



**Tomorrow's Women
Glasgow**

Service User Involvement Tomorrow's Women Glasgow

Project Update for Phase One

Outside the Box

Introduction

Glasgow Community Justice Authority works in partnership with agencies and organisations to reduce reoffending and create safer communities.

Outside The Box was commissioned by the Glasgow Community Justice Authority in Glasgow to carry out development work around service user involvement in the work for the Women's Justice Centre. The Centre chose Tomorrow's Women Glasgow as its name.

The purpose of this paper is to share what we have learned from phase one of the work from October 2013 – August 2014. It covers the

- Approach taken to the service user involvement work.
- Key activities undertaken.
- Wider learning about service user involvement with women who receive services from TWG.

The paper will be used by GCJA staff and partner agencies to inform, promote and develop service user involvement in other related service areas. It will also be of interest to the Scottish Government funded pilot justice services for women and other people who are interested in participation by people in touch with the criminal justice system.

Approach

Building a shared understanding of service user involvement was at the heart of the approach we took. The first step was to identify core values and expectations around service user involvement for stakeholders and staff. We did this through meetings and informal discussions with stakeholders and staff of Tomorrow's Women Glasgow. It was clear from this work that there is a shared understanding (with some variations) and commitment to service user involvement, by stakeholders and TWG staff, with good examples locally in related services.

The next step was to spend time with women who receive services from TWG to gain an understanding of

- What interested them.
- What they liked doing.
- What things helped them to participate.
- What got in the way or hindered them.

Women described how they were looking for a structure. Many of the women were interested in doing practical fun activities and developing practical skills like cooking, gardening and arts and craft. It was clear that there would be times, for a variety of reasons and difficulties, when they would not be able to attend and or participate. We heard how other options for involvement beyond just meeting as a group would be needed, because for some women group activity is not a safe or a positive experience, and not all combinations of women work well together.

“We talk about the present and the future. The past isn’t going to change but the future can.”

“I look fine on the outside - but I’m just pretending. I really struggle just to get by. I feel desperate and fearful most of the time. But coming here helps me. It gives me something good and useful to do with my time. It gives me a structure for my week.”

“It’s been a different experience here really positive and helpful. I’m making some real changes in my life for the first time.”

“It doesn’t matter how many mistakes you’ve made - you are still welcome here.”

Key activities

Service User Framework

The first key activity was to develop with women and staff a framework for current and future service user involvement. This was ongoing work which evolved and developed during the year. The plan was also for the framework to be also used for other work within the Community Justice Authority.

The Framework aims to do the following

- Describe current and ongoing service user involvement – giving a clear structure, whilst also being flexible, offering a menu of activities so service users can decide where, when and how they wish to be involved.
- Link to other work streams developed to support the work of the Centre - offer opportunities for service user's involvement in the design, delivery and evaluation of the service.
- Indicate where support, for women who use the service and for staff is needed.
- Outline the future development of service user involvement - a three year plan to gradually increase the opportunities and level of involvement as the service develops.

Putting the framework into practice

Work has started in beginning to put the framework into practice. These are some of the activities.

For individuals

Suggestions box for ideas and activities located on the coffee table in the main room. Suggestions are read out at the service users meeting and at staff meetings.

Wishing tree - thoughts and best wishes for what the future will be like for women and TWG.

For staff

Notes of the service user meetings and ideas for the agenda are discussed and planned for ensuring that things don't get lost and ideas and suggestions are acted on and responded to in a systematic and structured way.

For groups

Service user meetings - A monthly meeting for women and staff to discuss things and make plans has been established. The key issues discussed so far are testing out ideas and approaches for activities, fund raising, internet access to help with things like looking for accommodation and possible volunteering roles.

Communications Group - A group of women and staff has also been established to produce information such as leaflets and newsletters about TWG for other women. The communications group will also organise events such as the White Ribbon event in November.

Visit to Leeds Together Women Project

We organised a 2 day visit for women and staff in June to the Together Women Project in Leeds.

Together Women is a Yorkshire based charity with 10 years experience of providing services to women offenders with complex needs. They now have about 250 women who use the centre every week. They are still developing services with a new initiative for women in outlying areas who are just getting by but may have poor mental health and confidence.

Together Women have evidence that their approach works, with a very low reoffending rate and low delivery costs, especially when compared with the alternatives. More information about the Together Women can be found at www.togetherwomen.org

Four women and two staff members and the link person from Outside the Box travelled to Leeds to visit with staff and service users from Together Women. The visit was useful in terms of the new things we learnt about developing and running a service for women, and also for the everyday social activity and confidence building gained through travelling, staying in a hotel, eating out and seeing new places and people.

These are some comments from the visit.

“They (TWP) are 10 years ahead of us but we have seen what can be done and talked to some women about the difference it’s made to their lives.”

“It was good to get away from Glasgow for a bit – a chance to see new places and think.”

“It’s given us some big ideas for the future but also some practical things we can do now - like a notice board showing what’s happening this week - we have done ours on flip chart paper so we can change it each week.”

Tomorrow’s Women Glasgow Launch day

The Centre’s launch day was in June. Over 100 guests from partners and other organisations with links to the Centre came to hear about the early achievements. The women were part of the preparation for the launch day. Eight women contributed their thoughts and views about the impact that TWG had made on their lives.

We worked with women at the Centre to gather their views, think about how we would present it and to check they were happy with the presentation. We were all delighted that two women stood up and spoke about their experiences at the event. The collective round up was based upon direct quotes that the women wanted to say, and this was read by the worker from Outside the Box. The key themes that emerged from the discussions were that TWG was a safe place for women, that the women were gaining the beginnings of a structure in their lives, and were learning new skills by participating in meaningful and purposeful activity.

These are some quotes from the women that were presented at the launch.

“It’s always the same here - people are friendly and relaxed - it makes it easy because you know what to expect.”

“We like that its only women here.”

“We get the motivation to do the right things.”

“Most importantly it’s a safe place.”

“This centre is a good chance for me. From the beginning I could feel the warmth and welcome. It makes me want to keep coming back.”

“I’ve found structure here. My confidence is better and now I can talk to people which I couldn’t before. I’ve come on a lot.”

Hints and tips on service user involvement for staff and women

We wanted to be able to share good ideas and effective practice with service users, staff who develop and offer services and agencies who provide services with Glasgow Community Justice Authority. We worked with women and staff at TWG to gather ideas and suggestions on what has worked well for service user involvement and the things that make it easier. These ideas and suggestions have been incorporated into a simple paper called 'Hints and tips on service user involvement'.

Wider learning about service user involvement

Listening to the experiences of staff and women, and observing and participating in the work of Tomorrow's Women Glasgow has a crucial part of this work.

This section draws together the experience and views from women who receive services, TWG staff and stakeholders, and Outside the Box. They are drawn from

- Wider experiences of offering services to vulnerable people.
- Developing service user involvement in a wide range of settings.
- Establishing a new service in any innovative setting.
- Recognising what is different about the service and women at TWG.

The quotes below are taken from women who use the centre.

What we are learning about the need for the services in Glasgow

We are working with very vulnerable women with complex needs and chaotic lives.

Creating a safe place that is welcoming, consistent, informal but structured, and with clear rules and boundaries, is the best context for the women and for service user involvement to thrive.

Establishing a connection and a relationship with women who receive services comes first and then everything else follows.

“I felt unreachable and unnoticed before I came here.”

“When I came here I was a broken woman. I’m not saying that I am better but I’m not broke.”

“It gets better if you ask for help - especially here.”

“Before this service it was hard to get hold of people. You were on your own. Appointments were all over the place and if you missed them you got lifted and it was back to jail.”

“You have a key worker - someone just for you but you can talk to any one of the staff about anything, not just centre things they listen and help.”

“Most importantly it’s a safe place.”

What we are learning about participation

Service user involvement begins from where people are (both stakeholders, staff and women) not from where you would like to be. It then builds slowly from here over time with the support and consensus of everyone involved.

There are a lot of other things going on in many of the women’s lives which can sometimes make it harder for them to participate and or be able to contribute in the way they did last time. But they may well still be interested. It is important to keep involving them and be ready for when they want to come back.

Sometimes everyone talks at once and it’s a bit chaotic - that’s okay. The steps staff can take are to listen, capture the ideas, reflect back what has been said and try to keep things moving forward.

Planning and structure for meetings is helpful - it means things get done. The meetings/ gatherings still need to be flexible, informal and inclusive.

Not everyone can be or wants to be part of a group, nor is it safe for them to do so. Opportunities for service user involvement by individuals are good for that person. They also ensure that a range of views are taken into account, rather than just the view of a small group.

Participation is also increased when the service is flexible in the way it works - offering different options or ways of doing things.

Helping women to make their ideas happen - such as a bingo or film night, wishing tree, preparing lunch for staff using new cooking skills - builds confidence and relationships and brings joy. This also demonstrates how the service is listening and responding to the suggestions from the women.

Take small steps and do them well - build on success increasing confidence for everyone involved.

Life is very tough, complicated and uncertain for many of the women. Service user involvement can have a positive impact on women’s lives.

“That it’s important to take time to get to know people. You can still be friendly, but you don’t have to tell them everything and you don’t have to trust them.”

“We have also learnt respect for ourselves and for other people.”

“Patience is important – it’s not all going to change overnight.”

What we are learning about potential future developments

There is already a significant level of co-production at Tomorrow’s Women Glasgow, when staff and the women who use the service work together to plan the day-to-day service. The ideas that the women are contributing will shape future plans.

We are learning from other places. For example, the Together Women Project showed us that there is a huge demand by vulnerable women with complex needs for this service. Service user involvement is still based around regular service user group meetings with information shared in a range of ways. Social media is also used to promote, record and share activities.

There are a range of volunteering opportunities for women at the centre in Leeds - from facilitating and running courses, to welcoming people when they arrive at the centre and mentoring. This gives women positive role models and greater opportunities. Women complete a programme of support before they move onto a volunteering role.

In the longer-term, the aim is for people using Tomorrow’s Women and the other Community Justice Authority services to contribute to the wider planning and development of the services. The experience of TWG is that people using the services can feed in their views through discussions with staff, especially in settings that are comfortable and familiar.

“We’ve learned that we just have to accept ourselves. But we can give others hope. If we can do it - so can others.”

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