the service met the broader issues that were features of most of the women's lives. When examining the 'effectiveness' of specific resources it is crucial that a structural analysis is given to the context in which such resources are developed. While it was beyond the scope of the evaluation of the 218 Centre to examine the broader social, political and economic context, it could be argued that any attempt to identify 'what works' must necessarily do this.

Considerations

Coherent and joined up services for women

Pat Carlen (1990) has argued that non-custodial rehabilitation schemes for women are often fragmented and therefore ineffective in reducing women's imprisonment. Any impact they may have is often affected by legislation and policy in other spheres such as housing, employment and education (see also Roberts, 2004). The importance of coherent services (such as appropriate and effective aftercare) is crucial for supporting a woman to reshape her life. Similarly, the evaluation of 218 found that 'partnership' and 'interagency' work in the community can also be fragmentary rather than holistic in terms of service-delivery (Loucks et al, 2006; Malloch and Loucks, 2007). However, the commitment of workers and shared goals amongst agencies can often, at least partially, overcome these challenges (Rumgay, 2004b and 2007; Loucks et al, 2006). Indeed, as Rumgay (2004b:137) notes: *"collaborative grass-roots projects*

Executive).

targeting social exclusion might more readily offer the flexibility of purpose required to sustain motivation and effort among partners with different perspectives and priorities". She illustrates this further by providing two models of integrated provision:

Insert Table One here

The typology by Rumgay effectively illustrates the tensions inherent in the operation of the 218 Centre which, while funded by central government with crime reduction as a primary aim, was attempting, through an holistic, women-centred approach to address women's wider personal, social and structural needs. Pursuing *social justice* within a framework of *criminal justice* would never be a straightforward task. Roberts (2004), for example, similarly notes the challenge for developing and sustaining 'needs-based services' within a statutory context. She argues that the maintenance of such resources may require their location within the voluntary sector to overcome the vagaries of the 'formal criminal justice system' where needs-based interventions are *"highly vulnerable to budget adjustments and at the bottom of the heap of policy priorities"* (Roberts, 2004: 25). Locally based services are also importance in the development of multi-agency work given their ability to respond to local needs, often less visible to large centralised organisations. Independent services can also take a more proactive role in 'championing' the cause of women in the criminal justice system, as Rumgay (2007) illustrates.

Generic versus specialist services

In 2000, along with other voices, the Prison Reform Trust Report of the Committee on Women's Imprisonment (Prison Reform Trust, 2000) argued that women should

receive support for addiction issues in specialist services for women – rather than criminal justice services – to help with integration into local communities. If 'recovery' requires a change in self-perception (personal) and the development of new networks of support (social) (Maruna, 2001), it would seem that this is unlikely to be achieved within a context that subordinates needs-led individualised provision to externally prioritised criminal justice goals.. While 218 has the potential to offer a woman-centred resource with links to a range of other services, it is important that it remains a 'community' based resource rather than an exclusively defined alternative to custody. It would appear that services and resources often become formulated to reduce offending rather than supporting strategies for inclusion or community development (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Hannah-Moffat (2001) has also highlighted the ways in which policies aimed at enhancing the circumstances of women are highly vulnerable to distortion and manipulation in the process of implementation and practice.

Service-provision and structural context

While there is no doubt that the 218 service made a significant impact on the lives of the women who accessed the resource, a broader analysis requires that societal and structural issues need to be addressed in order to support women, including an examination of social structures, social and situational contexts, relations of authority and power. As Tombs has pointed out (2004a: 73) it is necessary to avoid *"decontextualising the policy solutions to women's offending from the material conditions of its existence"*. Without this analysis, there is a danger that attention remains focused on psychological rather than social circumstances which impact on an individual. 218 did not profess to be a woman-only space, nor was the intervention

or ethos underpinned by a feminist analysis. However, there was an attempt to locate women's experiences within the broader context of their individual lives, social circumstances and opportunities. Interventions are often limited by the extent to which they can influence change in these spheres, resulting in a more limited focus on immediate practicalities or perceptual shifts.

Sentencing Practice

While service provision is crucial for supporting individual change, there is no escape from the continuing impact and influence of the wider penal context and the effect of sentencing policy and practice. Without changes in this arena, interventions and innovative services are not likely to have any real impact on the female prison population. While it may be important to focus on the need for individuals to change, it is also crucial to be aware of the need to change systems. Without a coherent strategic approach, as Tombs (2004a: 77) notes: *"The responsibility for limiting the incarceration of women is shifted from government policy to the exercise of judicial discretion in individual cases"*.

Sadly things do not look good in this respect. Between 1995 and 2006 the use of custody as a penalty imposed in Scottish courts generally, increased from 10.5% to 12.3% (Scottish Executive, 2006a). Over 80% of all custodial sentences imposed were for six months or less. The female prison population in Scotland has experienced the most rapid growth in size, increasing between 1997 and 2007 by 90% compared to an increase in the male prison population of 16% (Scottish Executive, 2007). This rapid increase is reflected in England and Wales and internationally (McIvor, 2007). It is impossible to ascertain what effect the 218 Centre may or may

not have had on the number of women admitted to prison overall but it has undoubtedly had an effect on the individual women who were offered the service as a direct alternative to custody and is likely to have removed others from the pathway to prison they were on at the point of referral. While 218 was initially aimed at reducing the number of women admitted to prison from Glasgow, it is now evident that increasing numbers of women are imprisoned from other areas of Scotland. Indeed, in 2004-5 the highest number of women prisoners originated from the South West Scotland Community Justice Authority (Scottish Executive, 2006b). However by 2006, the largest proportion of women in prison was again from Glasgow (Scottish Executive, 2007)[21].

Conclusions

Some things do not change, as the Inspectorate of Prisons noted in his most recent inspection report on HMP and YOI Cornton Vale (HM Inspector of Prisons, 2007):

> *"This inspection draws attention to some things which have changed since the last report. But the changes are on a small scale in comparison to the two things which remain the same, and always remain the same, at Cornton Vale: the rising numbers and the dreadful condition of most women when they arrive".*

Clearly there is a need to acknowledge and accommodate gender differences in sentencing and interventions (Gelsthorpe, 2007). However this is unlikely to happen of its own accord. As sentencers acknowledged in a recent report published by the Scottish Consortium on Crime and Criminal Justice, the will to reduce the prison population is a political decision, therefore political leadership is required to achieve

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[21] However, the proportion of women imprisoned from Glasgow appears to be decreasing.

it (Tombs, 2004b). Sentencing reform is required alongside community developments to bring about change (Carlen and Tombs, 2006; McIvor, 2007).

In Scotland**,** unless there is real change in sentencing practices, the numbers of women imprisoned will not be reduced. 218 on its own can not be expected to impact significantly on women's imprisonment in Scotland. Rather, it needs to be part of a broader strategy of transformation that fundamentally challenges the central position occupied by prison in the repertoire of responses to women. Despite acknowledgements that prison is *'wasteful in terms of the resources it consumes and in its failure to change women's behaviour'* (Scottish Executive 2003: 41) it remains central to penal policy, pulling innovative resources like 218 into an increasingly penal-focused context.

The evaluation of welfare provisions in terms of their impact on crime rather than in their own right needs to be avoided. 'Alternative' projects should not have to rely on their relationship with (or comparison to) the prison for their justification. Otherwise they are increasingly expected to provide a punitive and controlling alternative, dependant on the binary nature of being 'other' or 'alternative' to the prison as Cohen (1985) has long argued.

The development of 218 on its own has not represented a 'decentering' of the prison (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Carlen and Tombs, 2006), hence the number of women in prison in Scotland has continued to rise. Two recent initiatives that appear to have been better able to impact directly on this are the use of Home Detention Curfews

(allowing women to be released early from prison through electronic monitoring[22]) (Scottish Executive, 2007)*;* and mandatory supervised attendance orders in place of custody for non-payment of fines (Reid Howie Associates, 2006). This illustrates the importance of legislation in promoting the use of alternatives to custody, as voluntary/discretionary powers do not seem sufficient. Individual pockets of innovation such as the 218 Centre are not in themselves enough to reverse the unprecedented increase in women's imprisonment that has been witnessed in Scotland and other western jurisdictions. Rather, there is an urgent need for *strategies* aimed at reducing the use of imprisonment and attaining much needed penal reform.

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[22] Between July 2006 and March 2007, 125 adult women were released from prison on Home Detention Curfews, with 19 recalls to custody. This compares with 1145 adult male prisoners of whom 216 were recalled to custody during this period (Scottish Executive, 2007).

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Table One	Top Down	Grass roots
Policy	Crime reduction	Social exclusion
Direction	Central government	Local agreements
Funding	Secure	Insecure
Provision	Standardised	Diverse
Access	Equal	Uneven
Mandate	What works	What's needed
Partnership	Contractual	Collaborative
Programmes	Standardised Accredited Targeted Coerced	Local adaptations Inclusive Mixed voluntary/coerced
Success	Reduced convictions	Reduced need

Rumgay (2004b: 137)