

**THE EXPERIENCE AND TREATMENT OF  
WOMEN PRISONERS AS VICTIMS OF  
VIOLENCE**

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## **Introduction**

This research was for my PhD thesis. The aim of the research was to gain access to women's prison in the UK in order to undertake Qualitative research into two specific issues: women prisoners' experience of domestic violence; and what treatment or management programmes are in place to deal with this issue, both whilst women are in prison and upon their release.

## **Objectives:**

- To ascertain the treatment or programmes available to women on admission to and release from prison which speak to their needs as regards being the victims of violence.
- To investigate women prisoners' experiences of violence.
- To ascertain if further help/treatment/programmes are required specific to this need.

## **Abstract**

This report explores the subjective experiences of women in prison – focusing on:

- previous (and in some cases, continuing) physical, mental and sexual abuse
- consequential crimes committed
- the policy and criminal justice system response
- availability of appropriate initiatives and self-help programmes across prisons within the UK context.

This report draws on an extensive review of the literature on experiences of women in prisons within the UK – examining their previous experiences. The report is informed by an in-depth analysis of qualitative data – findings generated from women prisoners from three different UK prison contexts. Semi-structured interviews have been used to collect the data and data has been analysed using thematic analysis, as informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework.

It is likely that there are significantly more women prisoners with a long-standing history of abuse and violence than is officially recognised by the state – it follows that several women prisoners mark their adverse experiences with problematic drug/alcohol use in addition to self-harm. The findings of this report offer insight into the different forms of abuse suffered by women prisoners, reactions to the abuse by the women, abuse suffered before the current sentences and associations between the

abuse and crimes committed and experiences of the prison environment in terms of treatment, management, and self-help initiatives. The report closes with a section on practical implications and direction for further research on this topic.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Research suggests that women prisoners suffer higher levels of emotional and psychological distress in comparison with their male counterparts (MacDonald, 2013). Indeed, this level of distress is consistent with previous research which has linked psychological distress with a history of domestic, emotional and sexual abuse, which is the background of several women prisoners in the UK (HMI Inspectorate of Prisons, 2007).

This paper seeks to explore the experiences of women prisoners with histories of abuse and to examine the care regimes/interventions in place to support said women during and after their prison sentences. There are several vulnerable women in prison, including those who have suffered previous (and often ongoing) forms of abuse. In addition, in light of the literature, several women prisoners, who are also victims of abuse, turn to drug/alcohol misuse and self-harm. It is therefore important that academic attention is paid to the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners.

### **Background Context**

This research paper offers an insight into the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners who have been victims of different forms of abuse – including domestic, sexual, physical and emotional forms. The institutional context is that of the British criminal justice system – two British prisons have informed the texture of this research study. Whilst this study explores the experiences of women prisoners in relation to their histories of different forms of abuse, it also focuses on the factors/support mechanisms in place to help integrate women into the prison environment/back into society once their sentences have been served.

Despite various and changes and reforms in the British criminal justice system, forms of abuse are still a common occurrence against women in general and are particularly common against women prisoners who often have long standing histories of abuse from people they have been in close contact with. These instances of abuse are also under-reported and there is thus a strong rationale for academic attention to shift towards the exploration of vulnerable women prisoners. There also needs to be a focus on the factors/support mechanisms in place to help integrate women back into society after their sentences have been served.

In light of the above, the aims and objectives of this research study are to explore the experiences of women prisoners who are also victims of various forms of abuse. As such, the research questions considered are the following:

- 1) What are the experiences of women prisoners in relation to domestic violence / other forms of abuse?
- 2) Have the women prisoners been victims of abuse 3 months prior to committing the offence for which they are now serving imprisonment?
- 3) How did the women react to their abuse/abusers?
- 4) Does the CJS have any measures/interventions for women in prison who are victims of abuse?
- 5) Are the women themselves aware of any initiatives that might help them?
- 6) Upon release, do these women feel like they would be in danger?

In light of this introduction and the research questions stated above, the next section of the paper critically reviews the available literature on the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners.

## **CHAPTER 2: EXPERIENCES OF VULNERABLE WOMEN PRISONERS**

### **Historical literature**

Although there is a well-established literature base in relation to the imprisonment of women generally - some of which touches briefly on the issue of violence against women prior to their imprisonment – there is limited literature specific to this area of research. Historically, Carlen and Worrall (1987:168) have found that women “were...at risk from the men they lived with, both in terms of physical violence and in terms of being caught up in their criminal activities.” This is therefore clearly an important topic of focus for academic researchers.

Subsequent to this, Leibling (1992:185) found that in a sample of suicidal female prisoners “...far more of the women reported having been sexually abused and have experienced violence at home.” In addition, more recently, Borrill et al (2003:229) found that women who tried to commit self-harm in their lifetime were those who had a “history of harmful drinking and ...violence including physical assault, sexual assault and violence from family and friends.”

Further to the above, in 1997, HM Chief Inspector of prisons published a thematic review of women in prison. The aim of this review was to “discover how effectively the security, through care, training and resettlement needs of women prisoners [were] being addressed, to assess the effectiveness of the organisation and management of female estate and to make recommendations for improvement.” (1997: 10). The report found that many staff were unaware that women [had] a history of abuse and that “very few staff...had any training in working with abused women (1997:132). Most recently the Howard League (The Independent 2006) reported that half of the female prison population have suffered domestic violence.

A review of the relevant literature therefore indicates that research specifically on the experience and treatment of female prisoners who have suffered violence is limited and that this study would therefore represent an important addition to knowledge.

In the context of the UK and Europe, the number of women prisoners appears to be growing although they still remain a small minority of the prison population. The reasons for the growing proportion of women in prison varies (Noblet, 2008) – however, the reasons appear to reflect a number of social and political factors (e.g. MacDonald, 2013). In addition, research suggests that prisons tend to be designed with the needs of men in mind – statistically men commit more crimes than women (e.g. Sokoloff, 2005; MacDonald, 2013). In this light, prison regimes, treatment and

throughcare programmes do not tend to address the specific needs of women – particularly vulnerable women prisoner groups.

Despite literature outlining that the courts appear to perceive that prison provides an opportunity for women offenders to receive drug treatment and mental health services within the prison environment and this therefore increases the imprisonment rates – MacDonald (2013) argues that this is in fact a mistaken perception.

### **An Exploration into Vulnerable Women Prisoners**

Despite concerns in relation to growing gendered violence within the UK context, there is a need for increased research in the area that may help to provide a clearer understanding of its consequences on areas of women's lives – including that of criminal behaviour (MIP Project, 2006). The following sections explore forms of violence and abuse inflicted upon women – including instances in and out of the prison context.

### **Issues of Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence remains a serious issue within contemporary societies. Violence and abuse manifest in different forms – emotional, mental, sexual and physical and such violence can be inflicted by either partner (e.g. Sharman and Bruce, 2000). In the context of this paper, the focus is on gendered violence, with male partners inflicting forms of abuse on their female partners. Research has found that forms of abuse and the various experiences of battered women can result in criminal behaviour (e.g. MacDonald, 2013) and severe psychological issues and trauma (Sharman and Bruce, 2000; Byrne and Howells, 2002).

Defining what is meant by 'abuse' is often problematic – there are several definitions of the concept that are used in different contexts. There is a growing consensus, however, that abuse can include aspects of physical, sexual, emotional, financial forms of abuse and issues of neglect in some cases (HM Prison Service, 2008). Whilst 'abuse' is a broad term, domestic violence more specifically has been defined as including forms of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse within the context of a relationship between partners/ex-partners (MacDonald, 2013).

Hooper (2003: 63) states: *adult women may experience all these forms of abuse, with the probable exception of financial abuse, in other relationships, and sexual or physical violence also from strangers*. Further to this, the UK Home Office defines violence or abuse as: *any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality* (National Offender Management Service, 2010: 4). In this light, there appears to be a



general consensus that abuse against women tends to involve forms of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and sometimes financial abuse.

Whilst the prevalence of sexual violence against women varies globally, research suggests that some 25-40% of the general female population experience some form of abuse before the age of 18 years (e.g. Dutton et al, 1994; Byrne and Howells, 2002). In addition, global estimates published by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020) suggest that approximately 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual abuse by an intimate partner or a non-partner in their lifetime.

Given these high prevalence rates across the globe, it is surprising that only a handful of contributions have been undertaken with female offenders to explore their backgrounds and experiences that may have contributed to their offences (Browne et al, 1999; Sargent et al, 1993). Nevertheless, the abuse experiences of women – including domestic, physical, sexual and emotional – position women offenders in an important social and psychological context. As Singer et al (1995: 103) observe: *the crimes these women commit are often a reaction to negative life events, a response to crisis or prolonged disadvantage.*

In light of the above, it is clear that issues of domestic violence against women remain a contemporary problem within societies across the globe. There are several risk factors, health consequences and preventions mechanisms that have explored in relation to the experiences of battered women and in the context of women offenders who are often acting in response to prolonged exposure to violent behaviour (e.g. Singer et al, 1995).

Risk factors of violence against women include lower levels of education, witnessing family violence (e.g. learned behaviours), suspected infidelity and low levels of women's access to paid employment (WHO, 2020). There are also associated health consequences – intimate partner/sexual violence can result in both short- and long-term physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health issues for women.

Said issues of violence can also have long-lasting impacts on children – leading to high social/economic costs for women, families and societies (WHO, 2020). In terms of health, domestic violence can lead to homicide/suicide, substance abuse, poor mental issues, unintended pregnancies and sexual diseases (WHO, 2020), amongst several other consequences.

Prevention mechanisms include counselling services and home visitation programmes – more services are needed however in order primary prevention methods seeking to stop domestic violence from occurring in the first place. In the context of prison, healthcare and treatment

provided must address the various needs of women prisoners – this is currently not the case (e.g. MacDonald, 2013).

In Europe, some prison staff demonstrate awareness of the support that is required by female prisoners and there are programmes in place but most of these are project-based developments. In the context of the UK, posters, brochures and leaflets are available in all of the women's prisons – whilst this is an effective means of circulating information, it should be considered that some 20-30% have reading/writing difficulties (Prison Reform Trust, 2008) and thus there is a requirement for support mechanisms which address individual needs of women offenders.

In this light, the next section of this review outlines the psychological needs of women and how these might be addressed through interventions.

### **Psychological Needs of Women Prisoners**

There is limited research specifically related to the psychopathology of women prisoners (Hurley and Dunne, 1991; Raeside, 1994; Byrne and Howells, 2002), however, there is a consensus that mental health issues are more common amongst the female population in comparison with male counterparts (Daniel et al, 1988; Mohan et al, 1997; MacDonald, 2013).

Mental health profiles of women prisoners appear to be characterised by high rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse (e.g. Byrne and Howells, 2002). There is also substantial incidence of self-harming behaviour – often leading to suicide. In this light, there is a clear need to improve the psychological and mental health services provided by the prison context in order to adequately support vulnerable women offenders. The next section outlines the support that is currently in place.

### **Support Interventions**

This section of the review outlines the extent to which the needs of vulnerable women prisoners are met in the context of British (and EU) prison contexts.

Across British prisons, research suggests that there is little evidence to suggest that important steps have been taken to address these needs in terms of healthcare, treatment, intervention and mental health services (e.g. Macdonald, 2013). This remains an issue in other regions of the globe – e.g. Australia and Canada (e.g. Byrne and Howells, 2002). As highlighted above, despite women prisoners, whom are also vulnerable, being at increased risk of forms of abuse, self-harm and deteriorating mental health in prison contexts, research has shown that the response of prison

institutions to address these issues often falls short of meeting the needs of vulnerable women groups (MIP Project, 2006; Prison Reform Trust, 2010; MacDonald, 2013).

Several studies comment on experiences of depression, psychological trauma, aspects of violence and other wellbeing issues that characterise a high proportion of women offenders serving their sentences. In this light, it has been argued that vulnerable women offenders are more troubled than they are troublesome (e.g. Bartlett et al, 205).

Interventions must be improved in the UK prison context in order to adequately address the psychological needs of women (Byrne and Howells, 2002). Research reviews (e.g. Bartlett et al, 2015) also point to a lack of a solid evidence base on interventions in place to support vulnerable women offenders – often the interventions in place mirror those that are available in the community or hospital settings (Gee and Reed, 2013). Whilst this helps to address some of the prison population, vulnerable women groups in prison – with longstanding histories of abuse and psychological wellbeing issues – it follows that their treatment responses are likely to differ to community samples. This is a clear example of evidence lacking from use and adaptations of interventions – the interventions offered in prison contexts must address the needs of the cohorts serving sentences.

### **Support**

There is evidence to suggest that prison environments are often experienced as isolated and lonely environments for women offenders (e.g. Carcedo et al, 2008). Whilst women appear to receive more social support than men do during their prison sentences (Hart, 1995; pollock, 2002), they also appear to show lower mental health and emotional wellbeing (Wheaton, 1995) and appear to feel significant amounts of distress (Carcedo et al, 2008).

Whilst social and institutional support is important for improved wellbeing within the prison context, it is clear more needs to be done to ensure the psychological needs of women offenders are being adequately met. In turn, this can help with re-offending rates, the integration of women offenders back into society and to generally support vulnerable women prisoners who have been subject to prolonged abuse and violence.

### **Staff Training**

In addition to improving practical interventions for vulnerable women offenders, it is important to recognise that working with women offenders can create a difficult working environment for prison staff – consideration thus needs to be given to the needs of the staff as well as the inmates. Given traumatic backgrounds/histories of women offenders, it follows that prison staff will require specific

training in empathetic listening and counselling skills to appropriately support said women. This will also help to ensure best practice.

It is also important to recognise however, that issues raised by vulnerable women offenders might prove personally difficult for staff members to manage and deal with, in the absence of training and support for their own needs. It is thus important that staff are provided with adequate levels of support in their working environments in order to reduce their own stress – which can be caused, for example, by various disclosures of abuse (Byrne and Howells, 2002).

### **Summary**

Overall, this literature has reviewed important experiences of vulnerable women offenders in the prison context – who have been victims of different forms of abuse prior to, and often during, their sentences. It has offered an insight into the context of vulnerable women offenders, the psychological needs that must be addressed by various interventions and the current measures in place to achieve these outcomes. The next section of this paper outlines the methodology of the current research study.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This section of the paper outlines the research methodology and choice of research methods used to inform the texture of the study. Whilst this section offers an insight into the research philosophy considered to carry out the research, it does not engage within detailed debates of all research philosophies given the limited scope of a research paper (Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Saunders et al, 2016). Instead this section offers a broad insight in order to justify the choice of methodology and methods considered. This section also offers an insight into the research process, background of participants, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

### **Research Questions**

Following the literature examined in opening sections of this paper, there remains an important research gap in our understanding and exploration of the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners within the British context. In this light, emerging research questions refer to the following:

- 1) What are the experiences of women prisoners in relation to domestic violence / other forms of abuse?
- 2) Have the women prisoners been victims of abuse months prior to committing the offence for which they are now serving imprisonment?
- 3) How did the women react to their abuse/abusers?
- 4) Does the CJS have any measures/interventions for women in prison who are victims of abuse?
- 5) Are the women themselves aware of any initiatives that might help them?
- 6) Upon release, do these women feel like they would be in danger?

To address these questions, this study is informed by qualitative data collection and analysis. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with vulnerable women prisoners across two prisons. The interviews explore the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners who have histories of sexual, domestic, emotional, and/or mental abuse.

### **Research Philosophy**

In light of the listed research questions, a qualitative interpretive approach was selected for this study. This approach is critical of those who apply the scientific model to understanding the social world (Bryman, 2015).

The ontological position informing this study is that of social constructionism – this refers to the notion that social reality cannot exist only in a physical form, but instead reflects the stream of consciousness/experiences of the people (Saunders et al, 2016).

The epistemological position is thus interpretivism – knowledge is obtained and considered as the truth from those who have access to it. In the context of this study, the women prisoners who kindly came forward to share their experiences of abuse, sentence serving and initiatives in place to support them have access to important knowledge and the subjective nature of the semi-structured interview technique offered access to this.

### **Research Methods**

Based on social constructionism and interpretivism, the semi-structured interview method appeared to be the most suitable to gain access to the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners. In total, 22 interviews have been conducted with women across two different British prisons.

A third prison was also approached, with access permitted, but women did not come forward to be interviewed. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in the social sciences and in sociological research – the method facilitates the exploration of open research questions and socially sensitive issues that disciplines within social science raise (Bryman, 2015).

An interview guide was designed as used to direct the interview process, but the women were given the opportunity and freedom to discuss their experiences freely – even if that meant departments from the questions on the interview guide. Indeed, it is encouraged that women speak freely about their experiences and feel comfortable to do so in the context of the interview, in order to gain insight into their realities (Saunders et al, 2016).

### **Research Process**

In order to achieve these aims, research has been carried out in three Women's Prisons, before conducting research in establishments (Appendix 1) an application was made to Her Majesty's Prison Service to undertake research. To gain approval, HM Prison Service required a Criminal Check and information on related published research of relevance to the study. A great deal of information was given in support of the application: a consent form for women prisoners stating that they have agreed to the research (Appendix 3), a participant information form for women prisons to read and

understand the purpose of the research, a piloted semi-structured interview questionnaire (Appendix 5) and Loughborough University Ethics approval application were all required before undertaking any research.

The national application process took around six months to gather relevant documents and fill in the form. National approval was granted from the HMO (see Appendix 2) after which the next step was to contact each prison individually to see whether they were interested in the research chosen. This process took another six months for individual prisons to organise the research in their establishments. Three prisons showed very much interest in the research project.

An application was e-mailed to a psychologist in each prison. Before undertaking research in these three establishments my supervisor Dr Kate Moss and I went to prisons to talk to the psychologists to discuss and arrange interviews with women prisoners. A self-selection (Appendix 4) was given to psychologists in prison to distribute to women victims in order that they could identify themselves as victims of violence. One prison selected women prisoners as victims of violence for this research as they already knew who they were. In this prison many were already attending the Freedom Programme which applies to women prisoners as victims of violence.

To achieve the aims I designed a list of interview questions. A semi-structured interview technique was employed to interview abused women prisoners. As the subject of domestic violence is a sensitive topic for abused women, every step of the interview process needed to be carefully prepared to get an accurate and reliable response. It is important to acknowledge that this research requires understanding and sensitivity. To present this accurately, it was essential to observe and listen to women's stories. This questionnaire was not presented to the cohort because it would not elicit much detail on the delicate topic of domestic violence and there would, very likely, be several gaps in the information given.

As mentioned, three British prisons located in different regions of the country were approached for access to participants at the onset of this study. Data was only collected from two of these prisons. Despite obtaining the necessary permissions and access to the third prison, women prisoners did not come forward to be interviewed.

### **Participants**

22 women prisoners came forward to take part in an interview across two of the prisons approached. Their participation in this study was entirely voluntary. All of these women were aged

between 20-48, and have a history of domestic, sexual, emotional and/or physical abuse. Most of these women have been abused by a close relative or somebody that they knew well (e.g. partner, husband, close relative, other).

### **Data Collection**

In line with several studies in this field, the data collected for this study has been analysed using thematic analysis – following the framework provided by Bran and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a widely used framework in the social science disciplines – the technique emphasises the examination and nature of patterns in qualitative data – also known as themes (Saunders et al, 2016). In the context of this paper, thematic analysis is used to find patterns in the data, conjure themes common across all of the interviews and offer new insights into the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners.

Thematic analysis as informed by Braun and Clarke (2006) involves a six important steps – to familiarise oneself with the dataset, to begin labelling/coding the data, to then search for patterns/themes across the data, to review these themes, and to define/name themes. The final stage requires the researcher to write up the analysis of the data in light of the available literature on the topic of focus (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

### **Ethical Considerations**

This research project received ethical approval from Loughborough University, Department of Social Sciences. Access was granted to research across three different prison environments across England – data has only been collected from two of these institutions.

Written informed consent was obtained from all respondents who came forward to be interviewed – participation in the study was also entirely voluntary. Adequate information was given to the potential recruits to the study for them to make an informed decision about sharing their experiences – this allows the individuals to understand the implications of their voluntary participation (Bryman, 2015).

Whilst difficult to protect participants from all forms of harm during a research study on a highly socially sensitive issue, all participants were protected from physical and psychological harm where unambiguous. If a question appeared to disturb the participant, for example, then they were offered space to process/move on from that aspect of the discussion. Effort was also made to offer various services to the women prisoners if considered necessary.



Confidentiality and anonymity have been maintained throughout the entire research study – identities of the women prisoners are protected including the identities of the prisons in which they are currently serving sentences. This will also extend to the dissemination/publication of the findings of this study – pseudonyms are used to protect the identities/establishments of those taking part (Saunders et al, 2016).

In line with confidentiality/anonymity , this study also complies with the Data Protection Act (1998- this was the law at the time ) – datasets and other identifying material in relation to this study are stored away in encrypted/password protected files on the researcher’s desktop and other information is stored away in a locked cabinet. Interview transcripts do not include any identifying information.

### **Summary**

This section has outlined the research methodology and methods used to inform the analysis and findings of the study. It has also outlined the permissions granted to conduct the study, methods of data analysis and ethical considerations adhered to throughout the research process. The next section of this paper outlines the findings and analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### Introduction

This section offers the analysis and findings of the research study – outlining the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners in the institutions examined. The findings are outlined in relation to four important themes: experiences of abuse, reactions to the abuse, abuse suffered before/during the prison sentence and experiences of support in/out of prison.

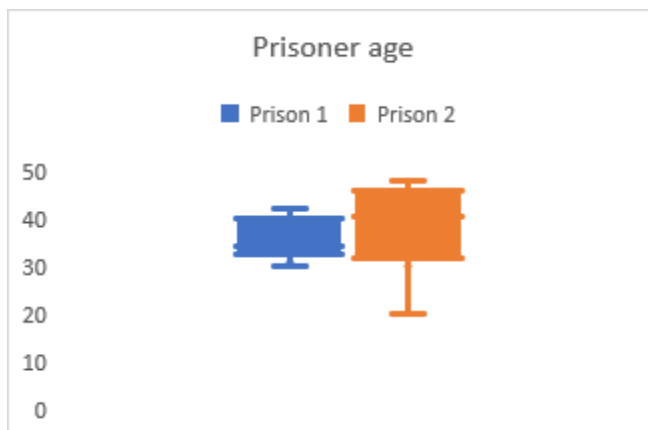
It was essential to make the interviews anonymous so that there would be no danger of recrimination from the abuser or anyone else outside. This enabled them to answer freely and fully. The interviewees are referred by number, for example, interviewee one is denoted as 1. (Appendix 5 & 6)

### Background Information

The graphs below offer an insight into the descriptive statistics of the data.

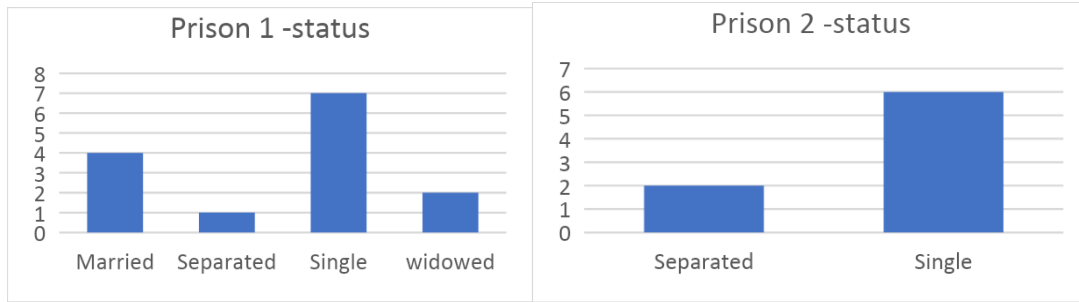
### Prison Age

The range age of the women interviewed across the prison sites is 28. The youngest was 20 and the eldest was 48 years of age.



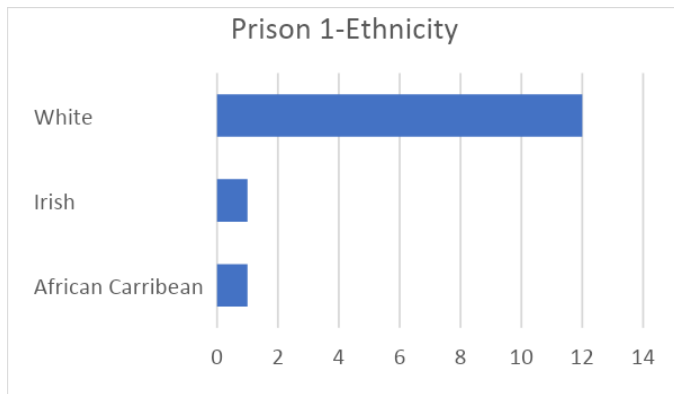
### Status

The majority of women interviewed were single and two were widowed.



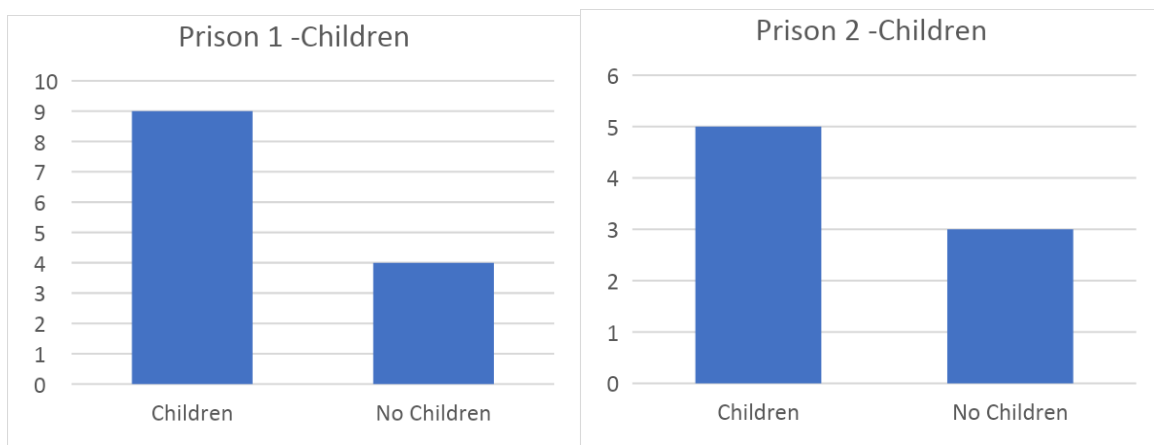
**Ethnicity**

Only one participant in this study was of African/Caribbean heritage. The majority of women were White. Women from other cultural backgrounds did not come forward. In the context of Prison, all of the women interviewed were White.



**Children**

The majority of the women interviewed explained that they had children. Seven of the women did not have prison at the time of interview.

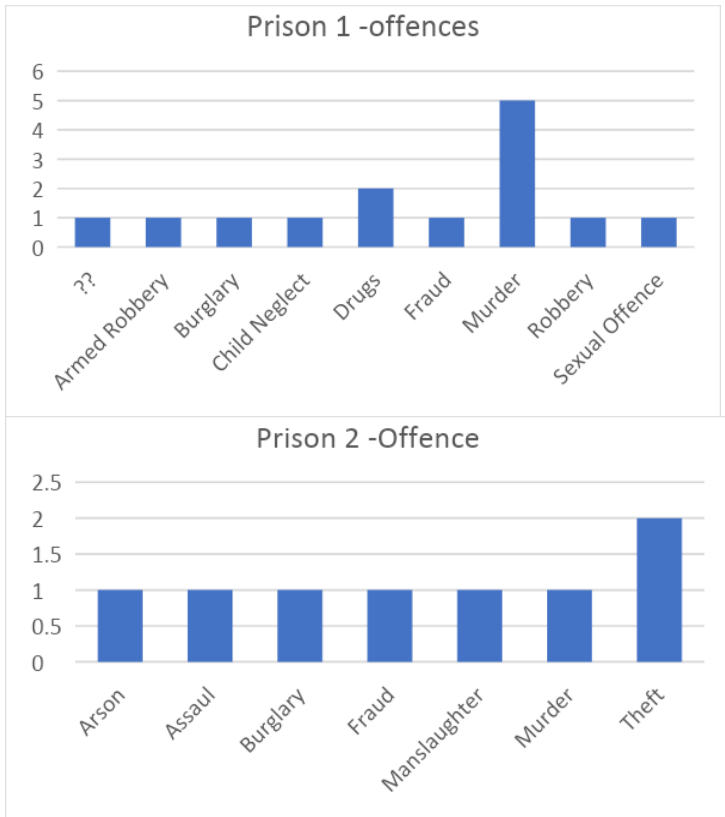


**Offenders Prison**

All 22 women stated that they had not been in a younger offender’s prison.

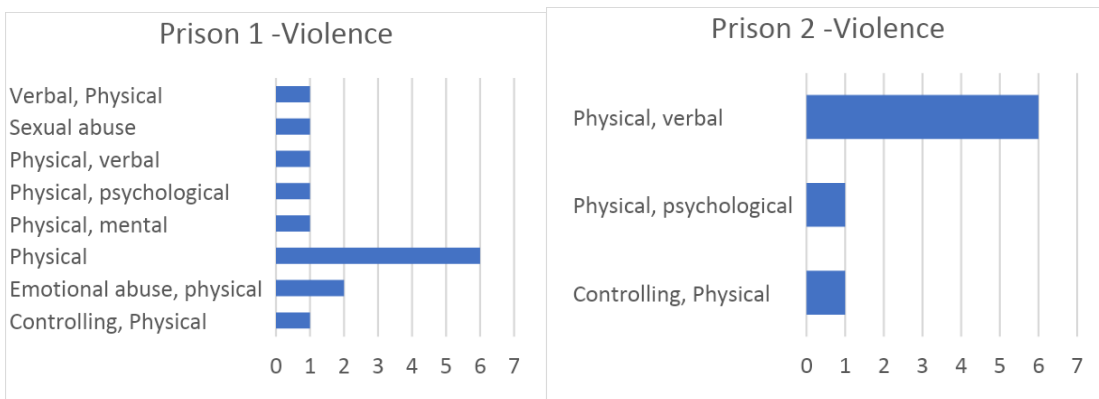
**Offences Committed**

All of the women prisoners committed offences before coming to prison. The research shows the women who were married were abused.



**Violence Experienced**

All of the 22 women experienced domestic abuse before their sentences.



**How Women Felt due to Violence**

This study indicates that the women felt low, confused and upset due to the violence they had experienced. One woman stated that she wanted to die, another stated that she felt suffocated.

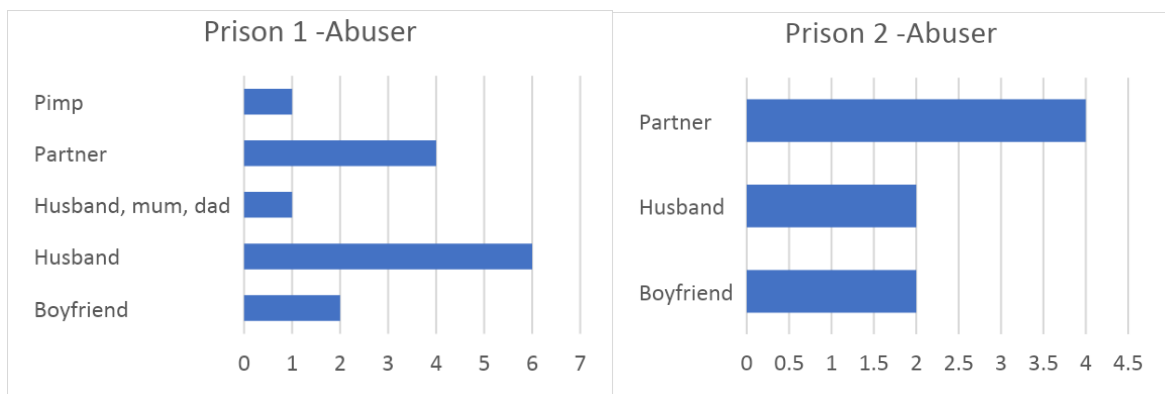
**Prison 1**

**Prison 2**

	Suffocate
Upset	d
Tortured	low
Nightmares/upset	Upset
Lonely	Emotional
Lonely	Low
Low	Low
Upset	Hurt
Mentally ill	Confused
Upset	
Low	
Low confidence	
Wanted to die	
Depressed	
Negative	

**Abusers**

All of the women explained that they had been abused.



**Reactions to Abuse**

The findings of this study suggest that the women tried to stop the violence and reported their experiences to their families/friends. Most of the same interviewed felt that the police were not helpful. In addition, one woman stated that she did not tell her family, however, some women came from families who did help. Some women also stated that their friends had helped with their situations.

**Prison 1**

Tried to stop violence

Police were aware not helpful

Family aware

Family helped

Police were aware not helpful

Suicidal

Ended relationship, police aware

Police were aware not helpful

Ran aware, police were not supportive

Tried to stop violence, friends tried to help

Told police and friends, who tried to help

Tried to stop abuse

Not told family

Family aware, contact policed who were not helpful

**Prison 2**

Tried to leave, friends tried to help

Left but came back, parents helped

Police were aware not helpful

Tried to leave, sister tried to help

Tried to leave

Family aware, tried to leave

No family

Family not helpful

**Treatment in Prison and Views on Treatment of Self-Help Programmes**

In Prison 1 only counselling courses were available. All of the women stated that they were not aware of help outside of prison.

**Prison 1**

Counselling course

Felt there should be programmes

Aware of programmes in other prisons

Nothing prison. Did an anger course

**Prison 2**

All attended Freedom programme which they found useful and helpful.

No programmes  
 No programmes  
 Prison should promote programmes  
 Not aware of any course  
 Not aware of any course  
 Not aware of any course  
 Not aware of any course  
 Not aware of any course  
 Felt should be counselling courses  
 Not aware of any course

**After Release**

All of the 22 women interviewed stated that they felt that would not been in danger after release in prison. Majority of the women stated that they would go to their family/children after being released. Some women also suggested that they will do courses. One stated she wanted to help women who were victims of domestic violence after being released.

**Prison 1**

Family, start course  
 Family  
 New future  
 Fresh start, family  
 Course, probation officer would help  
 Go to family, education  
 Probation would help do course  
 Family  
 Want a new life

**Prison 2**

Family  
 College. Family  
 Better Person  
 Family  
 Family  
 Fresh start, go to children  
 Course, probation officer would help  
 Family

Family, new life

Family, new life

Family, new life

Family, new life

Family, new life

### **Qualitative Analysis: Themes from the Data**

#### **Experience of Abuse:**

In the context of the both prisons, all women interviewed claimed that they had experienced domestic violence by their partners, husbands or biological fathers. Whilst several women made claims like: 'my ex-partner was hitting and abusing me...', some of the others claimed that they were '...in an abusive relationship with my husband...'. Similarly, one of these women expressed: '...my dad abused me and my mum. While I was growing up I met my boyfriend. He was nice at first then he started bullying me...'.

These findings clearly indicate that vulnerable women prisoners in the first institution all suffered forms of abuse from people that can be considered close to them.

#### **Reactions to the Abuse:**

All the women interviewed suggested that they tried hard to put an end to the domestic violence against them by trying to leave their abusers. In addition, these women admitted that several people around them – including family and friends – were aware of the violence. The women prisoners admitted that whilst some of these people offered support, others were unhelpful. For example, one of these women stated:

'...I tried to get away from it all but it was difficult. They can be nice, but they really don't mean it. My friend was aware what was going on. She was helpful, but I loved him. The police got involved but they were not helpful they did nothing - only give advice like go to Women's Aid...'

Another of these women expressed:

'...He always followed me wherever I went. My family knew about my experience. They wanted me to leave him, but I was scared that he might kill them if I left him. He did not like



me going to see my parents. My parents left town because of him and his violence. The police were involved but they did not do much because I didn't react strongly...'

Other women were committed in marriage and thus found it particularly difficult to leave their husbands:

'...My problem was that I always dropped the charges - it's hard to explain when you are married...My family have helped me by supporting me, but it's always on your mind, it's hard to forget violence." I will fight myself to forget the abuse by talking and being open about my abuse...'

And other women described returning back to their abusers in order to protect their children:

'...I tried to stop the violence by leaving him, but I went back to him. I had to think about my children and their happiness. I wanted them to have a good upbringing, but he never let this happen. My children were scared because of the violence. I tried to protect them, but it was so hard. I tried to ease my own mind by clinging onto this creature, but it did not work – he's not the kind type...My sister knew of my problems - she got involved in helping me, but it never worked...'

In addition to these experiences, several women echoed fears of their children and family being beaten and killed and therefore chose to remain in relationships with their abusers. For example, one of the women explained to me:

'...I did not get the police involved because he would kill me and my parents and my child...'

#### **Abuse Suffered Before the Current Sentence:**

In addition to various reactions of abuse examined above, it is clear vulnerable women prisoners also suffered abuse before their current prison sentences. In this light, the women interviewed that they crimes they committed, for which they are serving sentences, were a result of their domestic violence and abusive experiences. For example:

'...I experienced horrifying violence before my offence. I was so down...so down. I just lashed out. I was so hurt, so hurt. I was punched in the face by my boyfriend and kicked around before my offence. The ten years of domestic violence really got to me and I just shot like a gun. The abuse really got to me. During that time, I felt bad for what I did. I was not thinking." "Because of violence I always felt low, worthless, ashamed of myself and weak...'

It clearly seems therefore that a majority of the women committed their crimes in retaliation to the abuse inflicted upon them. Another of these women outlined her experiences which also led to her offence:

‘...I was so badly abused by him that I just wanted to forget it. I turned to drugs before I committed the offence. I burgled for money so I could get drugs. I needed drugs to forget my pain and to stop crying and just forget everything...’

### **Experiences of Prison: Treatment and Self-Help Initiatives**

In relation to experience of treatment in prison, all the women interviewed in the context of Prison 1 stated that they attended a freedom programme - this is available to women victims of violence. The women interviewed further indicated that this course was very helpful – it helped them to feel stronger and see things in a different light. The course also helped the women to make important realisations. These points are clearly summarised in one of the women’s statements. For example:

Management course.” “Not sure of programmes out there.”

‘...I have done a course here in Prison. I completed a relationship course and a freedom programme, which was excellent. It helped me to see things differently. I will never be a victim of violence again, that’s for sure. During the Freedom programme women have opportunities to talk about their experiences and there is wide discussion about the dominator and the types of men. The freedom programme is a fantastic course, it makes me feel stronger and I see things from a different direction, and I realised then that I was a victim and it was not my fault...’The prison service was aware that I experienced violence. I heard about this course and I attended the course which I am pleased about.” “I am not on any medications.” “I am also attending counselling courses which helps me to talk to someone about my experience. I can talk to a counsellor whenever I need to. When I speak to a counsellor I feel I’ve got something to look forward to in life in a positive way and life is worth living.” “Not really certain or sure if there are any courses outside of prison which relate to victims of abuse.”

In Prison 2, similar findings were obtained. For example, the women collectively expressed that...

‘...unfortunately, there is nothing in this prison. I was here for eleven years; they haven’t offered me any courses on domestic violence...’I’ve only done an Anger

And that counselling services would be helpful for them to manage and navigate their experiences in the prison's context. Whilst one of the women explained that:

'...there is no help in this prison, definitely there should be, women who are in prison have been abused...there's no support in prison. I want to see more counsellors and courses in prisons. Prisons are not aware of abuse...I am not on medical treatment...'

Others explained that there are some counselling and medical services available but that they are not entirely sure of the help that is available to them and this is not helping the needs of vulnerable women in prison. For example:

'...I think there might be a little counselling, I am not sure of this. I am not really aware of this. Nobody here asked about my experience. I am taking anti-depression medication because of the violence and I am always thinking about my children...' "Not 100 percent aware of any help outside prison."

#### **Following Prison Release:**

From the investigation it has been found that women prisoners when released from prison would like to start a new life. Majority of the women reported that they would go back to their families and children, with whom they want to start a fresh future.. Some reported that they would like to do courses or help women in domestic violence situation. Women prisoners also stated that probation officers would help them. All women also stated that they would not be in danger when they are out of prison.

"I will go back to my Mum's in Liverpool; my boy is with my mum. To be honest my son's father was troubling me, he gets drunk, he was troubling my son, "Drinking, drinking." "He tells my son, your mum's a murderer, my son gets upset with that. I don't intend to have contact with him. I've been thinking about that when I get out – he's wicked." "My main thing is to be with my son and go to college and do NVQs. I will try to get funding and do 'A' levels and help women who are abused, do counselling, get things in place, ideal to stay first at my Mum's." "Not going back to him. I will live with my family."

Similarly, another woman stated:

"...I will go back to my children, my home, my new life and forget the past and start a fresh life."

“I won’t be in danger - I killed my partner. He did so much to me I just couldn’t take it any longer.”

Women also reported that probation officers would help them in they need anything. For example:

“The probation officer will sort this out - they are quite good. I’ve got lots of confidence. I have done Maths and English. I want to go to College.”

All women interviewed confirmed that they would not be in danger after being released.

“The person who abused me is still out there but far away. I won’t be in danger. I have moved on.”

Another women also stated something similar:

“I will not be in danger when I am released from prison, I will be hassle free.”

In this light, it is clear that vulnerable women prisoners examined in this study have experienced different forms of abuse – mostly by an individual close to them (e.g. partner / boyfriend). It is also clear that these experiences have been unpleasant and may have been the reason that said women find themselves in prisons serving sentences. The analysis also reveals that many of the women were not able to manage the abuse or escape from it well or remained in these unhealthy ties for financial reasons or to protect their children. On the other hand, some of the women tried to escape in order to look after their children too. The next section of this analysis explored the experiences of prison in terms of self-help and institutional support available – this research study confirms that there is inadequate support available in the prisons examined. Whilst it appears that the women are offered medical help, emotional and psychological support – in the form of therapy / counselling – appears to be extremely limited but a desired form of help for the women interviewed. The study also found that women prisoners after released want to start a new life and confirmed that will not be in danger after being released.

## **Summary**

This section has analysed the findings using thematic analysis. The next sections discusses secondary data and the research findings in light of the literature reviewed in the opening sections.

## CHAPTER 6 SECONDARY DATA

This section looks at secondary data. It looks at treatment programs that are available in prison for women prisoners who have been victims of domestic violence.

### **Freedom Programme**

In a research "An evaluation of the Freedom Programme; a prison support programme for women who have experienced domestic violence" by Lucy Watkins (2010), it highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the Freedom Programme.

The aim of the Freedom programme is "to provide an opportunity for women to develop ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves, their children and others from harm"

The objectives of the programme-

- to increase women's ability to take control of their life
- increase women's perception and to make positive use of social provisions
- to increase employability
- to help women to recognise beliefs held by abusive men
- to recognise the impact of their experience on their own attitudes and beliefs
- increase women's ability to recognise what steps they need to take to protect their children

Watkins interviewed women in prison to see how women felt about the programme and its effectiveness. From Watkins' findings it was revealed which she had done her observations majority of the women did not take part in sessions whilst doing the Freedom programme. Watkins' found although some women. She also found that although some women thought highly of the programme and that it provided them with understanding of domestic violence, the research stated that it poses risks. Watkins' found if women did not participate facilitators would not know if the programme was working or not.

Some women spoke freely and appeared interested in the course, they spoke of their experiences and enjoyed the course. However, some of the women did find the course emotional and it did bring back memories. Watkins' also recognised that whoever delivers the programme needs to help

women not blame themselves. In addition, Watkins also found that the presenters who delivered the course needed both training and monitoring.

Watkins stated that the same women they would welcome addiction support after they finished the course, and some felt like they had learned enough. Although it was clearly limited learning took place. For example:

“...it does not provide them with ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves, their children and others. The programme is based on a typical male perpetrator abuse”.

“women have not tested their learning from the programme in the community and therefore women have to make their own assessment of how the programme will have benefitted them.”

The selection process of women to be interviewed for research was not the same at each site. At one prison a member of staff chose the women to be interviewed and stated that these women would have positive reports of the programme. This may make the results of the programme unreliable and biased. Finally, Watkins’ concluded that “the Freedom programme is not suitable for supporting women who have experienced abuse.

This reports suggests that the Freedom Programme does not work for everyone. The facilitators need to deliver using different approaches. They need to be trained and monitored when delivering the programme. Not all women will cooperate in the programme. Also, not all women would want to talk openly about their traumatic experiences.

Similar to the prison interviewed, this also showed that the Freedom programme was beneficial and did not show another, negative side to it. Staff chose the women who attended the Freedom Programme in prison. All women gave positive feedback as found in Watkins’ research.

More research need to conclude in prison on the programme for women who are victims of domestic abuse to get a bigger and reliable picture. More samples of women are needed, and it is important to find out how women prisoners use their experience outside of prison. Watkins’ stated women needed to be tested outside of prisoners. It is important to understand how many women are taking part when doing the programme in prison.

Recently another programme has been introduced in women’s prisons which is called “Healing Trauma”. In a recent evaluation report by Petrills, Thomas, Haspal (2019) looked at the programme in prisons.

“Healing Trauma” programme adapts a strength-based approach aimed at empowering women. It is designed to help woman recover from the effects of trauma in their lives. It aims to help women understand the connections between experience of trauma and criminological behaviour.

The research revealed that women felt relieved when talking about their experiences. Women also stated that the course gave them a voice and helped them to talk and start the process of healing. However, research found that some women did not want to talk about their experiences. The research found that sample they interviewed were not enough to say whether the programme works for all women and did not give a full view of the programme. Research states that more needs to be done on the programme. The data did not include reconciliation data.

Whilst reconciliation is problematic as the sole determination of the programme efficiency, inclusion of such data would enable analysis of the impact of the Healing trauma.

The secondary data research recommended that research is done outside of the prisons for women who are victims of domestic violence and no courses are available for women prisons who have been victims of domestic violence.

The secondary data revealed that there are treatment programs for women prisoners who have experienced domestic violence. Women prisoners have found the programmes useful. However, the programmes don't show how it has helped women prisoners or how it will help when they are released from prison. Investigators have found that facilitators don't have much experience in the subject or do not have follow up checks on how they are running the course.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the findings considering previous literature in the context of vulnerable women prisoners.

### **Issues of Domestic Violence**

In view of previous research in this area, the women of this study have suffered several different forms of abuse – by partners, husbands, boyfriends, fathers. Indeed, abuse is most likely to be inflicted by individuals near the women. This also appears to be a consistent finding across several women across the globe – these women then retaliate against their perpetrators and find themselves in the prison context (Singer et al, 1995; Byrne and Howells, 2002). Clearly, issues of domestic violence is embedded within several kinds of societies – with a number of different causes – and must be addressed at the individual, cultural and societal level in order to combat the issue. Whilst it is acknowledged that men can also be victims of domestic violence, this study primarily focused on the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners.

### **Psychological Needs of Women**

The literature further acknowledges the importance of addressing the psychological needs of women within the prison environment – however there is limited knowledge on this notion (e.g. Dunne, 1991; Raeside, 1994). Whilst there appears to be a consensus across the literature that mental health problems appear to be common across the female prison population in comparison with males, there is still limited data to support this. In this light, the current study has supported the notion that psychological needs of women within prison need to be addressed. It is inadequate to only ensure that their medical/physical health is good.

### **Support and Interventions**

Following the above, it is clear that institutional support and interventions are highly necessary in the context of vulnerable women prisoners. The literature highlights the importance of institutional support interventions, social support and staff training in order for staff to manage the care of vulnerable women prisoners (e.g. Macdonald, 2013).

Importantly, several studies comment on experiences of depression, psychological trauma, aspects of violence and other wellbeing issues that characterise a high proportion of women offenders serving their sentences. In this light, it has been argued that vulnerable women offenders are more



troubled than they are troublesome (e.g. Bartlett et al, 2015). This study highlights similar findings. Accordingly, interventions must be improved in the UK prison context in order to adequately address the psychological needs of women (Byrne and Howells, 2002). Research reviews (e.g. Bartlett et al, 2015) also point to a lack of a solid evidence base on interventions in place to support vulnerable women offenders – often the interventions in place mirror those that are available in the community or hospital settings (Gee and Reed, 2013). Whilst this helps to address some of the prison population, vulnerable women groups in prison – with longstanding histories of abuse and psychological wellbeing issues – it follows that their treatment responses are likely to differ to community samples. This is a clear example of evidence lacking from use and adaptations of interventions – the interventions offered in prison contexts must address the needs of the cohorts serving sentences.

### **Social Support**

In terms of social support, research evidence suggests prison environments are often experienced as isolated and lonely environments for women offenders (e.g. Carcedo et al, 2008). Whilst women appear to receive more social support than men do during their prison sentences (Hart, 1995; pollock, 2002), they also appear to show lower mental health and emotional wellbeing (Wheaton, 1995) and appear to feel significant amounts of distress (Carcedo et al, 2008).

Whilst social and institutional support is important for improved wellbeing within the prison context, more needs to be done to ensure the psychological needs of women offenders are being adequately met. In turn, this can help with re-offending rates, the integration of women offenders back into society and to generally support vulnerable women prisoners who have been subject to prolonged abuse and violence. Indeed, the findings of this study appear to echo these findings almost two decades later – this clearly supports the contention that much needs to be done in order to help vulnerable women prisoners.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This research has explored the experiences of vulnerable women prisoners and their histories of different forms of abuse. The findings suggest all of the women interviewed and examined in this study are victims of varying forms of domestic violence. Indeed, most of the women have found themselves in prison as a result of these experiences of abuse. The study also finds that additional help and support at the institutional level is needed to address the emotional and psychological needs of women in prison. Whilst it appears that women are offered medical support in these contexts, counselling services appear to be limited/non-existent and this raises important practical implications.

Importantly, limitations of this study include its qualitative research strategy and design which limits the ability to generalise the findings beyond the immediate context under examination. Whilst a good number of interviews were conducted with vulnerable women prisoners, and the study also reached saturation in terms of the themes and analysis, it is acknowledged that there is some difficulty in generalising the findings from this study to other contexts. It is also recognised that some of the data is thin – women in this study constitute a very vulnerable group and the cohort had difficulty in opening up about their experiences of abuse and in prison.

### Limitations of the study

- Small sample-not many women came forward to talk about their experiences of domestic violence.
- Women from different diversities did not come forward. This would have enabled a different pictures of the experiences.
- A notepad was taken while conducting interviews as tape recording was not allowed in prison, this means therefore some details may have been easily missed.
- Some women did not provide much detail. It is appreciated that these women do not want to talk about their experiences. Very few women were questioned during the interview but gave little feedback. Too much probing was not done to avoid emotionally upsetting the women. Recalling sensitive experiences would have led women to be upset.
- Giving permission to interview in a few more prisons would have been beneficial, however, not all prisons can accommodate this and not all women would have come forward.

- It was hard to find a sample of women who had been imprisoned recently to talk about sensitive issues. More time to talk would have been good but women had other plans to attend too.
- Staff on-site were also busy which led to a shortage of time to do in-depth interviews. More time would have been beneficial, however, to type the interview women would have got distracted/upset to talk about their experiences.

### **Benefits of the study**

- Was able to interview a good sample of women to get some information of the topic
- Was able to gain national clearance to do research in two women's prisons.

### **Recommendations**

Research in why women's prison's don't get help outside of prison in their experiences. Do more research to see what programmes are available to women prisoners of domestic abuse. See if Freedom and Trauma programmes have been more helpful.

Feed findings in Home Office policy and national policy. Provide more help for women victims of domestic violence which will help offender and reduce re-offending.

Research revealed family was important to women who were given less prison terms.

This research would assist the prison service in meeting some of its objectives of holding women in safe, decent and healthy environments in the following ways:

- It would help address some of the particular challenges that women present in terms of their safety and health.
- Improved information regarding constructive prison regimes in relation to women who have been the victims of violence could lead to a reduction in their crime by addressing this specific problem.
- The research would represent an addition to knowledge which could assist in the promotion of clearer understandings of women offenders and their needs.
- The study would provide more information about improved support and care which could be given on admission, during detention and upon release.

- The research could address the reduction of risk in terms of the question of whether the care given is commensurate with the risk.
- The research would provide greater knowledge about such issues which may assist in strategies which could lead to a lowering of the crime rate and consequently the prison population itself.
- This information would hopefully feed into Home Office policy and to the Prison Service Women's Team.

This report contributes to the knowledge that is already available to help women prisoners who have been victims of abuse. It identifies what they see as their needs in terms of support on their return to society and in terms of preventing them re-offending. The information will hopefully promote a clearer understanding of women offenders and their needs.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1**

**Appendix a**

**APPLICATION**

**TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN**

**HER MAJESTY'S PRISON SERVICE**

<b>Name of researcher(s)</b>	Dr Kate Moss Miss Rezia Begum
<b>Project title</b>	The experience and treatment of women prisoners as victims of violence.

Please type or print, using black ink



**RESEARCHER(S) DETAILS**

**Surname:** Moss

**Title:** Dr

**Forename(s):** Kate

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**Address to which all correspondence should be sent (if different from above):**

Dr Kate Moss

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Department of Social Science,

Loughborough University,

Loughborough

LE11 3TU

**Contact Telephone Number: 07932 627357**

**Name, Status and Address of Research Supervisor (if appropriate):**

As above

**If more than one researcher will be engaged on the project, please copy this page and provide details on all.**

**Please attach a CV for all researchers**

**OTHER RESEARCHER(S) DETAILS**

**Surname:** Begum

**Title:** Miss

**Forename(s):** Rezia

**Home Address:**

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Loughborough

Leicestershire

LE11 1PQ

Currently registered as a full time PhD student within the Dept of Social Science, Loughborough University, Loughborough, LE11 3TU.

**Contact Number:** 07821268630

**Name and Address of Sponsoring Body** (if appropriate):

N/A

### **PROPOSED RESEARCH - AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Reason for undertaking research project:**

The research will be undertaken by Dr Kate Moss in the Midlands Centre for Criminology at Loughborough University. The Centre specialises in cutting edge criminological research in a wide range of criminological and criminal justice spheres which aims to enhance the study and understanding of aspects of criminology and criminal justice and to inform policy and decision making through the commission of high quality and academically rigorous research and publication. It is envisaged that this research will give rise to some academic publications and will also inform a PhD that Miss Rezia Begum is currently undertaking within the department of social science. It is anticipated that this paper may also feed into Home Office policy, improving the care and aftercare of those women who are detained within HM prisons.

**What is (are) the research question(s)?**

Objectives:

- \* To ascertain the treatment or programmes available to women on admission to and release from prison which speak to their needs as regards being the victims of violence.
- \* To investigate women prisoners' experiences of violence.
- \* To ascertain if further help/treatment/programmes are required specific to this need.

**Is there related published research of relevance to the study?**

Although there is a well-established literature base in relation to the imprisonment of women generally - some of which touches briefly on the issue of violence against women prior to their imprisonment – there is nothing specific to this area of research. Historically, Carlen and Worrall (1987:168) found that women;

“were...at risk from the men they lived with, both in terms of physical violence and in terms of being caught up in their criminal activities.”

Subsequent to this Leibling (1992:185) found that in a sample of suicidal female prisoners;

“...far more of the women reported having been sexually abused and have experienced violence at home.”

More recently, Borrill et al (2003:229) found that women who tried to commit self-harm in their lifetime were those who had a “history of harmful drinking and ...violence including physical assault, sexual assault and violence from family and friends.”

In 1997, HM Chief Inspector of prisons published a thematic review of women in prison. The aim of this review was to “discover how effectively the security, through care, training and resettlement needs of women prisoners [were] being addressed, to assess the effectiveness of the organisation and management of female estate and to make recommendations for improvement.” (1997: 10). The report found that many staff were unaware that women [had] a history of abuse and that “very few staff...had any training in working with abused women (1997:132).

Most recently the Howard League (The Independent 2006) reported that half of the female prison population have suffered domestic violence.

A review of the relevant literature therefore leads me to believe that research specifically on the experience and treatment of female prisoners who have suffered violence is minimal and that this study would therefore represent an important addition to knowledge.

Borrill, J., Burnett, R., Atkins, R. & Miller, S. (2003) *Patterns of Self-Harm and Attempted Suicide Among White and Black/Mixed Race Female Prisoners*, Journal of Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, Vol. 13, 229-240.

Carlen, P. (1987) *Gender, Crime and Justice*, Open University.

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (1997) *Women in Prison: A Thematic Review*,

London: Home Office.

Liebling, A. (1992) *Suicides in Prison*. London and New York.

**What are the potential benefits of the research?**

**☐ to the Prison Service?**

I feel that this research would assist the prison service in meeting some of its objectives of holding women in safe, decent and healthy environments in the following ways:

- \* It would help address some of the particular challenges that women present in terms of their safety and health.
- \* Improved information regarding constructive prison regimes in relation to women who have been the victims of violence could lead to a reduction in their crime by addressing this specific problem.
- \* The research would represent an addition to knowledge which could assist in the promotion of clearer understandings of women offenders and their needs.
- \* The study would provide more information about improved support and care which could be given on admission, during detention and upon release.
- \* The research could address the reduction of risk in terms of the question of whether the care given is commensurate with the risk.
- \* The research would provide greater knowledge about such issues which may assist in strategies which could lead to a lowering of the crime rate and consequently the prison population itself.

**☐ to academic knowledge in the field of study?**

\* I would hope that the research would result in the publication and dissemination of agreed findings through conference papers and academic articles in national and international journals by agreement with the prison service.

\* This information would hopefully feed into Home Office policy and in particular to the Prison Service Women's Team.

## **RESEARCH PLAN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **What data gathering and sampling techniques will be employed?**

The data would be gathered using a paper questionnaire method. A draft of this is attached which indicates the type of information we would like to collect from participants. However, I must stress that this is a draft and would be open to suggestions from the prison service and their psychologists on this and will take any advice which might be offered.

### **How will internal and external validity be established?**

\* It is acknowledged that this research involves issues of sensitivity. The information collected will be gathered on trust and as such we acknowledge that there are thresholds within the type of work whereby information may be either embellished or held back.

Work on police forensics in relation to sensitive issues such as sexual abuse verifies that this can be the case. However, we feel that this is still a useful piece of work to undertake.

\* It is also acknowledged that the participants for this type of study may be those which could be deemed to be vulnerable. As such all relevant steps have been taken to ensure that the research carried out meets with both Loughborough University's code of ethics and has been cleared by the University's Ethical Advisory Committee as well as with those criteria laid down by the Prison Service. The project was cleared by the Loughborough University Ethical Advisory Sub-Committee and the proposal, their feedback and other relevant information relating to this is enclosed as an appendix to this application.

**Which (if any) measurement tools will be used?**

\* The data collected using paper questionnaires would be analysed using standard analytical software such as SPSS.

\* The results would be further analysed for statistical significance using standard statistical tests.

**Please list any equipment, which you are intending to bring into the prison establishment.**

I would like to bring paper questionnaires which would be printed on plain paper.

I would like to record the interviews with the permission of the Prison Service and participants but will understand if this request cannot be met.

**What is the proposed timetable for the research?**



I would like to begin the research in January 2007, but we can be flexible depending on what is convenient for the prison service and those establishments which would be amenable to this research being carried out.

**When is the research due to be completed?**

**Fieldwork:** I hope to carry out the fieldwork between January and June 2007

**Report:** I would be able to submit a written report of our analysed findings to the Prison Service in December 2007.

**RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION**

**How will the research results be analysed?**

\* The quantitative data collected from participants by way of a paper questionnaire will be analysed using the SPSS data entry system. It will then have further statistical tests applied to it in order to test for statistical significance.

\* The qualitative data collected from participants will be written into the full report which will contain both the quantitative and qualitative data.

**How long will the research materials be retained?**

\* All the research materials will, in the first instance be collected anonymously and participants will be assured of this at the outset of the research.

\* Paper questionnaires will be kept in a locked room at the University and will be kept separate from any inputted statistical versions of this data which will be kept on a password protected computer.

\* All University research is carried out in accordance with the Data Protection Act and will be destroyed after 5 years.

**How will the results of the research be disseminated? (e.g. thesis, article, book etc...) Indicate how the results will be made available to the Prison Service.**

\* The results of the research will be written up as a report and will be made available in the first instance to the prison service.

\* If the prison service agrees, the report will be subsequently produced as an article and will be submitted for publication in the Prison Service Journal and/or another academic journal.

\* The researchers would also like to present the findings at a key conference such as the British Society of Criminology Conference or the Howard League Conference.

\* The researchers would also like to be able to reproduce some of the findings of the research within a PhD subsequently produced by Miss Rezia Begum.

### **ACCESS TO PRISON ESTABLISHMENTS, PRISONERS AND PRISON STAFF**

**What establishment is access being sought for (name(s) or type(s) of establishment)?**

Access is being sought to women's prisons only and in particular, Holloway, Send, Cookham Wood, East Sutton Park and New Hall.

**Have these establishments (or any others) been approached separately about this research? If so, please provide details:**

My initial understanding of this process was that I should approach individual prisons in order to gauge their interest and to determine whether they were already participating in

research which would make a further project difficult. Prior to the completion of this application therefore, I wrote to all the women's prisons in England in order to gain some feedback about those establishments which may be interested in this research and to determine whether a local or national application for research would be the most relevant. Thus far Holloway, Send, Cookham Wood, East Sutton Park and New Hall have expressed interest in the study and asked us to obtain the relevant permission. At this point it became clear that the national application and clearance was the relevant approach to take.

**How long will the researcher(s) need to be inside each prison establishment (number of days and numbers of hours a day)?**

☐ It is envisaged that the following time would be required:

\* 1- 1.5 hours per interview with each participant

\* 20 - 30 minutes between interviews to allow for escorts and tea breaks

\* 4 - 5 interviews per day

\* The number of days within each establishment would be driven by the numbers of participants in each sample. Since this would entail a random sample of admissions, we would need to be advised by each establishment as to the potential numbers. At this stage however, working to the above figures, the following estimates could be made.

\* 20 participants would require 4 – 5 days

\* 50 participants would require 10 – 12 days

**How long will the researcher(s) need to be in contact with prisoners?**

1 – 1.5 hours per participant

**How many prisoners would be involved?**

Because I would like to interview a random sample of admissions, I would have to be advised by the prisons involved how many participants I could realistically expect within such a sample.

**Are there any special requirements (random selection, specific prisoner groups etc.)?**

I would like to interview a random sample of prisoners recently admitted to the prison in order to determine whether they have been the victims of violence prior to detention. I would be guided by the prisons involved as to how many participants we could expect within such a random sample.

**How long will the researcher(s) need to be in contact with prison staff?**

The researchers would need to be in contact with prison staff for as long as is necessary in order for staff to escort us and the participants between interviews and to be present during the interviews taking place. Specifically, this might entail the following:

\* 1 – 2 members of staff facilitating for each day during the collection of the data.

This of course will depend on internal procedures and we would be keen to engage with the prisons about how this could best be managed.

**Which type of staff would be involved?**

\* Prison officers for escorting participants and being present during the interviews.

**How many staff would be involved?**

I would envisage 1 or 2 staff being involved as described above.

**Are there any resource implications for Prison Service Headquarters?** (anticipated demands on staff time, office requirements, information etc...)

As above depending on internal procedures.

## **RESEARCH ETHICS**

**What procedures are there in place to ensure that the consent of inmates will be obtained on a valid and informed basis and that the information will comply with the Data Protection Act? (Attach examples of consent forms)**

Loughborough University operates its own ethics procedures and has its own Ethical Advisory Committee to which application has been made and granted in support of this research. A copy of this is enclosed with this application.

In order to comply with the Data Protection Act, copies of participant consent forms and the participant information sheet - also required according to University ethics procedures -are also enclosed.

In addition to all of the above, the researchers will verbally communicate to the participants at the start of each and every interview that they can withdraw from the research at any time.

**Under which ethical guidelines will the research be conducted?**

The research will be conducted under the University Ethics Procedures and a copy of all relevant information pertaining to this is enclosed.

**Has a relevant Ethics Committee approved the research?**

Please attach a copy of the submission to the Ethics Committee and its response:

Yes, this has been approved by Loughborough University and a copy of the University Ethics submission and approval is enclosed.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

Please return this form, together with

- Copies of the CVs of all researchers
- Copies of any submission to an Ethics Committee and its response
- Copies of any questionnaires, topic schedules, and consent forms

To ONE of the following:

- Prison Governor/ Research Contact



Area Psychologist

Prison Service Headquarters – Psychology Group

## **Appendix B**

### GUIDANCE ON THE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

#### WITHIN HM PRISON SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

##### **1. Applying to conduct research with HM Prison Service establishments**

Under Prison Service Order 7030, the decision as to whether to grant access to researchers to Prison Service establishments lies with the Governor of the establishment concerned. He or she will normally nominate as a contact point the Research Liaison Officer.

Where there are questions about the desirability or methodology of the research, the Governor may seek the advice of the Area Psychologist. The latter will advise on the ethics and methodology of the research, and whether it is best placed to meet Prison Service needs. If the researcher is seeking access to several establishments in an area, or to multiple prisons in the female, juvenile, or High Security estate, the Area Psychologist may be asked to act as the contact point on behalf of all the prisons. Decisions on whether to grant access remain, however, with the Governors of the prisons concerned.

Research requests with a wider applicability may occasionally be referred to a relevant Headquarters Group to act as the contact point and broker any access to establishments.

## **2. Criteria for Assessing Applications**

The Prison Service is committed to developing policy and practice in line with the evidence of “What Works”. We therefore wish to encourage research whenever possible. However, the sheer volume of requests (particularly in relation to some types of establishments and groups of prisoners, for example female prisons and life sentenced prisoners) mean that Governors must be selective when considering proposals. Further, the Prison Service has a duty of care to prisoners, which includes ensuring that they are not subject to unnecessary intrusions into their privacy or subjected to potentially damaging research procedures.

Research will normally only be allowed, therefore, if the following conditions are met:

### **(a) The researcher is a post-graduate –**

Many requests for research come from under-graduates looking for data for projects that form part of a social science course. It would be impractical for the Prison Service to assist with all of these and it is unlikely, given the size of such studies and the level of experience of the researcher, that they will add significantly to the body of knowledge in the subject area. Students on placements who are supervised by a member of prison staff and who are undertaking projects related to the needs of the establishment, however, will be treated as an exception.

### **(b) Demand on staff and resources is manageable -**

Although on occasion research projects will be brokered through a Headquarters Unit or at Area level, the final decision as to whether the demands on staff and resources can be accommodated lies with the Governor of the establishment concerned. Researchers often under-estimate the amount of staff time involved in arranging even a small number of prisoner interviews or distribution of questionnaires. In some establishments space is at a premium, making projects impractical.

**(c) The project is of sufficient quality**

A good research proposal should give a resume of previous research and explain how the proposed study derives from this. It should also include a logical and well-thought through methodology, including sampling techniques and a timetable. The proposal should also state clearly what value the results will provide; research should be of benefit to the Service and/ or enhance academic knowledge significantly.

**(d) The project avoids duplicating or conflicting with other current research studies**

Research proposals should clearly indicate previous research in the proposed area. Research does sometimes require replicating results, either on different populations or in different circumstances. However, problems can arise if external researchers address an area on which there is already a national project, with a different perspective. The Research Strategy Team at the Home Office (Tel: 020 7273 3992) can advise on elements of the national research programme and have a database upon which all research projects of which it has been informed are stored.

**(e) Ethical issues have been reviewed and approved**

The Researchers must make clear the ethical guidelines under which they will be operating. Where there is any sensitivity, the research should be approved by an Ethics Committee, especially if the proposal involves access to prisoners. All universities, NHS trusts and many professional organisations and funding bodies have Ethics Committees, which consider research proposals. Ethics Committees assess research in terms of any ethical issues that might arise. They consider how subjects will be treated, what they will be told, and aspects of consent and confidentiality. They also look at how information will be used. They are

very valuable in ensuring that research is conducted in a professional manner and provide a safeguard against the risk of research exposing subjects to damage.

### **3. Conduct of research**

Researchers within HM Prison Service establishments will be expected to

- ☐ Be security cleared. This will normally be arranged by the establishment in which they will (first) be conducting their research;
- ☐ Abide by the security arrangements of the establishment. This may affect what equipment is brought into the establishment;
- ☐ Submit any questionnaires or interview schedules in advance for clearance;
- ☐ Undertake interviewing in a professional manner. The researcher should not provide details of their contact address/e-mail (any requests to contact the researcher should be routed through the establishment). The researcher should make clear the limits on confidentiality. The researcher should make clear the right of the participants to withdraw at a later date if they wish.
- ☐ Conduct their research with reference to the Prison Service's Professional Principles (forthcoming).

## Appendix C

### Statement of Professional Principles

#### Aims and scope of research

- ☐ The aims of any research should not conflict with the statement of purpose of HM Prison Service.
- ☐ Research within the Prison Service should not compromise the rights, safety and wellbeing of participants.
- ☐ Research conducted within the Prison Service should be intended to benefit the Prison Service or enhance academic knowledge significantly.
- ☐ Applicants should review research previously conducted in the same area to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- ☐ If the research design changes materially during the period of the research, the researcher should inform their Prison Service research contact.

#### Role of participants

- ☐ Researchers should have in place a sound procedure for securing informed and valid consent from participants in the research and this consent should be provided before research commences. If researchers are not intending to secure consent from participants an explanation will be required.
- ☐ **In the case of adults who are vulnerable because of social, psychological or medical circumstances, or learning difficulties great care must be taken in obtaining consent. If necessary an independent third party should be used.**
- ☐ **In the case of children, the consent of the child as well as the parent should be sought. Researchers should provide information that can be understood by the child and assess whether the child has the capacity to understand the research. In addition, researchers should have regard of issues of child protection and make provision for the potential disclosure of abuse.**
- ☐ **Provision should be put in place for participants to withdraw from the research, they should be made aware of this right.**
- ☐ Participants should be informed that they will suffer no disadvantage as a result of their

decision to participate or not participate in the research.

- ② Research participants should be aware of the purpose of the research in which they are involved, and who has funded it. If researchers are not intending to inform participants of the purpose of their research, an explanation will be required.
- ② **Research participants should not be subject to intrusive or unnecessary investigations.**
- ② **The anonymity and confidentiality of research participants and their information must be secured. Participants should be made aware of the procedures that have been put in place for this purpose.**
- ② **Researchers are under a duty to disclose certain information to the Prison Service. This includes behaviour that is against prison rules and can be adjudicated against (see Section 51 of the Prison Rules 1999), illegal acts, and behaviour that is harmful to the research participant (e.g. intention to self-harm or complete suicide). Researchers should make research participants aware of this requirement.**

### **Methodology**

- ☐ Research applications should be methodologically sound with a clear and logical research design.
- ☐ Research designs should be appropriate so as to reach sound research conclusions with the smallest number of research participants.
- ☐ *Researchers must declare any financial benefits or losses that may be accrued by research participants.*

### **Legal requirements**

- ☐ *Researchers must comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.*

### **Access to research**

- ☐ Researchers should make clear in their application who will have access to data collected during their research. If they propose to change who has access to the data, they should consult the Governor/ Area Psychologist.
- ☐ Research participants should also be made aware of who will have access to the research.

### **Data security**

- ☐ Researchers should store all data securely and ensure that the data is coded in a way that maintains the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants.
- ☐ Researchers should state the length of time that the research data will be stored after the research has been completed (this would normally be twelve months, but a longer period may be negotiated with the Prison Service research contact); the data should be destroyed securely as soon as is practicable.



### **Use of research**

- ☐ The researcher should state in their research application how their research will be used and disseminated.
- ☐ The researcher should make a draft of any report/ publications resulting from the research available to the Prison Service research contact for comment and to check for factual inaccuracies.

### **Capacity of researchers**

- ☐ Researchers should be aware of the skills and competencies needed to conduct and analyse the research that is being proposed and should only undertake research that they are qualified to conduct.

### **Ethics**

- ☐ If the research presents ethical issues or problems, researchers should refer their research plan to the appropriate local research ethics committee (e.g. university, NHS, or research body) for approval.
- ☐ In these situations, a statement of approval from the local ethics committee should be included with the research application.
- ☐ Researchers should comply with the Prison Service Equal Opportunities statement and the Prison Service Race Relations Policy statement.

**The Statement of Professional Principles has been drawn up with reference to:**

- 1 The British Psychological Society Code of Conduct**
- 1 The British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice**
- 1 The British Society of Criminology Code of Research Ethics**



## **Appendix D**

### **Examples of ethical issues raised in research applications**

This list provides some illustrations of ethical issues that can arise in research and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the ethical issues that applications can present. Please see the Statement of Professional Principles (Appendix C) for details of the standards that are expected from research.

#### **Informed consent**

It is essential that if proposed research involves contributions from research participants that they provide informed consent. This means that they fully understand the nature of the research that is taking place and agree to take part in it without any coercion.

Researchers should have procedures in place to ensure that research participants do provide informed consent before they take part in research. This will usually be via a consent form, which should describe the research that is taking place, the information that the research participant will be asked to provide, and how this information will be used. The consent form should be easy to read, and measures should be taken to ensure that vulnerable participants (including those with literacy problems) understand the content of the form.

In addition, it should be made clear to research participants that they can withdraw from the research at any point, and that this will not compromise them in any way.

### **Participation in research**

Taking part in research should not lead to any financial benefits or losses for research participants. In addition, potential participants should not feel that they will incur social benefits or losses due to their participation or non-participation in the research.

For example, if a researcher is intending to interview a prisoner, this may mean that the prisoner loses wages from spending time in an interview when s/he would normally be undertaking work. Researchers should address this issue in their research application. Conversely, it is not generally desirable for prisoners to be paid for being involved with research.

### **Right to privacy/ confidentiality**

Research participants can be harmed if their privacy is jeopardised by research. Researchers should always make sure that research participants remain anonymous, unless there are very good reasons, and even in these circumstances express consent would be required from the research participants. Researchers should also make sure that contacting research participants does not compromise their privacy.

For example, if a researcher is known to be conducting research about sex offenders who deny their offences, approaching prisoners may identify their offence to their fellow prisoners. Researchers would therefore have to make sure that their research design protected research participants' undisclosed offences being broadcast to other prisoners.

However, there are circumstances when a researcher is under a duty to disclose certain information to the Prison Service. This includes:

- ☐ Behaviour that is against prison rules and can be adjudicated against (please see Section 51 of the Prison Rules 1999)
- ☐ Undisclosed illegal acts
- ☐ Behaviour that is harmful to the research participant (e.g. intention to self-harm or complete suicide)

Researchers should inform research participants that they have a duty to divulge such information.

### **Research with vulnerable participants**

If research is undertaken with vulnerable prisoners – such as young prisoners, offenders with learning difficulties or those who are vulnerable due to psychological or medical circumstances - then researchers should put special precautions in place to ensure that research participants do understand the scope of their research and the role that they are being asked to undertake. It is also essential that consent is given freely. Consent will usually be required from a parent or other responsible adult for children to take part in the research.

In addition, if the research concerns subjects that are potentially disturbing e.g. abuse, suicide, family history etc. researchers should ensure that there is provision of suitable support for prisoners who have taken part in the research.

### **Research already approved**

If a University/ NHS Ethics Committee has approved a piece of research but you retain concerns about it; please ask the researcher for a copy of the submission to their local ethics committee and the reply that they received. This may alleviate any misgivings that you hold, but if you are still concerned about the research – please refer it to your local Area Psychologist.

**Appendix 2**

Kunal Mehta Efficiency Strategy &  
Research Her Majesty's Prison  
Service First Floor (Room 120),  
Cleland House Page Street London,  
SW1P 4LN

TEL: 020 7217 5722

FAX: 020 7217 5533

kunal.mehta@hmps.gsi.gov.uk

Date: Friday, 01 December 2006

CC: Ian Maris, Lindy Maslin, Jo Bailey, Karen Brady, Paula Wilkinson, Joanne Corr, and Carol Smith

To: Dr Kate Moss-Brookes

Midlands Centre for  
Criminology Department of  
Social Science Loughborough  
University Loughborough, ST15  
0GY

Request to undertake research in HM Prison  
Service

Title: The experience and treatment of women prisoners as victims of violence

Reference:

PG/2006/061

Establishments: HMP Send, Cookham Wood, East Sutton Park and New Hall (HMP

Holloway)

The National Research Committee (NRC) has consulted on and reviewed your application to conduct research at HM Prisons. In principle, we are pleased to be able to support your application subject to the agreement of the Governor and Research Contacts at establishment level and strictly subject to the following:

1. That you fully cooperate in a professional manner with requests from Prison staff.
2. That you are aware that HMP Holloway is extremely busy and currently overwhelmed with research (as per our conversation on 01 December 2006).
3. That you keep me (and other relevant Prison staff) informed and updated on any changes made to your methodology, especially regarding any visits to Prisons that we are not aware of.
4. That the Prison Service receives a copy of any research dissertation submitted as a result of the research.
5. That the Prison Service receives copies of any papers submitted for publication based on this research at least one month in advance of the publication.
6. That it is made clear to participants verbally, as well as in writing, that they may withdraw from the research at any point and that this will have no adverse impact on them.

The NRC is content that the below concerns and actions have been successfully addressed and will remain so:

1. That you are aware of the vulnerability of inmates who have been recently admitted and sentenced and that you work closely with the research contacts to address this concern and make your methodology more rigid in this respect. The NRC suggests that you wait until such participants are more settled.
2. That you update your participant information sheet as below:
  - a. That you replace 'hospital/prison' with 'prison' under 'will your taking part in this study be kept confidential?'

b. That you replace 'shared in way' with 'shared in a way' in that last sentence under 'will your taking part in this study be kept confidential?'.

c. That under 'what will happen to the results of the research study' you replace 'writing to the address above' with 'writing to the address below' and replace 'securely and destroyed confidentially' with 'secure and confidential'

d. That under 'who has reviewed the study' you also add Loughborough University ethics.

3. That you review the attached suggested templates for the PIF and Consent form.

4. That you continue to make full note of changes you have made to your methodology owing to concerns from the NRC and its consultant members.

Again, we direct you to PSO 7035 and our website that contains essential information regarding your research.

I take this opportunity to wish you the very best with your research.

Please do get back to me should you require further details as the above points are strict conditions for your research to remain approved.

Yours

sincerely,

Kunal Mehta (Mr) Research Officer  
Efficiency Strategy & Research  
Section Planning Group



**Appendix 3**

**Sample consent  
form**

University Headed  
Paper

**Participant Information Number for  
Study:**

**CONSENT  
FORM**

**Title of Project: Womens' Experience of  
Violence**

**Name of Researchers: Dr Kate Moss**

**Please initial  
box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, dated \_\_\_\_\_

for the above study and have had an opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my parole, standards of care, rights or privileges being affected.

3. I understand that sections of my notes may be looked at by appropriate members of the University of Loughborough research team, where it is relevant to my taking part in research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

---

Name of Participant Date Signature

---

Name of Person taking consent Date Signature

(if different from  
researcher)

Dr Kate Moss/ \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Date Signature

One for patient, one for researcher; one to be kept with hospital/prison files

## **Appendix 4**

Questionnaire given to inmates

### ***Have You Ever Been the Victim of Violence?***

If you have, we would like you to think about taking part in a research study which is being carried out by the Midlands Centre for Criminology at Loughborough University. This centre carries out studies into different types of crime in an effort to prevent it. If you take part, you could help us and the prison service to find better ways of caring for you and people like you.

### ***So, what is the study about?***

We would like to find out:

1. If you have been the victim of any sort of violence before you came into prison.
2. What effect you think that violence has had on you.
3. Where you will go when you are released, will you be in danger and whether this will be taken into consideration.

### ***What will happen if you do decide to take part?***

If you have experienced violence of any kind, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given more information about the study and be asked to sign a consent form. If you do decide to take part, a researcher would like to interview you. The interview would last about an hour and a half. You would be free to withdraw at any time and you don't have to give a reason.

### ***Will the information I give in this study be confidential?***

Information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly



## **Appendix 5**

### **Interview structure**

THE EXPERIENCE AND TREATMENT OF WOMEN PRISONERS AS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

PILOT SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview which is trying to identify two things.

1. Whether you've experienced violence of any sort against you.
2. Whether you are being or will be offered support in relation to this, either during your sentence or upon release.

I'll be asking you some questions which will help to achieve this aim. There are seven sections – each of which I'll describe as we come to them. Throughout this interview you'll be able to expand on any particular aspect if appropriate.

I want to assure you that the result of this questionnaire will be totally anonymous. Should you feel uncomfortable with the questions at any point please tell me.

Firstly, I want to briefly examine the reason for your current imprisonment and ask you for some supporting information.

Do you need to clarify anything before I begin?

#### **1. Background information**

Can I ask you a few questions about yourself please?

How old are you?

Are you single, married, separated, divorced or widowed?

What is your ethnic origin?

#### **2. Your current imprisonment**

Can I now ask you some questions about your current imprisonment?

What was the offence (or offences) for which you were imprisoned?

Can you briefly explain how long you are serving and when you expect to be released?

Have you been in prison or YOI before and if so, can you explain why and for how long you were imprisoned?

### **3. Violence experienced generally**

In this section I would like to ask you some questions about your situation generally. I want to find out if you ever been the victim of violence or abuse of any kind during your life.

These questions might be a bit hard to answer as they are about a sensitive issue, but it is important for me to try to understand why you were abused and how this may have affected you. Please take your time or stop if you feel you need to.

Have you ever experienced violence or abuse from another person or persons, and can you tell me about this?

*Aide memoire for researcher only Can you please describe to me how this abuse came about, what type of abuse was it and how it did affect you? Who abused you? Have you been physically injured due to violence? Have you been hurt emotionally or in any other way you can describe? Why do you think you were abused? How did this violence make you feel?*

### **4. Violence experienced before the current sentence**

Now I would like to ask you some specific questions about violence you may have experienced before you committed the offence for which you are currently imprisoned. I want to find out if there is any link between anything that may have happened to you and the offence you committed.

Did you experience any form of violence before you committed the offence for which you were imprisoned, and can you describe this to me?

How did this make you feel?

Has anyone asked you about this before?

## **5. Reactions to abuse**

Now I would like to ask you about anything you tried to do to stop the abuse happening.

Did you try to do anything to prevent the violence? If not, why?

*Aide memoire for researcher only Do you think you could have stopped the violence. Did you try to stop it happening? Did you tell family, friends, the police your doctor or anyone else about the violence? How helpful were they?*

## **6. Treatment in prison and views on treatment or self-help programmes**

In this section, I would like to ask you about any support you are currently receiving in prison and what help you might get when you leave.

Are there any help or treatment programmes in this prison which apply to women who have been victims of violence? If so, can you tell me about how it works? If not, do you think there should be?

*Aide memoire for researcher only Has anyone at all ever asked you about violence you have experienced. Are you on any medical treatment as a result of the abuse you suffered? Have you had any counselling?*

Are you aware of any help or treatment programmes outside of this which might be helpful to you?

*Aide memoire for researcher only What additional programmes would be helpful?*

## **7. After your release**

In this last section, I would like to ask you about your views on the future after you



have been released from prison.

Where will you be going when you are released, and do you feel you will be in danger?

*Aide memoire for researcher only Will the person or persons who abused you still be at large? Have you thought of moving to another area when you are released? Do you require help to move to another area? Have you already found a place to live? Have you had any offers of help? Have you spoken to anyone in the prison service or others about your fear? Will you receive any protection? What are your future plans and goals when you are released from prison?*

I want to thank you for taking part in this study. I am grateful to you for sharing some difficult issues with me. This is important research the results of which could improve understandings of women who experience violence and assist in providing better help or treatment. You have made a valuable contribution to this.



## Appendix 6 Transcripts

### STYAL PRISON

#### Background information about the offenders and their current imprisonment

This section of the primary data findings gives the background and current sentence information of the women prisoner's in Styal Prison:-

1. A British white single 39 year old mother of two children aged 16 and 10 who are living with their father. 1 was sentenced for Arson. The offender has not been in prison or young offenders institute before. 2. Is 20 years of age her origin is British White. 2 has no children and single. She was sentenced in 2005 for three years and will be released in 2008. 2 reported that she never has been in prison or YOI before. Committed theft. 3. Is a 46 years old, Single, British white mother of five children who are living with their grand parents. 3 was sentenced in 2005 for wounding with intent, she was sentenced for 4 years and six months. 4. Is a 42 year old, separated British white, mother of three children who are living independently. 4 was sentenced for burglary in 2002 for six years imprisonment, will be released in 2008 and has never been in prison or YOI. 5. Is a 30 years old, British white, separated mother of four children aged, 3,13,12,9 living in foster care. 5 was sentenced for theft and assault, she was sentenced for 12 months in 2007 and will be released in 2007. This offender has not been in prison or YOI before. 6. Is a 46 years old, British white, single mother of five children who are living independently. 6 was sentenced in 1998 for murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. 6 was not sure whether she will be released or not. She has never been in prison or YOI. 7. is a 37 year old, single Somalian with no children. This offender committed manslaughter in 2003, will serve five years in prison and will be released in 2008. 7 has not been in prison or YOI before. 8. Is 42 years old British white, Single, mother of a two years old girl, who is in foster care. 8 was sentenced (2003) to five years imprisonment and expected to be released in 2008. She has never been in prison or YOI before. Committed fraud. 7

## **Violence experienced**

All eight women claimed that they experienced violence by either their boyfriends or husbands or by their biological fathers. 1 was abused by her ex-boyfriend. "I was abused by my ex-boyfriend. 2 experienced violence by her partner, "My ex-partner was hitting me and abusing me." 3 was in an abusive relationship with her husband. "I was in an abusive relationship with my husband. 4 was treated badly by her partner, "I was abused by my partner – he treated me like dirt and a dog. He never respected me or cared about my feelings." 5 experienced violence perpetrated by her partner. 6 was abused by her husband. "I was abused by my husband." 7 suffered at the hands of her biological father and then was abused by her boyfriend. "My dad abused me and my mum. While I was growing up I met my boyfriend. He was nice at first then he started bullying me." 8 experienced violence at the hands of her partner. 8 reported "My partner abused me." "Always abused me."

## **FORMS OF ABUSE**

All eight women reported experiencing physically, verbally, being threatened and controlled. One woman confirmed being raped. 1 confirmed experiencing many forms of violence. "He was very controlling, mentally torturing me and verbally and physically abusing me. I experienced violence in every way. You name it and I had it." "It was very suffocating, it was emotional and it was always on my mind." "I had black, red, purple bruises everywhere - it was sick. I had split lips, stitches, cuts everywhere." It was a living hell and a nightmare zone." He was very dominating. He wanted power, it gave him pleasure punching me." "It was horrifying Oh god! - the things I went through." 2 faced abused after moving in with her partner and confirmed that he was on drugs and was very messed up. While her partner was not on drugs he still abused her and controlled her. 2 felt like dying because of the violence she had suffered. 2 stated "It all happened when we moved in to together. He was on drugs and all sorts of mess. Whether he was on drugs and not on drugs he always abused me and hit me so hard. He loved to control me it made him feel like a big hard man. He physically and verbally abused me." "I was always crying and crying - it was so bad it's hard to explain the pain I went through just because of that one man. Once he kept on kicking me in the stomach, I couldn't move - I was stiff because of the pain and agony. "I was so angry with my life and felt like dying and dying." 3 had no idea why she was abused. She thought it was maybe because she had five daughters and no sons. Her husband did not like girls because he thought girls were weak and useless. 3 stated that the abuse made her feel paralysed. "He was a big bully; he controlled, hit me and threatened me mentally. He always twisted my arms, it hurt so badly and it was so bad. He bruised me on my knees

lots of times and on my face. I have no clue why he did this. I did what he wanted me to do all the time. I don't understand men. I really don't. I have five girls and he wanted boys. That's where it all started. Men -they don't like females because they think they're very weak and useless." "His attitude towards me was upsetting and emotionally saddening." It made me weak and I felt paralysed." 4 reported that her partner did not respect her and treated her like an animal. 4 stated "he treated me like dirt and a dog. He never respected me or cared about my feelings. He hit me always on my head, banged me lots of times on the wall very hard, and bruised my body and my heart. He blackmailed me, saying that he'd kill me and threatened me. He controlled me on everything. I was emotionally hurt and then because of this I turned to drugs so I could escape my pain." "I was always upset because of the way he treated me and showed me no respect. "I got treated like an animal." "It made me very insecure and worried about my future. It was like I was not in control of my own life and that someone had taken over my whole life and mind." "I did not think positively I only thought negatively."

5 went through traumatic violence, her partner raped her and she was in shock because of the rape she had experienced. The rape made her feel dirty. 5 stated "My ex-partner raped me physically and mentally abused me. He also controlled my life from day one. "He raped me, which was traumatic for me" "I was in shock because of the rape. He kicked me everywhere on my body." "The violence experienced damaged my life from top to bottom." "The rape was emotionally upsetting." "I was very down, low and I felt my body was dirty." 6 was bullied by her husband and was hurt because of the remarks he made about her. 6 stated she was always bullied and controlled "He hit me with his belt. He whipped me lots of times on my back and left lots of marks. I couldn't move for weeks because of the bruises. I don't have any idea why he kept hitting me. He used to say that I was rubbish, ugly and looked like a pig. This made me very upset and low, I felt like killing him, which I did. I couldn't take the nasty talk any longer." 7 suffered control, physical violence and mental abuse. 7 stated "My dad abused my mum, and me - he controlled us, hit us, bullied us, mentally abused us." "My mum died when I was six, then the Social Services took me away from my dad because they realised I was being bullied and hurt."

"I grew up without both parents. I lived in foster care, which was okay, but I always suffered because of the violence I went through with my dad, I was heart broken when I lost my mum - she loved me a lot, I miss her loads." "While I was growing up I met my boyfriend. He was nice at first then he started bullying me, controlling me and slapping, kicking me around." "He was wicked and nasty towards me for no reason. "This made me low and down. I lost my confidence totally. "I left him after two years because I had had enough." "I couldn't stay any longer with him."

8 states that her partner tried to kill her. "He stamped on my hands with his foot and held tight on my neck. "He wanted to strangle me to death." "He wanted me to do what he said - he was in control when we were together." "The abuse confused me and made me weak and I had no strength in my life." "I had lots of injuries because of the violence. I never went to see a doctor because they would ask lots of questions."

### **Violence experienced before the current sentence**

All women confirmed that the crimes they committed, were a build up due to the violence they had experienced. 1 confirmed experiencing horrific violence before the offence. "I experienced horrifying violence before my offence. I was so down...so down. I just lashed out. I was so hurt, so hurt. I was punched in the face by my boyfriend and kicked around before my offence. The ten years of domestic violence really got to me and I just shot like a gun. The abuse really got to me. During that time I felt bad for what I did. I was not thinking." "Because of violence I always felt low, worthless, ashamed of myself and weak." 2 reported being abused before the crime she committed. 2 wanted to forget the whole experience, turned to drugs and needed money. "I was so badly abused by him that I just wanted to forget it. I turned to drugs before I committed the offence. I burgled for money so I could get drugs. I needed drugs to forget my pain and to stop crying and just forget everything." "I was so low and down before my offence I felt lonely." "When I went to court the Judge was aware of my experience - that's probably why I got less time." 3 snapped because of the violence, she was mentally abused and emotional before the offence.

"Because of the abuse I just snapped. I tried to hurt him because he hurt me mentally and emotionally. It got to me, it just made me want to hurt him." I don't want another relationship with a man - it's damaging and results in crime." "My problems were never brought to light - it was all kept quiet because, at the end of the day, I tried to hurt him - that's how everybody in the court saw it." 4 stated being victimised before the offence. "I was victimised before my offence. I was abused mentally and physically I was not thinking straight. Everything was negative, I had no money I was skint, I needed money for my drugs and my children. "He never cared about the kids or me. I had to feed them." "Domestic violence ruins your life and only a victim can understand this feeling." "Nobody asked me why I had done this crime."

5 reported being raped before the offence. "Before my offence I was raped - it was a bad time and a terrifying experience for me. "I was angry and upset, I just wanted to hurt

someone because of what he had done to me.” “Because of the rape I went and done a very bad thing.” “The judge knew this but I did not report my rape incident to the police - that’s why the jurors saw me in a bad way.” 6 confirmed that the abuse affected her and ruined her life. “Mental abuse was affecting me a lot, it ruined my life, which led to his murder. If I was not abused I wouldn’t have hurt him.” Before my offence he pulled by hair and tried to cut my throat with a blade. Everything happened quickly and fast. My head was spinning and spinning.” “I got scared because of the crime - I just panicked then. I called the police myself.” “I said in court what had happened but it’s a crime at the end of the day.” 7 reported that she was being bullied by the person she was caring for and reminded her of both her father and boyfriend.” “Before my offence I was looking after an elderly lady whom I cared for.” “I killed her because she always snapped at me, she was hurting me and always kicking me. She was not ill or anything - she was cruel and horrible. I totally had enough from everyone and I just stabbed her. I did not want do it but it just took place - it was very bad. It was a big mess” “I thought to myself here I go again bullied and messed up.” “I just wanted to go to the doctor’s for help, I was going mad and sick.” 8 killed her partner because of the abuse she suffered. “I was abused before I killed my partner, the abuse made me just snap. “I had no choice when I killed him. It would have been me if I didn’t snap or it would have been someone else.” “I didn’t mean to kill him, I was unhappy.” “The probation officer knew about my problems and my abuse.”

### **Reactions to abuse**

All women reported trying to stop the violence by trying to leave the abuser/s. Many people around these women were aware of violence. Some were helpful and some were not.

1 stated that she tried to leave the abuser but he was stronger than her and that she still loved him. “I tried to leave him lots of times. I lost count how many times I tried to leave him. I fought back but he was stronger than I was. “I tried to get away from it all but it was difficult. They can be nice but they really don’t mean it. My friend was aware what was going on. She was helpful, but I loved him. The police got involved but they were not helpful they did nothing - only give advice like go to Women’s Aid.” 2 stated that she tried to leave the abuser but he always followed her and he was strict. “I tried to leave him lots of time. He was a bad tempered man.

“He always followed me wherever I went. My family knew about my experience. “They wanted me to leave him but I was scared that he might kill them if I left him. He did not like me going to see my parents. My parents left town because of him and his violence. The police were involved but they did not do much because I didn’t react strongly.” 3 reported to

the police that she was experiencing violence but they were not very helpful. "I phoned the police a couple of times but they couldn't do much apart from give some warnings." "My problem was that I always dropped the charges - it's hard to explain when you are married." "My family have helped me by supporting me, but it's always on your mind, it's hard to forget violence." I will fight myself to forget the abuse by talking and being open about my abuse."

4 described leaving the abuser but went back to him because of her children. "I tried to stop the violence by leaving him but I went back to him. "I had to think about my children and their happiness. "I wanted them to have a good upbringing but he never let this happen. "My children were scared because of the violence. I tried to protect them but it was so hard." "I tried to ease my own mind by clinging onto this creature but it did not work – he's not the kind type." "My sister knew of my problems - she got involved in helping me but it never worked."

5 tried to stop the violence but was dragged back by the abuser and was blackmailed. "I did try to stop the violence by leaving, me but he found me and dragged me home by the hair and blackmailed me by saying that he'd kill my children if I did not come home or left him again. "I wanted nothing bad to happen to my babies so I listened and got beaten in all the time."

6 wanted to leave but was caught by the hair all the time. "I tried leaving him, but he caught me by the hair, pulled me and dragged me all the time. "My family was aware of the abuse - they said to leave him. I tried to leave, but it was my own fault for not trying harder - I was scared of him you see. "My family had enough - they always said to me he's not good for me and he's wrong."

7 reports "I tried to leave my job but I had no money nothing. "I had nowhere to go, no family, nobody - every body was gone, my mum had gone. "I had no shelter, no love, no family."

8 tried to leave and was afraid because the abuser was a bully. "It was a bad relationship and I tried to leave him but he was a big strong bully." "I did everything for him but he abused me for his own pleasure." "My family knew but they wanted no problems because he had big bully friends who would kill them if they got involved." "They said a number of times to go to the police and leave him. "I did not get the police involved because he would kill me and my parents and my child."

### **Treatment in prison and views on treatment or self help programmes**



All eight women prisoners stated that they attended a Freedom programme, which applies to women victims of violence, and stated that the course was very helpful, excellent and made them stronger and see things differently.

1 stated she attended a relationship course and a freedom programme course which she benefited from. 1 also stated that the freedom programme made her realise that domestic violence was not her fault. "I have done a course here in Styal Prison. I completed a Relationship course and a Freedom programme, which was excellent. It helped me to see things differently. I will never be a victim of violence again, that's for sure. During the Freedom programme women have opportunities to talk about their experiences and there is wide discussion about the dominator and the types of men. The freedom programme is a fantastic course, it makes me feel stronger and I see things from a different direction and I realised then that I was a victim and it was not my fault." 1 also feels positive about her life and looks forward to life. "The prison service was aware that I experienced violence. I heard about this course and I attended the course which I am pleased about." "I am not on any medications." "I am also attending counselling courses which helps me to talk to someone about my experience. I can talk to a counsellor whenever I need to. When I speak to a counsellor I feel I've got something to look forward to in life in a positive way and life is worth living." "Not really certain or sure if there are any courses outside of prison which relate to victims of abuse."

2 reported that the Freedom programme was excellent, very helpful to talk about her experience of violence. "I am attending a course called the "Freedom Programme". The course is excellent and very helpful. I also attend a counselling course, which is excellent. I get to talk a lot about my past and it makes me feel better." In the Freedom programme women get to talk about domestic violence and the abuser. This course is a good listening course." "I am not on any medication." "No courses are available for women outside of prison."

3 reported that any women attending the Freedom programme will benefit from it.

"I have attended the Freedom programme which is offered to women prisoners who have been victims of violence. The course helps women to talk about their experiences and discuss different types of men. It gives a chance to meet other women and helps you to think that you are not by yourself." "Any women doing this course will benefit from it and learn a lot about it." "The prison service was aware that I was a victim of violence. They gave out information on the types of courses women can attend who have been victims of violence." "I am also doing a counselling course on top of my Freedom course. It helps me a lot to forget my past by talking to other people about my problems." "I get a lot of help here, it's good to have support in prison." "I am on anti-depression tablets because of the violence I experienced. The violence has made me very depressed." I need to find out if there is any treatment for women when released."

4 stated that the freedom programme is an eye opener to all women in prison and outside of prison. "I have attended the Freedom programme. The programme is an eye opener for all women - not just for women in prison but women outside and women refugees. "Women get together and discuss the types of men and other things." "I would recommend this course to anyone - it will help them." "I also go to a counselling course, I have the chance to talk to someone about my past. "Both courses are brilliant." "It's a mediation for women victims." "The prison was aware of my experience and they recommended this course to me." "I am on anti-depression pills because of the violence." "No courses outside of prison. "

5 confirmed that she attended a counselling course and Freedom Programme course which has helped her to talk about her past experience. "When I came into prison I went on a rape counselling course. The course helped me talk about it, but it's always there inside my head." "I have also done a Freedom programme which was fantastic and helpful talking about my life and listening to other women talking about men." "In prison people were aware that I was raped and that I needed help. They were helpful and still are." "I am taking medication for my depression." I am sure there are no courses outside of prison. "

6 stated the Freedom Programme helped her to think positively about herself and that women who tend to not talk about their problems feel down or commit suicide. 6 concluded that the help she is getting is making her feel better and not depressed. "I went on a course called the Freedom Programme it helped me to think positively about myself. I felt good about the course it made me think about different types of men." "The prison was aware that I was a victim of violence." "They referred me to this course, which was just right for me. "Women who do not talk about their problems or experiences feel more down, which results in suicide." "I am on anti-depression tablets but I think the help I am getting here will help me to stop the tablets." 7's probation officer recommended the Freedom Programme to her which helped her to talk about the problems she had. "I am taking anti-depression tablets to calm me down." "I went on the Freedom course. It helped me to think about everything and it helped me to talk about my experience." "I spoke to my probation officer about my past - she said to attend this programme." "No help outside of prison . Only Womens Aid if you get abused."

8 stated that she attended the Freedom Programme which was brilliant and useful to her, she was able to express and talk about her experiences. "I completed a Relationship course and a Freedom programme. The Freedom Programme was brilliant and very useful. "I was able to express my feelings and discuss with other women about my feelings." "I am not on any medication. I think if I had stayed with the abuse longer I would have had to go into a mental hospital." "if you need help

outside of prison you need to go to the police. Not heard of any programmes for women outside of prison. “

### **After release**

All women reported that they wanted to start a new life and that they would not be in any danger from anyone. 1 stated that she will start a new life with her children and will go to her parents' home. 1 also stated that she is a stronger woman and will not be in danger and wants to help victims of violence. “When I am released I will go back to my parents' home and my children. I won't be in danger - the abuser is not around anymore, he got lost a while ago. No one can use me and hurt me any more, I would resist. I am a stronger woman now. I want a good life for my children and me and to be a stronger person and not to be a victim any more. I want to work for Women's Aid and help other victims.” 2 stated that she will not be in danger, wants to start a new life and wants to make her family proud. “When I am released I will not be in any danger, he is out of my life now. The prison service will help me find a place. “I want to build a good life for myself and make something of myself. “I want my family to be proud of me. “I want to go back to college and do a course. I want to start a fresh life and never be in prison again and one day settle down.”

3 confirmed that she wants to be a better person and will not be in danger from the abuser. “Once I am out of this place I will go and stay with my brother until I find a place. The prison has said that I will get help to find a place. I will see what I will do when the time comes.” “I won't be in danger because the abuser has moved on. I will also move on and move somewhere very far. “I want to prove to myself that I will be a better person and that I've got lots of options in life. I want to do mentoring and help other women who have been victims of violence and start a new life.”

4 wanted to be a good Mum and start a fresh life when she is released.

“I want to go back home when I am released and be with my kids. I want to be a good Mum and a good person. “I want to start new and do something good with my life. My partner will not be around - we have separated and I am glad for that. “I should have left him the time he first started hitting me, maybe then I wouldn't have been in this mess and in prison.” 5 would like to start a fresh life with her children and forget the past. “I will go to my family and my children and start a good life. “I will try to forget the bad nightmare I experienced with my partner and start a fresh clean life.” “I won't be in danger because he's gone from my life and my mind.”

6 also wanted to make a fresh beginning with her children and will not be bullied by anyone. “If I am released I will start a new life with my children because I missed out seeing them growing up, which hurts me thinking that every day.” “I will start a new life and forget the past. He's gone and he won't

be around to bully me again or anyone else -that's for sure." 7 would like to do a course and start a new life when she is released from prison. "When I am released I will do a course, start a fresh life, earn money and find my own place. The probation officer will help me find a house and they will support me until I am settled." "Nobody will hurt me again and I want to be by myself for a long time - no more relationships, just me on my own."

8 reported that she would like to be with her two year old daughter and wanted her daughter to be educated. "I will go back to my family and my daughter. I miss her a lot and want to be with her." "I want to see her become a good person and not get involved with violent men." "I want her to be educated and be something when she grows up." "I will not be in danger when I am released from prison, I will be hassle free."

## **FOSTON HALL PRIOSN**

### **Background information about the offenders and their current imprisonment**

To understand a person's life situation it is important to know their background and the reason for their crimes. This section identifies the background and the offence which women prisoners have committed.

1 Thirty-five years old British white, single mother of one child aged eleven who is living with grandmother. 1 murdered her boy friend in 2002 and will be released in 2011. 1 is serving life imprisonment, recommended to serve nine years in prison. She has made an appeal on the grounds of self-defence. This offender has not been in prison or a Young Offenders' Institute (YOI) before.

2 Forty years old British Irish, married waiting for divorce, mother of three aged 12, 6, 3 years who are living with her family. Has been in prison for fraud and deception, serving six years and eight months. Will be released in 2008. Has been in prison but not YOI.

3 Forty years old British White, single mother of three children aged 22, 21, 18 years. Offence committed: murder in 1993. Will be released in 2017 and has not been in prison or YOI before.

4 Thirty-three years old, single, British White no children. Committed murder, has not been in prison or YOI before.

5 Thirty- one years of age, single British White, no children. Committed burglary and robbery will be released in 2007, has been in prison before.

6 Thirty-three years old black Caribbean, separated with two children aged 12, 9 living with their auntie. Offence committed was importation of drugs, serving 12 years in prison. The offender has not been in prison before or YOI.

7 Twenty-four years old single, White British and has no children. Offender was sentenced for Armed Robbery. Offender was not in prison or YOI before.

8 Thirty-three years old, British White, married, three children who are living with her partner. The offence committed was death by careless driving. She has not been in prison or YOI.

9 Thirty years old, British white, Single, no children. Sentenced for conspiracy to supply drugs. Was in prison before for five years but not in YOI before.

10 Thirty-four years old, British White,Single, has five children aged 17, 16, 12, 6, 2 years living with grand parents. In prison for armed robbery and has not been in prison or YOI before.

11 Forty –one years old, single, British White, Married, mother of two children aged 23 and 17 living with family. Committed murder in 1999 will be released in 2013, not been in prison or YOI.

12 Thirty-eight years old, British White, widowed with two children aged 15 and 18 years in foster care. Offender sentenced in 1996 for conspiracy to murder, will be released in 2009 and has never been to prison or YOI.

13 Thirty- one years old, married, British White with four children aged 9,8,6,3, years in foster care. Sentenced for child neglect in 2007, will be released in 2012, not been in prison or YOI.

14 Forty-two years old, widowed, British White, two children aged 19 and 16 in care. Sentenced for sexual offence in 2005, release date in 2007 and has not been in prison or YOI before.

## **Violence experienced**

This section identifies who the abusers were and the forms of violence the women experienced. The fourteen women prisoners all stated that they were victims of domestic violence. Women prisoners reported that they had been violently abused by Step- fathers, biological parents, husbands, boyfriends and one stated being abused by her pimp. One or sometimes more than one of these were the perpetrators of the domestic violence.

1 stated experiencing violence since being in relationships. "My step-father, boyfriend, my son's father abused me." "Since I started to have relationships I suffered in all relationships. " My step-father abused me when I was a girl. "To be honest, I attracted the wrong men." 2 reported that her husband abused her ever since she was married. "We were travellers, I was married a long time ago. It was an arranged marriage. I did not want to marry him. Abuse started since marriage."

3 states that she was abused by her biological father and ex-partner. My biological father abused me until I was eight. My mum got separated, then it stopped. I did not talk about it until I was thirty-four years old, then I broke down and told people. "I went through domestic violence that was with my ex-partner." 4 was abused by her boy friend. "He was violent towards me for five years." 5 stated she was violently abused by her pimp for not earning enough money. 6 reported that she was beaten and abused by her husband. "I have experienced domestic violence by my husband." 7 was abused by her partner. "We had arguments that's how the violence started."

8 experienced violence from her husband. "I had experienced abuse by my husband." 9 stated that she was abused by her step-father and partner. "My step-father was a violent man. "My boyfriend also hit me and was controlling me." 10 was experiencing violence by her partner. 11 experienced violence by her husband and step-father. 12 and 13 were both abused by their husbands. 13 was abused for eight years by her husband. "My husband abused me for eight years." 14 experienced violence from both her biological parents and her husband. "I was a victim of violence as a child and when I was married."

## Forms of abuse

All the women confirmed that they had been physically, verbally, threatened and controlled. Two women confirmed being sexually abused. 1 claimed that she suffered psychological control, physical, obsession. 1 recalls an experience. "At first, for example, what I am wearing, how I am behaving." "The first relationship made me feel I was nothing, everything was wrong - not allowed to speak, accusing me, am a slag. My boyfriend made me think I was bad. I tried to make them feel good - I was paranoid." "I was injured, physically, I got pregnant, and I got hurt then switched and blocked everything. I had time to think in prison. I was abused. When I was abused I carried guilt everywhere I was going. I hoped that he would change, love might change him, he was very controlling." "I tried to make him feel better, I neglected myself for him." 2 reported that she had a miscarriage because of the abuse and beatings. "I had a miscarriage because of abuse and beatings." He knocked my teeth out, broke my nose. I thought it was my fault. I got the police involved but they were not helpful. The police just said calm down. They did not want to get involved because it involved a married couple. The police were not sympathetic." "It was mental torture, picking on me - something was not right in the house. I did not have any sleep. "He was not loving. His family was not loving - it came from his side. In his childhood his father abused his mother. His mother had no life." "I tried to kill myself being in that stage. I was tired, I tried to run away, I went to the Women's Refuge. He found me and kept on saying I'm sorry, but it still kept on happening." " I wanted to be myself again. Coming into prison made me a stronger person." 3 stated her father sexually abused her and then her husband abused her. "It started from pushing, throwing things and broken bones and using weapons. I had a broken nose and then went into hospital. I kept things to myself and made excuses." "Things were bad, I was having flashbacks. It was very complicated"

4 was controlled by her boy friend. "I had to ask for his permission on what I should wear." "You blame yourself because you think it's something you have done."

"I was quite young, twenty-two when I met him, some of it was down to age, I didn't speak to anyone about it. "I was very lonely, had no confidence, no self-esteem, it made me feel ashamed of myself. I felt very isolated. I didn't tell anyone about it only my sister knew. He was four years older than me." 5 was beaten by her pimp when she couldn't make any money. "I was in a kids' home and I got mixed in all sorts." "I thought abuse was normal, I used to have black eyes and bruises. Everybody believed him. When I couldn't make money he beat me. Once I went missing." "He went into prison for three rapes and robbery. He used to beat women." "I don't know why I was abused - I think because I was a softy." I thought it was natural. Now I know it isn't." 6 experienced physical and verbal abuse. "I was twenty-two when it all happened – it started from that, the abuse." "I was physically abused."

7 stated that before the violence they always had arguments. "We had arguments - that's how the violence always started. The violence and the arguments hurt me emotionally a lot. I did not like it. He got angry when I used to say anything. I was physically hurt by him." "Once he hit me hard on my head. It was sad because you love this person who hurts you." "I have been injured and went into hospital. I was very hurt and very upset." "He wanted everything his way." 8 was injured due to violence by her husband. The abuse made me depressed; he split my head - all sorts. He injured me when he hit me. It made me emotionally very upset. I didn't what to do." "He made me feel worthless and I had low confidence and felt sick. My children were never around when he was violent towards me. I did not want the violence to affect them. They mean a lot to me and I only worried about them." 9 stated that her step-father beat her when she was 12 years old and she was physically injured by him. "My step-father was a violent man. He used to beat me up. I was around 12 years old when I was physically injured by him. I had bruises on my eyes. It made me get hurt. He was a good mental manipulator. He tortured me and my mum and others around us. My mum was aware of this but she loved him. It was not bad when she was around, in front of her. It was mostly horrible when she was out. My own dad and sisters knew. They tried to help but I was too messed up." "My boy friend also controlled me." 10 was emotionally abused and physically abused by ex-partner. I was emotionally and physically abused. He used to put a knife near to my throat and drag me by the hair." "He was on drugs. I think he is a schizophrenic and a control freak."

"My friends knew about my experience. They have helped me but he wormed himself back again." I thought I was going crazy and I was low all the time. I had less confidence. I only put on a smile for the sake of my children and other people."

11 experienced emotional and physical abuse. "My step-father sexually abused me. My husband punched me all the time and both verbally abused me like I was a worthless nothing." "Both only wanted things their way and only wanted control. They thought they were big and the boss." They both were very violent towards me. My step-father also abused my mum." The violence made me feel like I was a rubbish tip and no good in this world. I felt useless and no good, that's how I felt about myself." My mum couldn't help, she also got battered by my step-father."

12 was beaten all the time by her husband and did not know why. . I got beaten in all the time I don't know why I got beaten, I did what ever he said to flippin do."

"I stuck with the abuse for ten years. The relationship was only controlling and he only wanted money." "When he was violent and abusive towards me it made me sick. I felt I only wanted to die. I felt like killing myself and banging my head on the wall." He physically and



emotionally drained me down.” 13 stated that her husband was like a psychopath and very controlling. “My husband abused me for eight years. I have no idea why he did that to me. He was a control psychopath. It hurt me like hell. I was living in hell. It made me feel depressed, useless and a failure.” “I was mentally physically and emotionally abused. I was being bullied, punched and screamed at all the time.” 14 experienced violence since a child by her own parents and husband. “It all started when I was a child. When I was little they did not want me because I was a girl. They wanted a boy instead of a girl. They always hit me, pulled my hair, pushed me and kicked me hard, smacked me hard and called me names. I was not a wanted child. They hated me so much. They never loved me.” 14 was sad and unhappy due to violence. “This made me so sad and I was used to crying all the time. I have been so badly injured by them. My husband also treated me like a dog - he controlled me a lot called me names.” “I thought I was not wanted and it was my fault and that I was responsible for my abuse.” My parents never looked at me in a loving or caring way. My father is dead and my mum is still alive. I want her dead so badly I hate her. What type of mother is she? - a wicked, negative wicked, wicked woman. I wish she were dead. I will be so glad.” “Both parents and my husband are wicked.”

### **Violence experienced before the current sentence**

It is very important to understand why women committed the offence for which they are imprisoned and to understand their state of mind before they committed the offence. 1 experienced violence before the current sentence. “The offence was a build up, stress in relationship very controlling, violent. He came out of prison - he was a drug dealer, I was not happy with him. Stress added to that.” 1 reported that she only spoke to the prison and probation officer of her experience. “I only spoke to the prison and probation officers.” 2 stated that the offence was due to financial hardship because she was struggling with three children. “Fraud was due to economic hardship, I was

struggling.” 2 mentioned that nobody asked her about her experience and the crime she committed. “No one asked me these questions before. Not mentioned in my trial before, no reports. Probation officer and social worker knew what I put up with, with him, never mentioned in court.” 3 stated that she was in a very bad relationship before the offence was committed. “My life was bad, my ex held a knife towards me in front of my children. They were screaming, I didn’t want them to go through with it. I thought of hiding from him all the

time." "The offence was due to jealousy, my husband thought I was having an affair." 4 reported being stabbed before the offence. "Before coming to prison, I got stabbed with a scissors three months before. I had cancer that time. I lost my hair, I suffered violence during that time." "I felt very helpless and was lonely. I was wondering if this would happen again. "When I came to prison I realised that I was alcoholic, when I drank I would just pass out. 5 stated that she was abused before the offence and was messed up. "I was in a kids' home and got mixed in all sorts." 6 was struggling financially and had loans to pay off. "To be honest, I think he was very dominant. I had the kids - I needed to protect them. "I started to lose my confidence, I wanted to run away, I started to drink so I could go to sleep and forget it but it didn't go away." "Then I left him, I was in debt." 7 described being abused by her partner before the offence which led her to react badly. "Before my offence he hit me a lot for no reason. I reacted badly due to the violence, then it led to the armed robbery." It was too much. I had lots going in my mind. Nobody asked me these things about violence during my trial." 8 claimed that she was abused before committing the crime. "I was in an abusive relationship before my offence. I was not thinking straight, it was so bad. I was sick and that led to the accident. He was telling me all sorts and during that time he was having an affair. It led to the car crash. Nobody asked me during that time what was on my mind." 9 reported being messed up because of the violence she had suffered. "My boyfriend also hit me and was controlling me. He reminded me of my step-father" "The violence made me go off the rails. I did not like my step-father. He messed everything. If he were not around I wouldn't get into trouble. My partner lets me down and picks on me. I got in flip of a mess" 10 stated that her partner made her commit the offence. "I was abused. My ex made me commit the offence, he dragged me. The probation knows about this. They are aware of my situation and why I committed the offence. The judge hardly cared. I've got children I won't do anything to be separated from them. I was so upset in the dock that I just collapsed. I left my partner so many times, but he found me and made me pay by committing this crime. The police have been aware but they just say go to a Women's Refuge." 11 reported being abused before the offence committed. "I was abused before I was sentenced. I was in hospital sick and penniless. I had no money anything. I had two children to feed. I had no money, I was skint." "I was hurt, used and abused only. Nobody cared, nobody cared!" 12 experienced violence from her husband before the crime she committed. "I experienced violence from my husband before my crime. The abuse made me kill him. I didn't want to do that, but we had a big argument and I just snapped. I couldn't live any more like that. He always made me feel low and down. He made me feel like I was a piece of trash." "Nobody knew that I had problems - only after the offence. He never let me see my family. I was not allowed to see my parents. I had to sneak out to see my mum and dad. They died while I was in prison. This kills me every day and time. The probation are aware of my experience."

13 was verbally abused before the sentence. "I was verbally abused and smacked all the time and before my sentence. I neglected my children and had lots on my head. I couldn't cope with anything.

My children rebelled against me. I was hurt and sad. I should have protected my children. The Judge was not caring of my situation."

14 states that she was bullied into the crime by her husband. "I was bullied into the crime by my husband. He is dead now and he put me in prison. He made me commit the crime. I had no way out to escape." "The police and the Judge and prosecutor were not helpful because I was involved, though I got dragged into it."

### **Reactions to abuse**

This section identifies whether women prisoners have tried to stop the violence and, if not, the reasons for not stopping violence. It is essential also to know who was aware of the violence and whether they were supportive towards the victims or not.

1 hoped that violence would just stop and tried to stop violence by making the abuser happy. "I hoped the violence would stop, I wanted to leave, you get manipulated because you love that person." "My baby's father put me in hospital, my partner did not want me to tell the police." "Men don't understand - police officers don't sympathise." 2 stated that the police were aware of the domestic violence but did not want to get involved in married couples' problems. "I got the police involved but they were not helpful. They did not want to get involved because it involved a married couple. The police were not sympathetic. "Police was so ignorant, I was upset.

They said to the victim: "If I was married to you I will do the bloody same to you."

"Police didn't take domestic violence very seriously, when I needed help.

"I don't know anything about it now." The offender talks about her husband "You feel sorry for them, you want to believe in them and give them a chance." "Nothing I could have done.....just the kind of person."

2 did not tell her family about her situation but they had found out. "I hid a lot of things from my family, my family knew, they found out."

3 reported that she had no confidence because of the violence. "I had no self worth, I had no confidence, nobody believed me because he was a nice man. He makes you believe all that." "Nobody asked about this, only when it was about my crime. Prior to coming out, I am going to start filing for divorce." "My family knew about the violence. Probation officers and social workers asked me for a psychological report. I never spoke about it. I was not allowed to talk about it. It was never used. The judge said it would make the Jurors biased against me. I have not spoken to anyone about this before. I think it's unfair." He believed that I didn't love him and that I love the kids." "I tried to convince him. I did go and confide in my cousin." "He said he was sorry." "I didn't know how to get away from him. My brother is eight years younger than me; he used to stay with me in the house. When people were around it was not bad. "He would take it out on me if he lost." I used to hide under the stairs he tried to look for me. My children knew this."

4 reported that she felt helpless and couldn't do anything to stop violence. "In the beginning it may be difficult to explain...you think, why didn't you walk away? First you think you want to be with

them. Second because you think he was drunk. You think you need to work harder." "He turns his charm on, makes you think he loves you and that he is sorry. He knew how to manipulate me." "I felt helpless – it's a very sad thing because I wasted time on him, it has been a big chunk of my life."

"I have started my life again unfortunately in prison with a big sentence. I am a human being - that man made me feel intimidated. Coming into prison was a test for me. I want to be a professional plumber. If you've been in a bad relationship you feel every man is bad they make you have to be cautious." "Nearly every time you come across nine out of ten women have said that they are here due to domestic violence. There is a man behind every thing. It is like living in the forties and the fifties. Most women are drunk, it's all right to get them out of drink but to me what's underneath it? Prison was a good beginning for me and far away from him."

5 stated she ran away from home couple of times to escape violence but got caught all the time. "I ran away from home but the police found me. I was neglected, my mum was working and my dad was drinking all the time." "I was thirteen when I was abused. I went to a Kids' Home and he phoned me and threatened me not to tell anyone. I don't want any contact with my family."

6 reported that she was suicidal because of the violence and her family was not supportive. "One of my reactions was getting out of this world." I met people, I was going out feeling

sorry for myself, I felt suicidal and I couldn't think." "I took him to court and he got arrested. Once my children were ready to go to school, he hit me in the bathroom, then my daughter called the police, then he got arrested." "I spoke to my family and friends. My mum and my sister said "he's your husband – basically they were not supportive they were never there." I needed money I got debt and had loans."

7 stated that she reported her partner to the police which was not very helpful and that ended the relationship. "I tried to keep away from him. I ended the relationship. It was too much to take. I called the police a couple of times. They were not helpful. About six or seven times I called them. They did not respond much. They only gave him warnings which did not help."

8 reported that she contacted the police who were a bit helpful and that her husband always came back after abuse. "I phoned the police several times - they were a bit helpful. My husband always came back after he had a warning and just said sorry. I left him before and went into hostels with my children. When he found me the abuse still kept happening." My family was scared of him. They couldn't help. My friends were helpful."

9 ran away from home a couple of times but the police always got her back home. The police were not supportive towards her. "I ran away lots of time from home because of my step-dad. I called the police a few times, but they were not helpful because I was messed up. They thought 'she's bad news'. I left my partner lots of times and then got back because I love him." "My probation officer had my reports saying that I was abused."

10 tried always to please her ex-partner but could not stop the violence. "I tried all the time to calm him down, go with what he said. I tried to please him all the time but it was always my fault and then he was abusive towards me." "His mum knew of the situation she did help all the time but he never listened to her." "She was very helpful but she is old and weak."

11 did try to stop the violence but did not leave because she had no money. "I did try to stop and leave but I couldn't, I had no money to support two children." "My friends were helpful calling the police but they did not help much." I never pressed charges against him." "I told my friends, I thought if I told them they could have been helpful."

12 stated that she walked out but her husband always found her. "I used to walk out when things got out of hand, but he always found me. I did contact the police but they didn't do much about it." My friends knew. They tried to help but it was hard."

13 also left her abuser a number of times but got caught. "I did leave home on a number of occasions but he caught me all the time. He was a lot bigger and stronger than I was. He made me scared. I did not tell my family, I did not want them to get involved."

14 claimed that she ran away from her parents and husband but always got caught. "I used to run away from home so I could escape from my parents, but the social workers and police officers found me and took me back home. My mum covered the story up - she was a clever wicked witch." "The police officers and social workers did not listen to me, they thought I was a liar. "They did not listen to my cries. They listened to her and my evil husband." "I left my husband once, then he caught me and hit me more." "The violence situation drove me crazy and suicidal. No one can control me or hurt me any more."

### **Treatment in prison and views on treatment or self help programmes**

This section identifies if there are any help or treatment programmes in the prison which apply to women who have been victims of violence, how it works, if they are aware of any help or treatment programmes outside of the prison which might be helpful to them, whether anyone in prison has asked them about the violence they have experienced, whether they are on any medical treatment because of the abuse and if they have had any counselling.

1 stated that there are no programmes for women victims of violence in Foston Hall prison and that there should be. 1 also stated that prisons are not aware of abuse. "No domestic violence courses in Foston Hall. Nothing in this prison, only counselling." "No alternative here." "There is no help in this prison, definitely there should be, women who are in prison have been abused. There's no support in prison. I want to see more counsellors and courses in prisons. Prisons are not aware of abuse." "I am not on medical treatment." "I am not sure of any help or programmes outside of prison. "

2 felt that there should be programmes in prison for women victims. "Not sure of any treatment in prison. "I never asked" "I do feel that there should be." "Women self harm because they feel dirty in themselves. Women can harm themselves." "Counselling would be good." "There is nothing outside of prison. "

3 confirmed that there were no programmes for women victims in Foston Hall prison but was aware of programmes in other prisons. "I am trying to fight for a course which I am aware of in Styal prison. "The Freedom Programme. I am going to see if there are any courses running on domestic violence." "They did get me a counsellor - it was good and not good. I only saw her once a week, it's the

travelling and it was hard for her coming. I am able to talk more now about it than before." "I am writing a book about this to help me." "I am not aware of any programmes outside of prison."

4 stated there was no programme for women victims in prison. "Unfortunately there is nothing in this prison. I was here for eleven years, they haven't offered me any courses on domestic violence." "There is nothing in Foston Hall - there should be. I've only done an Anger Management course." "Not sure of programmes out there."

5 reported that she was on a programme but not for women victims. "I am on a programme called 'the carrots' and I am on methadone." "There was no counselling offered to me. It will be good to know that you are not on your own." "Nothing is available outside of prison for women. "

6 also was not aware of any programmes in prison for women victims. "I am not aware of any courses, not to my knowledge. Women can do this Freedom programme if they have this chance. Nobody here asked me about the violence. "I am on anti-depression medicine at the moment." "Na no courses or anything."

7 claimed that programmes in Foston Hall prison were not well publicised. "Really not sure about courses."

8 stated "I am not aware of treatment here, There should be. Nobody in prison asked me about my experience. Nobody mentioned it. I am on depression tablets." "There are nothing here or outside."

9 reported that "there is no help here or courses on violence. There should be. The prison is aware that I have been abused but they offered me no programmes or support."

10 stated "I don't know if they have any courses that help women. I don't know of any, I think they don't have any here. I am on Epilepsy medication. When he used to hit me, I then had bad fits."

11 confirmed that there are "no programmes in Foston prison. I am not on any medicine and I am not attending any courses. There should be courses, otherwise women will go mad and commit suicide." " Nope no help for women when get released. "

12 has not heard of any treatment programmes for women victims in prison. "I have not heard of any programmes which help women in domestic violence situation in this prison. I

am only doing an education course here. I am not on any medical treatment. Nobody here has asked me if I was abused.”

13 states there may be some counselling in Foston Hall prison. “I think there might be a little counselling, I am not sure of this. I am not really aware of this. Nobody here asked about my experience. I am taking Anti-depression medication because of the violence and I am always thinking about my children.” “Not 100 percent aware of any help outside prison.”

14 like all other women prison stated that there is no courses for women prisoners who were victims of violence. “I am not aware of any programmes here. I want to do courses in here. Nobody asked me

if I was abused or did not offer me any courses.” I am taking depression tablets.” “Nothing available outside.”

## **After release**

This section looks at the views on the future after women prisoners have been released from prison. It identifies where women prisoners will be going when they are released and whether they feel they will be in danger and what their future plans and goals are when released. 1 states that she will be going back to her mum’s home and will start a new fresh life with her son. “I will go back to my Mum’s in Liverpool, my boy is with my mum. To be honest my son’s father was troubling me, he gets drunk, he was troubling my son, “Drinking, drinking.” “He tells my son, your mum’s a murderer, my son gets upset with that. I don’t intend to have contact with him. I’ve been thinking about that when I get out – he’s wicked.” “My main thing is to be with my son and go to college and do NVQs. I will try to get funding and do ‘A’ levels and help women who are abused, do counselling, get things in place, ideal to stay first at my Mum’s.” 2 stated that she will not go to the abuser and that she will live with her family. “Not going back to him. I will live with my family.”

“I hid a lot of things from my family, my family knew, they found out.” 2 stated that the abuser is living far away. “He is in Scotland, he is with another women and he has a baby.” “We’ve been separated for a long time. He knows I am a different person now.” 2’s goal for the future is “to build up with my kids. I have been apart from them for a long time.” “He has no contact with my children. My daughter is six and wants no contact with him. She wants nothing to do with him, which is sad.” “My family help me. They are angry with me because I



hid it." "My family are supportive" "My children see a psychiatrist." 3 stated that she wants to start a new future.

4 wants to be happy after she is released and wants to move on. "My worries are when I am out. I don't want to come out of prison". "They will protect me while I am in here in prison but what will happen when I get out?" They won't help when I am out because they say I took someone's life. I made one mistake, unfortunately I got into a relationship when I was young and it affected me." "After I am released I want to be happy, I am in a relationship with another woman." "It's very difficult to explain about violence, I have been happier than before. We have made plans together." "She understands my independence. I want to work; it will be a new beginning out there. I want to be treated equally. I have pains inside." "You need to talk to someone, it's different than just doing a course. Domestic violence needs to be identified." 5 reported that her probation officer will sort her a place when she is released and that no men can bully her any more. "I don't know where I will be going after my release or if I will be in danger - possibly." "They will only get one chance with me. The probation officer will sort this out - they are quite good. I've got lots of confidence. I have done Maths and English. I want to go to College. I don't trust any men." 6 wanted to be with her children and get a better job. "When I am released I will go to Birmingham or I may be deported. The Judge said that the children should stay and I should go." "Nobody asked me why I committed the crime or anything. Nothing during the trial, I only had a doctor's report but they did not show it." "I wouldn't need to escape from him. He may move on because it's going to be five years after I am released." "At the moment I am taking education to gain more skills and try to get a better job." 7 confirmed that she will not be in danger after she is released and will get help to find a place. "I won't be in danger, I don't know where I will be going yet. The prison and probation will help me find a place." "The person who abused me is still out there but far away. I won't be in danger. I have moved on. I

want to get a job and a flat." 8 will go back home and wants to be a good mum and support her family. "I will go back to my home. I won't be in danger everything is sorted now. I want to be a good mum and support my family." 9 wanted to start a new life. "I will go back to my house and partner. I will not be in danger. I want to stay off drugs and start a new life. I can't work because I had an operation on my back and it still hurts I can't move it." 10 wanted to lead a better life with her children. "The prison service will find me a house. They will help - the probation will do all that. I will not go back to him. I only want my children with me." "I won't be weak like before, I am stronger now. I can stand up now. If I am in danger I will take an injunction out on him. I am going to stand up. My only goal is to have a house, have my kids back and lead a normal life. I don't want to be someone's punch bag." 11 will start a new life with her children and forget the past. "I will go back to my children, my home, my new life and forget the past and start a fresh life." "I won't be in danger - I killed my partner.

He did so much to me I just couldn't take it any longer." 12 will go back to her family house and start a new fresh life with her family and children. "I am going back to my family house where I was born and lived before I got married." "Sad thing is I don't have my parents anymore. I have my brothers and sisters only now. I will go back to Exeter." "I have had threats from my husband's friends, but I ignored them and they don't know where I will be going after I am released. Nobody knows that I came from Exeter. The most important thing for me to do is be with my family, children and start fresh." 13 wanted to start a new life with family and wants her children back. "I don't know what will happen after I am released from prison. I only know that I want my kids back and to start my life properly again." I won't be in danger because he is in prison for a longer time." 14 wanted to start a fresh life again with her children and lead a normal life. "I am going to a place in Nottingham, the probation will organise all that." "I want to start fresh again and with my children." "I want them to be decent human beings and not violent or criminals."