

# *What works with women offenders?*

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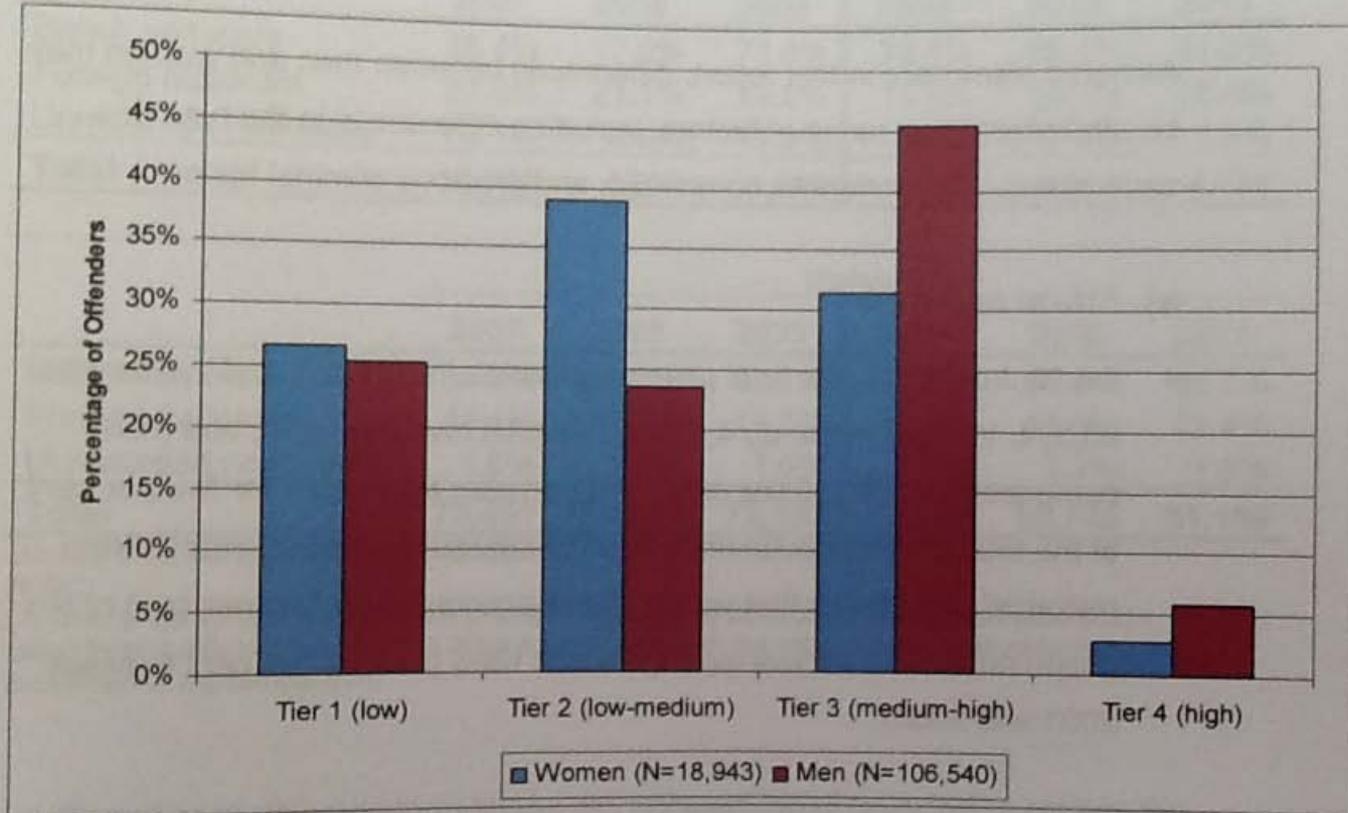
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# What do we know about women offenders and risk in England and Wales?

- ▶ W = 24% (m = 76%) out of court proceedings & court disposal
- ▶ Indictable offences -> *property related offences* (52%); *fraud & forgery* (12%); violence ag person (10%); drugs 9%
- ▶ W = 15% of those under supervision as a result of Community and SSOs (5% of prison pop)
- ▶ Length of C & SS Orders = shorter (f=14% less than a year; m=7% under a yr); fewer requirements
- ▶ Greater proportion of women serving under a yr in prison
- ▶ Low level crime -> low risk

Source: Ministry of Justice s.95 statistics on women and the criminal justice system (MoJ, Nov. 2012)

**Figure 5.01: Offenders supervised under community orders and Suspended Sentence Orders by known supervision tier and gender, 31 December 2011**



Source: Offender Management Statistics

# What do we know about women offenders and their crime related needs?

- ▶ Consistent messages from research literature, from experienced service providers and service users
  - ▶ Unmet needs in relation to sexual and violent victimisation
  - ▶ Unmet needs in relation to physical and mental health
  - ▶ Unmet needs in relation to housing and income
  - ▶ Unmet needs in relation to training and employment
  - ▶ Substance abuse
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Proportion of offenders who re-offend 2010 & 2011:  
Females (From: Table 5.06 Moj. S95 statistics W& CJ, 2012)

<b>Adult reoffenders females</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>
<b>Adult reoffenders males</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
	<b>28.3%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>

# What do we know about women offenders?

Victimisation -> Less Resilience -> Risk

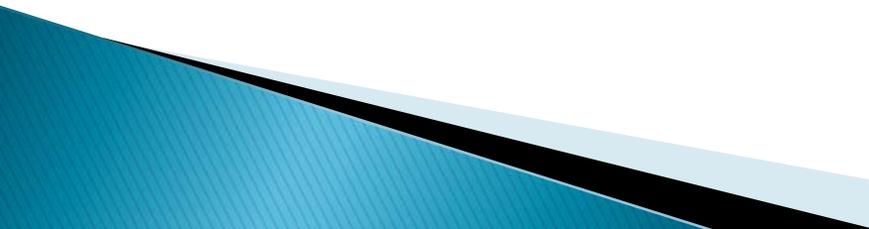
Victimisation creates 'psychological sequelae' which can lead to offending behaviour

In the language of 'capital' - *low human and social capital*

# Women as 'correctional afterthoughts'

- ▶ **Programmes** designed to address offending behaviour
- ▶ White, male, adult offenders
- ▶ Women as '*correctional afterthoughts*' (Ross and Fabiano, 1986)
- ▶ Concepts of 'risk' and 'need' = gendered
- ▶ What works for men will work for women too (Cann, 2006)
- ▶ The responsiveness of women to cognitive skills programmes designed for men?

# What works for women?

- ▶ 'Women who offend are often driven to do so not by 'cognitive behavioural deficits' but by the complexity of the demands made upon them (Worrall, 2002: 144)
  - ▶ Hollis (2007) – no clear differences between men and women re the impact of the GOBP on reconviction rates (small sample sizes; no statistical significance)
  - ▶ Lart et al. (2008) – rapid evidence assessment (16 N American and Canadian studies and three meta-analyses)
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# Provision for women

- ▶ Lack of access to women-specific accredited **programmes**
- ▶ Lack of women-specific support from individual probation officers (training issues?)
- ▶ Lack of safety in mixed gender probation offices
- ▶ Lack of approved premises for women (hostels)

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- ▶ Specially designed **programmes** (designed by Probation and operationalised by Probation)
  - ▶ Outsourced specially designed programmes
  - ▶ **Specified activities** (as a requirement of a Community Order)

# Martin, Kautt & Gelsthorpe

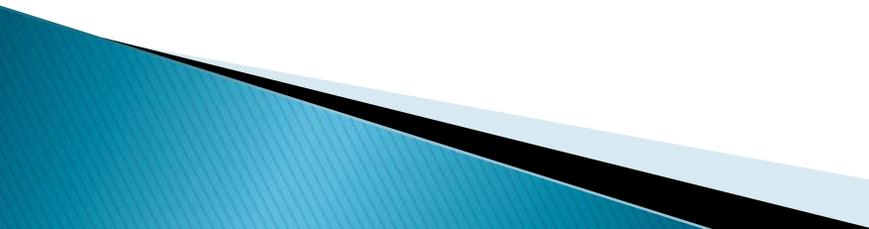
## BJCriminology (2009)

- ▶ How to understand women's lower rate of compliance on the community-based **General Offending Behaviour Programme**
- ▶ The predictors of programme completion (OASys) vary for men and women
- ▶ The findings support gender responsiveness – and the idea that men and women should be approached differently
- ▶ Men more likely to engage in *instrumental compliance* and women more likely to achieve *normative compliance....*
- ▶ **How to encourage normative compliance? (relational dimensions...)**

i) Where I think we are in terms of what I think we know...through *other empirical research*: women and ways of learning

- ▶ Women and ways of learning (Belenky et al, 1986)
- ▶ Collaborative rather than competitive settings
- ▶ Women only settings
- ▶ Case-specific factors (Blanchette and Brown, 2006): child care, health care, mental health care
- ▶ Gendered pathways (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009)

# Where I think we are in terms of what I think we know...theory

- ▶ Relational theory (Miller, 1986)
  - ▶ Strengths based approaches (Van Wormer, 2001; Worell and Remer, 2003)
  - ▶ Positive Psychology (Gillman and Seligman, 1999)
  - ▶ Good Lives model (Ward and Brown, 2004)
  - ▶ Recognition of 'trauma' (Messina et al., 2007 – and work by Covington)
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Where I think we are in terms of what I think we know...**from women themselves**

“[Probation] don’t understand, I don’t think – I think they should really research more themselves, to see what people are feelin, or what’s gone on in life and why they do the things they do? ...Basically, I think Probation need to work more and research more, and not always be saying [puts on officious voice] ‘Oh, you do this, you do that, you go back’, d’ya know what I mean? You need to have a *relationship* with your Probation Officer that you can tell them absolutely *anything*, d’ya know what I mean, and they will support you. And I just ain’t got that.”

Louise (NRN), age 23 (serving 2 years 4 months for Burglary)

## Practitioners' views

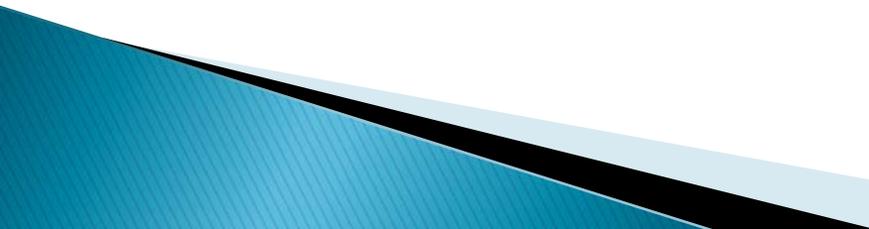
“ ...well I'm sure that you're familiar with research that will, you know, support time and time again the absolute *crucial* role of the professional relationship between the practitioner and the offender, and the whole concept of embarking on a journey together? So it's not that, kind of, Probation are *doing* stuff to you – 'the offender' – but it's about a **collaborative working**. Obviously it's not like we're mates and we're doing Advise, Assist and Befriend anymore; it's within a boundaried context but, you can never underestimate the value of that **rapport**. **Women really respond to that.**”

**Senior Probation Officer, (Community-based)**

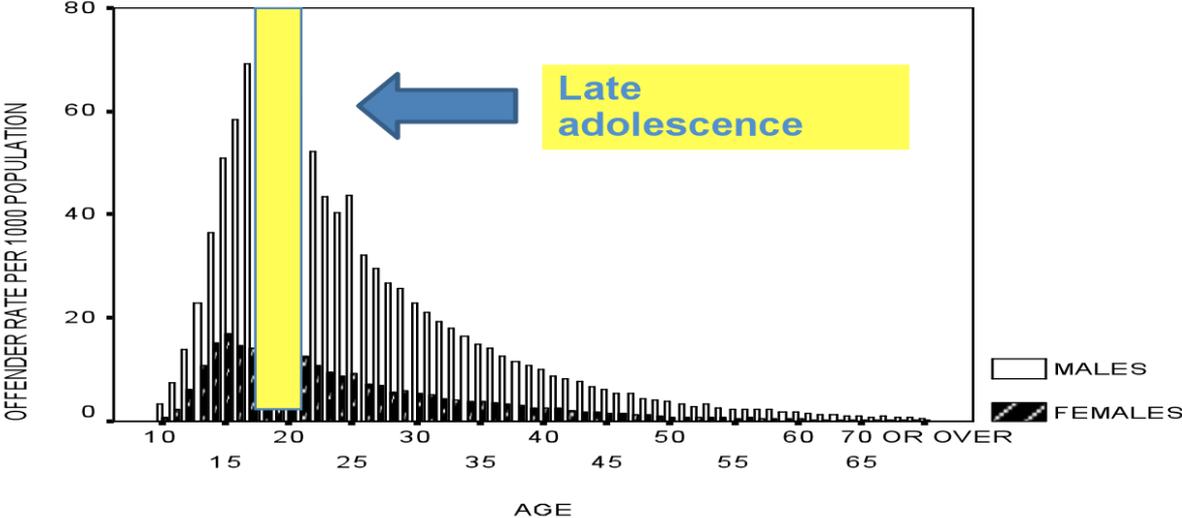
- ▶ Where does all of this take us?
  - ▶ Evidence from research
  - ▶ Theories
  - ▶ Women offenders' views
  - ▶ Practitioners' views
  - ▶ Thinking about desistance...and what might help...
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### iii) Women and desistance

#### Some preliminaries: conceptualising desistance

- ▶ Stopping **and** refraining from offending
  - ▶ Spontaneous or '**natural**' desistance
  - ▶ **Assisted desistance** (and what works)
  - ▶ **Primary and secondary desistance**
  - ▶ The problems of **measuring desistance**
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# The age-crime curve



Source: Recorded Offender Rates per 1,000 Relevant Population by Age-year and Sex, England and Wales, 2000

# Key aspects of desistance journeys

- ▶ They are complex processes, not events, characterised by **ambivalence and vacillation**
- ▶ They involve **re-biography** (at the time or post hoc); changing identities (narratives); more than learning new cognitive skills
- ▶ Prompted by life events, depending on the **meaning** of those events for the offender; inherently subjective, hence individualised, **sensitive to difference/diversity**

## Is desistance different for women?

- ▶ *Systematic review* of the literature: catalogues → screen by words → screen by abstract → full article/report screen = 45 items > 17 articles/reports eligible. (Of the 45 some failed to distinguish between men and women)
  - ▶ Small scale studies
  - ▶ Cross-cultural differences
  - ▶ The need for meta-analyses
  - ▶ The importance of participating in research – to build up a picture
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# Common themes

- ▶ **Human agency** ('resolve' and timing)
- ▶ **Supportive relationships** (emotionally and materially supportive relationships which encourage interdependence)
- ▶ **Severing relationships** with abusive partners/offending peers
- ▶ Dealing with **practical problems**
- ▶ **Reasons to stop offending & ways to continue desistance**
- ▶ **'Normal-smiths'** to convey to women that they are capable of achieving aspirations of pro-social, conventional roles (Rumgay, 2004)

## What works with women: Nine lessons drawn from research (Gelsthorpe, 2010).

### The benefits of centres and services for women

1. Women centred
2. Mixed provision (offenders and non-offenders)
3. Focus on empowerment
4. Use of effective learning styles
5. Holistic stance (problem-solving)
6. Facilitate links with mainstream agencies
7. Provision for 'top ups'
8. Supportive milieu
9. Practical help with transport and childcare

# The potential of women's community services to promote desistance

- ▶ Supportive relationships
- ▶ Pro-social modelling
- ▶ Learning new skills/new ways of being
- ▶ Practical management of life
- ▶ Empowerment

**Potential** for women's centres to contribute to desistance (by meeting their probation officers there even...)

# The Together Women model

- ▶ TW sought to incorporate best practice lessons from the ASHA centre and 218 Centre
- ▶ 5 TW centres
- ▶ 43 service users interviewed + second interviews with 14 women

Hedderman, C., Gunby C. and Shelton, N. (2011) 'What women want: the importance of qualitative approaches in evaluating work with women offenders', *Criminology & Criminal Justice* pp3-19

# What do women want?

“ I sometimes think about going back to drugs...but when I do I come here instead...it's a good replacement...” (Nina)

“It's nice to know that somebody thinks about you and that, you know, there is somebody there to turn to...I thought it'd be like another authority. I thought it'd be like , erm, police, probation, social services kind of, you know, making these rules...obviously they're not gonna put up with my bloomin' nonsense, and all that sort of thing, but they just tell me what I should be doing...and 'phone me and encourage me...’” (Wendy)

## iii) Challenges

1. Models of change – theorising
2. Consistency in monitoring and evaluation...the adequacy of data...robust findings?
3. Intermediate outcomes – distance travelled; measuring change within individual support plans
5. Comparison and control groups (e.g. non starters following referral to TW)
6. Reconvictions (data collection & data cleansing)...the limitation of snapshots and the need to show the process of changes (See Jolliffe et al., 2011 MoJ 11 / 11 REoffending Analysis of Women referred to TW and the Scope to Divert from Custody)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/217364/women-offenders-referred-together-women.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217364/women-offenders-referred-together-women.pdf)

## Positive steps...but lots of questions... 40 + centres for women in the community

- ▶ A focus on the practical (service delivery) & the need for greater emphasis on models of change
  - ▶ Who are the women accessing the centres?
  - ▶ What do we know about *these women's* needs?
  - ▶ How many needs do women accessing the centres experience and how are these needs related?
  - ▶ What support do the women receive and what difference does receiving this help make for those women who are current offenders?
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# ...and questions to ask

- ▶ How can we achieve consistency in approach in regard to research evaluations of work with women? Content, process or context? Impact for how long and in what circumstances?
  - ▶ *Payment by results*: investment merits? sample sizes?
  - ▶ What counts? Are binary measures useful re women?
  - ▶ Ring fenced funding?
  - ▶ Ring-fenced focus?
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## Some Useful References

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