



**WOMEN'S  
BREAKOUT**  
Chances to Change

together women

## MEMBER CASE STUDY

## Together Women Project

The needs the woman presented with when she arrived at Together Women Project

Accommodation

Health

Mental wellbeing

Attitudes, thinking and behaviour

Education, employment and training

Finance, benefits and debt

Drugs and alcohol

Children and families

Domestic violence

Prostitution

### About the Womens Centre

Together Women is an independent charity working across Yorkshire and Humberside. Together Women aims to make a difference to the lives of women offenders and women at risk of offending by helping them tackle the reasons they commit crimes through working with key workers in community and custody based women's centres. Women can access advice on health, education and training, housing, substance misuse, finance and family issues.

### The circumstances the woman was in before being in contact with Together Women Project

FN was transferred to HMP Newhall to complete the CARE Programme (Choices, Actions, Relationships, Emotions) where she began to engaged with Together Women as part of the Mentoring and Advocacy Service (MAS). FN had an extensive violent history with nine previous convictions with her index offence being robbery to which she was sentenced to 4 years and 6 months in custody. FN showed a propensity for violence and the use of violence to meet her needs whilst in custody and received a number of adjudications for assaults and threatening to take a resident hostage so she could be transferred to another establishment. The use of violence was compounded by her experiences of intrusive thoughts involving committing violent acts towards others if she felt that they had slighted her in some way. FN has been release from custody on two occasions but was recalled to prison on both of these due to breaching her licence conditions. FN has a very negative view of Probation Services and feels that this inevitably means she will always be recalled.

FN had a troubled upbringing which was influenced by her experiences of traumatic events both personal and witnessed. She often witnessed Domestic Abuse between her parents and described her mother as having a chaotic lifestyle of prostitution and substance misuse. Due to this FN was removed from her mothers care and placed in a number of foster homes as well as residing at her fathers for short periods.

In order to cope with this trauma FN became involved with the London gang culture and displayed anti-social behaviour such as substance misuse and sex working from the age of 14. FN became pregnant at 18 and suffered a miscarriage at 5 months gestation before becoming pregnant a second time. Due to her chaotic lifestyle she was unable to provide adequate care for the child who was subsequently removed from and placed with paternal grandparents.



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### The impact that Together Women Project had on the woman's circumstances

Initially, FN was resistant to receiving support from Together Women as she felt that there was 'no point' as she was returning to her home area of London. Through continued contact and offered appointments, a rapport between FN and her mentor was built, enabling FN to feel safe and comfortable that she would not be abandoned by the service following her return to HMP Bronzefield (London). This positive working relationship that was both boundaried but supportive, was one of a handful that FN had experienced throughout her life.

Support sessions were focussed on providing holistic support around moving prisons and also the content of the programme which she found particularly difficult. This led to discussions about her life in the community prior to custody, her self-esteem, problem solving skills, views of sex working and her role as a mother whilst in custody and how she would like to be when she is released.

Through her work with CARE and Together Women FN created a vision of her preferred future and ways in which she could avoid anti-social behaviour. This led her to request a move away from London as she felt that she had a negative reputation which could increase her risk of becoming involved in the gang culture again. Unfortunately, FN was transferred to HMP Bronzefield following the completion of CARE which did provide barriers to her resettlement. FN wanted to move to the Kirklees area to avoid negative influences and build strong links with her father who has a very stable and pro-social life. Together Women were pivotal in sourcing and advocating for FN to receive accommodation in her preferred area upon release. She has made good progress and continues to engage with TWP, who recently advocated on her behalf with a local tea room which resulted in part-time employment.

A key area for FN was her clothing and appearance, so when she was initially awarded Jobseekers Allowance which left her with £1 disposable income per fortnight, the temptation was to return to Sex Work to fund her lifestyle. To stop her returning to risk taking behaviour, Together Women applied for a clothing grant and she was awarded £150 towards clothing costs.

### The woman's circumstances now

FN has been successful at remaining in the community for six months now which is her longest period of time on licence. She has built successful and positive relationships with her offender manager, drugs worker and her housing support worker. FN has not relapsed to using substances, offending, sex working or using violent behaviour. She has also built strong links with her family and is more able to deal with conflict without resorting to violence as she would have previously.



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### Those involved helping her

Together Women have been her main source of support throughout her completion of CARE, subsequent move between establishments and release into the community. FN is now supported by a local Offender Manager, Drug Service, local Women's Centre and Housing Support worker.

### The woman's personal account of what happened

I thanked my mentor for still offering me appointments and coming to see me when I first met her, it gave me a chance to engage and showed me she would be there whenever I needed her. I don't think that I would be doing as well without my mentor as she has helped me move to an area where I can start again, if I was in London I think I would be using and sex working and going back to the old me.

### Find our more



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