

# **Time for Change: An Evaluation of an Intensive Support Service for Young Women at High Risk of Secure Care or Custody**

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**A REPORT FOR UP-2-US**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **The Time for Change Project**

The Time for Change Young Women's Project (TfC) provides dedicated and gender-specific services for vulnerable girls and young women aged 15 to 17 years at referral (18 only if exceptionally vulnerable on account of care listing) who are at high risk of secure care or custody, and for whom other mainstream options have proved unsuitable. TfC was set up to include those who were chaotic and extremely vulnerable in transition from secure accommodation and prison and in response to concerns regarding the very limited service provision for girls and young women who either offend or are at risk of offending in Scotland, and against a backdrop of an increasing female prison population (McIvor and Burman 2011). Scottish Government turned down the initial bid but changed their view after the SOPHIE report on Secure Accommodation and the number of 15-17 year olds in prison. In reality, by the time TfC started there were no 15 year olds and most girls were 17 years of age.

A key change to Scottish youth justice policy and practice which also serves as important background context for TfC has been the implementation of the 'whole system approach' to dealing with under 18 year olds who offend. This is founded on the principles of early intervention and is designed to seek opportunities to engage young people more productively in education, skills and positive activity, by putting in place a more streamlined and consistent response that works across all systems and agencies to achieve better outcomes (Scottish Government 2011). The principles of early, and effective intervention that is timely, supportive and appropriate, and the linking of risk taking behaviour to the expression of unmet need, together with the aim of the prevention of custody and secure accommodation, were encapsulated in the development of TfC.

The key aims of TfC are to: provide dedicated intensive, relationship-based, support of young women and girls in order to minimise the escalation their offending and /or involvement with the youth and adult criminal justice systems; to assist them resolve current or past conflicts or trauma, familial difficulties and emotional issues associated with their offending behaviours, and to: enhance their positive social relationships, interests and access to suitable education, in line with research findings on resilience and desistance and with an asset-focused, strengths-based approaches to practice.

The TfC service is delivered on an outreach basis and includes elements of practical support, partnership, one to one focused work and an on-call help-line. TfC also has access to facilities for residential placements, through the Up-2-Us parent organisation resource team which provides respite to vulnerable young people in times of crisis. TfC key workers respond to all calls for service provision, with managerial support, via a duty on-call system. TfC also offers consultation and advice to other agencies.

## **The Evaluation**

The evaluation of TfC was conducted by researchers from the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) between 2009 and 2011. The evaluation utilised a mixed method approach, and included data from semi-structured interviews with: TfC key workers and manager, criminal justice social workers, children's and families social workers, and other stakeholders, and with young women service users. It also included analysis of case file information and the TfC data-base which records information on referral source, reasons for referral, key presenting issues (e.g. health, addiction), familial circumstances, legal status, history of anti-social or offending behaviour, and current accommodation, as well as any history of statutory involvement.

The evaluation sought the views and experiences of TfC staff, stakeholders and service users, in order to:

- gain understanding of the complexities of the client group, both in regard to levels of need and risk, and the practice challenges encountered by TfC;
- obtain feedback from service users and stakeholders on key elements of the TfC service and its collaboration with other agencies, including the model of service delivery and principal practice approaches;
- examine the impact of TfC on the young women using the service, and;
- ascertain how the work of TfC and its model of service delivery could be improved

## **Research-Informed Practice**

TfC explicitly adopts a gender-specific approach in its 'holistic service provision (Patton and Morgan 2002) which recognises and addresses the multiple problems (physical, emotional, mental and sexual health, self-esteem/self-worth, substance abuse, victimisation and trauma) that frequently characterise young women's lives. The TfC service is relationship-based (Mearns and Thorne 2007) and delivered primarily on a one-to-one basis. It utilises a strengths-based model of planning and practice, which addresses young women's challenges and strengths, and aims to facilitate or enhance young women's ability to self-advocate within a supportive environment. Practice is also trauma-informed (Covington 2003) and includes therapeutic interventions aimed at individual young women, with a focus on self-esteem, a positive self-concept as a female, and the development of pro-social skills.

## **Referral Processes**

TfC has a broad catchment area in the west of Scotland, and accepts referrals from statutory and non-statutory sources. Young women engage with TfC on a voluntary basis but there is increasing evidence that TfC is being suggested to the courts as an additional support option. as an additional support option. Although TfC set out with the aim of preventing girls and young women from being sent to secure accommodation or prison, it soon became clear that an increasing number of referrals were either already placed within secure care

and therefore requiring support upon discharge, or were already being held in custody either via remand or direct sentence. Following ongoing concern about the imprisonment of women on repeated short term sentences and the lack of support on release, TfC commenced a professional working relationship with HMP YOI Cornton Vale, a female Young Offender Institute and Prison, and the Good Shepherd Centre, a secure unit dedicated to girls but this changed in 2011, and although all units approach - GSC responded positively.

TfC is developing good professional relationships with potential referrers. Awareness of TfC has grown and interview data from stakeholders highlights the overall development of positive working relationships with TfC, with a strong recognition of the need for the services offered. Interviews with stakeholders also clearly show that the purpose of TfC is both well understood, and appreciated.

TfC is a service which young women engage with on a voluntary basis, although referrals to TfC are increasingly being suggested by social workers to the court as additional support and/or as part of a court order.

Hayley and Carly held a meeting with girls on Cornton Vale and put up posters so girls could self refer.

From May 2010 to March 2011, TfC received a total of 44 referrals from statutory criminal justice, youth justice and children and families social work services within local authority areas, health agencies, and voluntary sector organisations working directly with a young woman or her family/carers. Most referrals emanate from HMP YPI Cornton Vale (n=16), and the Good Shepherd Centre (n=8) mainly seeking support with transitions into the community, including accommodation. Of the community-based referrals, most came from South Ayrshire (n=5), Renfrewshire (n=4) and North and East Ayrshire (n=3 respectively). Three quarters (n=33) of those referred to TfC are aged 16-18 years.

Differences exist across local authority areas in terms of ease of access to information on referrals. TfC staff report difficulties surrounding the sharing of historical and background information, such as social enquiry reports and Children's Hearing information, and in accessing appropriate mental health or learning disability assessment and provision for young women.

Young women imprisoned at the point of referral essentially refer themselves; although it is important to note that TfC workers offer encouragement to prison-based young women to engage with TfC. Without such encouragement, there is a likelihood that young women may not engage with TfC. Where there is a self-referral from prison, gaining background information can be difficult, as often young women are hazy about details, with limited understanding of the reasons for their arrest, the nature of current and/or pending charges, or potential sentencing outcomes.

The ability to make referrals to TfC was generally welcomed by social workers, some of whom indicated that their role was increasingly one of case management, leaving them

limited time to spend directly with individual young women. They welcome the additional in-depth information that Tfc workers provide and their insights into young women's needs and general progress. It was generally felt that good relationships were in place and that Tfc workers could undertake tasks that social workers had probably identified but did not have time to address, providing them with an opportunity to focus on issues more directly related to offending or order compliance/completion. The respite care was also considered very valuable by social workers who recognise the need for 'time out' for some young women particularly in times of crisis.

It has taken a long time to become invited to Review Meetings especially Children and Families – we were often doing the chasing. This has changed as the project has become better known. The Review day last year helped and we tend now to adopt a tight time and focus with younger girls who are in children's units and cases can drift into day to day problems.

For the most part, communication processes between Tfc and other services and agencies are considered to be working well. Where referrals are considered appropriate, three-way meetings are held between the Tfc key worker, the young woman and social/agency worker to conduct an assessment and develop or review the individual support plan. Interviews reveal good information sharing is in place, especially at the initial stages of a young women's engagement with Tfc. However some interviews with referrers revealed a desire for increased agency involvement, and greater communication of progress in the work being undertaken with young women and their response to it. This suggests the need for more inclusive review systems.

### **The Young Women Service Users**

Data from the Tfc data base provides some information on accommodation, educational/employment status, contact with youth/adult justice, and familial and social background. But in many cases this information is sketchy or missing, prohibiting any detailed analysis.

This is partly linked to Tfc being new and taking self referrals from prison which means there is some delay in getting information from Criminal Justice (Data Protection meant we had to get the girls' permissions). We now know that the figures, for example, for care history from the early period are a gross under representation as 33 of 44 total are or have been accommodated.

Over half of those referred (n=24) were either in prison (remand or under direct sentence) or accommodated within secure care at the time of referral. Six were living at home with family; two were living with a friend or other relative; six were in local authority accommodation, and; six were in temporary accommodation.

Almost two fifths have been previously accommodated by the local authority (inc. foster care, residential care, and supported accommodation). Whilst most (n=35) reported having

some contact with family members, in most cases this was sporadic and infrequent. Around three quarters of referrals come from lone mother families.

All but one were either subject to compulsory social work intervention or involved in criminal proceedings, or were under sentence at the point of referral. Thirty nine had an allocated social worker, but there were wide variations in levels and frequency of social work contact.

Most have histories of police involvement, arrest, conviction and/or involvement with the Children's Hearings System on offence grounds (as well as welfare grounds). In 21 of the 44 referrals, offending was a key reason for referral. Whilst a small number were charged with violence, including murder, attempted murder and serious assault, most were involved in more minor offending: breaches of the peace; vandalism; malicious mischief; criminal damage; making threatening telephone calls; and; a range of road traffic offences, including drunk driving; having no insurance and/or driving licence; leaving the scene of an accident, and; being a passenger in a stolen car.

Few young women referred appear to have undergone any formal standardised risk assessment; the lack of formalised risk data is surprising, given that many of the young women referred have been justice-involved for some considerable time.

While most young women are referred on the basis of their offending behaviour, vulnerability factors are also noted, for example; severe isolation and lack of understanding of the court and justice system; homelessness and housing difficulties; mental health issues; self-harming; negative peer or familial associations; childhood trauma, loss or attachment difficulties.

Data from interviews with TfC staff and analysis of referral and case progress information highlights that a high number had been exposed to considerable familial conflict, and/or physical and emotional neglect or sexual abuse at points during their childhood.

### **Working with Girls and Young Women**

The programme offered by TfC is designed to meet the needs of individual young women. A key worker is allocated, and will work in partnership with each young woman, to ensure her views are taken account of in the development and fulfilment of her own support plan. This encourages responsibility for engagement, rather than the imposition of a care plan which has been designed 'for' rather than 'by' young women.

Individual support plans are subject to internal monitoring and review at intervals of initially one month then at regular intervals thereafter. This tends to be an informal process between the TfC key worker and young woman, but where other agencies are involved, their views are also solicited, and the TfC plan is linked in with other plans in place. Support plans may include: support to develop new coping strategies and to make informed choices; support to develop new pro-social relationships, or mend severed relationships; facilitate improvements to physical and mental health; enhance practical living skills; assist



in introduction to new social experiences; linking young women into other appropriate services and activities in order to address social exclusion; address reasons for young women's offending behaviour, and; assist in the development of plans for education, training and employability.

High frequency of contact is maintained, contact can be daily or weekly, 30 hours to 4 according to stage, problems and risks. Meetings and Court appearances are additional. Contact meetings are approx. two hours duration, and can include relationship building activities, and one-on-one therapeutic support. Contact also includes recreational pursuits to assist young women to develop greater self confidence, and encouragement to participate in structured activities.

The value of the TfC service lies in its flexibility, and ability to respond to the diverse (and multiple) problems encountered by young women in their daily lives. Much of the support provided is practical in nature: assisting in budgeting, applications for housing or financial assistance, securing appointments with doctors and dentists, contacting social services and other agencies where difficulties could be encountered making contact, or when the young women were just not confident enough to do this themselves. Workers also get involved with families, making contact, relaying information, attending relevant meetings and providing support for young women when meeting with their families.

The gender-specific nature of TfC is an important aspect of the way in which intensive support is interpreted, delivered and received. Operating from within a gender-sensitive paradigm, the emotional support provided to young women is considered extremely important and seen by TfC workers as a key part of their role.

The provision of emotional support is also held in high regard by referrers as, often, it is time-consuming and ongoing nature of this kind of support which is difficult for social workers and other service providers to provide.

The physical location of young women is very important in the design and delivery of support that can be provided, as well as the nature of contact. As part of their case-load, key workers may be simultaneously supporting young women in prison, in the community and in secure care; this necessitates flexibility in response.

Interview data with young women evidenced that TfC workers are considered reliable, consistent, accessible and easy to talk to. Young women are appreciative of the advice and advocacy in relation to practical matters, such as legal and housing issues and the emotional support and assistance offered. All were aware of the distinctive roles of social worker and TfC worker, and the experience of working with TfC was perceived as very different to the type of practice and provision offered by statutory social work services.

Young women's engagement with TfC is not always easy, or productive, despite sustained efforts to build relationships and rapport. In a small number of cases, individuals remain doggedly resistant to engagement with TfC (or indeed any other support service), missing appointments, being uncommunicative, and/or refusing to participate in any meaningful way.

There are key differences between older (those aged between 16 and 18 years) and younger girls engaged with TfC. The 'older' group tend to have experienced more (and often significant) involvement with the statutory care and/or justice system, including periods of imprisonment. They are less likely to be involved within children's services; more likely to be exposed to adult criminal justice services; more likely to have addiction problems (mainly alcohol), and; more likely to be involved in risky lifestyles. The older group also tend to have more limited sources of support, and require a higher level of worker contact and support in order to maintain their safety.

TfC staff report that younger girls are more difficult to build relationships with and more resistant to meaningful engagement, which resounds with literature on working with girls (Alder 1998; Baines and Alder 1996; Batchelor and Burman 2004). Many of the younger girls are on compulsory orders, and are more likely to have several agencies involved in their care plan. As well as this being a likely factor accounting for engagement difficulties, it also raises concerns about unnecessary duplication of support. Therefore, there is need to ensure that young women are not overwhelmed by number of practitioners involved within their lives, but to ensure that TfC is selected as an appropriate means of support where key criteria are met.

### **Impact**

Whilst a detailed analysis of outcomes was never a specific objective of this evaluation, some largely textual information on impact of TfC on the everyday lives of young women engaging with TfC is available from interviews and case files, although there are important caveats to this. It is important to emphasise that the evaluation has been undertaken over a short period of time, and the complex psychological, familial and social difficulties experienced by this group may be deeply entrenched. Many of the young women have experienced a raft of prior statutory and voluntary interventions, which have not resulted in sustained positive change. Many have had difficult and distrustful relationships with professionals and are resistant to working with agencies. Yet for many there is evidence of some progress in some areas. This includes: increasing recognition and acknowledgement of the risks posed by their drinking and drug use; increases in help-seeking behaviour in relation to substance abuse; a growing ability to identify/avoid risky situations likely to lead to arrest; progress in repairing family relationships, and; the acquisition and use of practical living skills, often accomplished in conjunction with the achievement of more stable living arrangements.

The practical support provided by TfC in helping young women to plan, to budget, to obtain accommodation, and to shop is highly valued by social workers and other referrers. Also, the role of TfC workers in supporting young women to access a range of services was viewed by social workers as very important, both in terms of addressing social exclusion and also achieving compliance with court orders.

The impact of interventions such as TfC require time to demonstrate longer term impact in relation to reductions in reoffending/reconviction, increases in compliance with orders and ultimately reductions in the number of young women being imprisoned or sent to secure care. Whilst these findings are at best tentative, there was a reduction in the rate of offending recorded; just seven of the young women incurred a new charge, and an eighth was arrested twice but not charged on either occasion.

Because of the multiplicity of need in these justice-involved young women's lives, taken together with the relatively short time frame of the evaluation, no young women had been supported to move on from TfC, so it is not possible to provide meaningful information about the processes or experiences of exiting from the service. Nonetheless it is anticipated that this is highly likely to prove a very difficult and challenging process for both young women and their key workers.

The findings of this evaluation provide support for the benefits of TfC, despite some of the uncertainties currently experienced due to short-term funding arrangements and the challenges of working with this group. Incarcerated young women and those at high risk of detention in prison or secure accommodation, remain a group in great need of appropriate resource provision, both from welfare provision and penal policy and practice.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Up-2-Us was established in 2008 to serve very vulnerable and disadvantaged young people for whom statutory and other organisations have found hard to help and who, as a result, are at high risk of admission to secure care or custody. Up -2-Us runs three projects for young people, serving a wide area in the West of Scotland taking referrals mainly from across North and South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and North and South Ayrshire.

Through its Time for Change Young Women's Project, established initially as a twelve month pilot in May 2010, Up-2-Us provides dedicated services for vulnerable girls and young women aged 15 to 17 years who are at high risk of secure care or custody, and for whom other mainstream options have proved unsuitable. Time for Change was funded during the pilot year by the Scottish Government and Lankellychase, who along with the Robertson Trust had helped Up-2-Us raise the profile of work with girls.

The initial aim of TfC was to prevent the custodial detention of young women and girls, in either prison or secure accommodation. However, as the Project developed throughout its pilot year and responded to the need of its client group, the aims were broadened to the following:

- to provide dedicated intensive, relationship-based, support of young women and girls within the community in order to minimise the escalation their offending and /or involvement with the youth and adult criminal justice systems;
- to assist young women and girls resolve current or past conflicts or trauma, familial difficulties and emotional issues associated with their offending behaviours;
- to enhance young women's positive social relationships, interests and access to suitable education, in line with research findings on resilience and desistance and with an asset-focused, strengths-based approach to practice.

### **TfC targets young women and girls:**

- aged 15 – 17 years
- at high risk of secure care or custody
- at risk of remand
- at risk of detention in secure accommodation
- resident in the West of Scotland (excluding City of Glasgow local authority area)

In particular, TfC aims to serve vulnerable and disadvantaged young women for whom mainstream statutory and other organisations have found hard to help. and who are at a very high risk of admission to secure care or custody.

### **Criteria for referral**

- high risk of detention in relation to offending behaviour;
- high risk of harm to self.

The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) was commissioned to evaluate the TfC Project, with the evaluation taking place between September 2010 and September 2011. The research is based on a mixed method approach combining qualitative and quantitative data. It sought to obtain views, perceptions and expectations of those parties involved with the TfC Project, namely TfC workers, service users and relevant agencies in order to:

- gain an insightful understanding of the complexities of the targeted client group, both in regard to levels of need and risk, and the practice challenges encountered by TfC;
- assess expectations of key stakeholders, including their views on the age and gender-specific approach adopted for this client group;
- obtain feedback from service users and stakeholders on key elements of the TfC services and its collaboration with other agencies, including the model of service delivery and principal practice approaches;
- examine the impact of TfC on the young women using the service, and;
- ascertain how the work of TfC and its model of service delivery could be improved.

Full details of the methodological approach taken in the study can be found in Appendix A.

## 2 BACKGROUND

The Time for Change Project was set up in May 2010, in response to a number of inter-related concerns regarding current responses to vulnerable girls and young women at high risk of custody or secure care in Scotland. These concerns must be placed within a background context of marked increases in female custodial detention in Scotland in recent years, which have in turn exacerbated fears amongst practitioners of the likelihood that vulnerable young women and girls are experiencing higher risk of being drawn into custody and secure care. A number of recent initiatives aimed at adult female offenders in Scotland have highlighted the importance of providing responses which can address the wider issues facing women who come into contact with the criminal justice system and to develop and make use of, community-based provision (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2009). There is an increasing recognition of the importance of mentoring programmes, and the role that support workers can provide in enhancing the impact of statutory services (e.g. Loucks et al. 2006; Burgess et al 2011; Salgado et al, 2011). Yet there is a relative dearth of appropriate age and gender-specific resources and services for girls and young women, in custodial settings and also, particularly, within the community in Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, there have been changes to the Scottish youth justice policy and practice landscape with, on the one hand a keener focus on identifying and managing risk amongst young people and, on the other, a focus on developing strategies for early and effective intervention designed to prevent offending by children and young people. A significant recent development has been the implementation of the 'whole system approach' to dealing with under 18 year olds who offend. This is founded on the principles of early intervention and is designed to seek opportunities to engage young people more productively in education, skills and positive activity, by putting in place a more streamlined and consistent response that works across all systems and agencies to achieve better outcomes (Scottish Government 2011).

The concerns about existing responses to young women and girls who offend, and the wider youth justice policy and practice developments together form an important background context for understanding the genesis, establishment and implementation of the Time for Change Project within Up-2-Us, and these are discussed in more detail below.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'girls' is used to refer to those under 16 years and 'young women' to refer to those aged 16 to 18 years.

### 3 POLICY CONTEXT

The current policy context of work with young people who offend in Scotland is structured by the Scottish Government policy document *Preventing Offending: A Framework for Action 2008*, which is premised on the importance of early intervention and prevention, particularly for the 8 to 16 year age group, before any concerns about behaviour or welfare begin to escalate. The document outlines a number of strategies aimed at preventing offending involving young people, including Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) which focuses on timely and appropriate interventions for children and young people who offend.

The *Preventing Offending: A Framework for Action 2008* document, whilst placing strong emphasis on 8-16 year olds and preventative work, also states explicitly that there is a need to 'sustain attention on the successful transition to adulthood, particularly the vulnerable period between 16 and 21' (Scottish Government 2008a: 4), specifically through multi-agency work.

The nationally agreed objectives of the *Young People Who Offend* strand of the Scottish Government's *Reducing Reoffending Programme* (RRP) are to:

- develop and implement a process that provides decision makers access to the information required to effectively support the care and management of young people who offend or present a high risk through the children's hearings/criminal justice system.
- develop and introduce a streamlined and effective framework that identifies and diverts under 18 year olds whose offending or risk taking behaviour can be effectively managed outside: (a) children's hearings; (b) the criminal justice system; and (c) custody (secure care and prison).
- develop and introduce a range of evidence based early and effective approaches and programmes for under 18 year olds who have offended or present a risk of serious harm so as to lead to a reduction in re-offending rates.
- develop and support the implementation of processes to enable a consistent standard of risk assessment and risk management of all young people under 18 at high risk of offending or reoffending; to support shared understanding of risk and need across services for children and adults.
- develop and support the implementation of processes and interventions for under 18s who are (a) dealt with in the courts and (b) detained in prison, to better meet

their age and stage of development in line with the principles of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These are buttressed by the principles of the policy document *GIRFEC: Getting it Right for Every Child*, emphasising timely, supportive and appropriate interventions for diverting young people from further offending. The GIRFEC philosophy maintains that work with children and young people who offend should also take place within a child protection context. Many young people who display offending behaviours are highly vulnerable and many will have experienced crime and trauma in their own lives. Within this, it is increasingly recognised that negative early life experiences can leave some young people extremely vulnerable to social and environmental pressures, and this can lead to offending violence and other forms of harmful or anti-social behaviours in childhood and later life (Fraser and MacQueen, 2011). The GIRFEC approach aims to place young people's needs first; to ensure that they are listened to, their views are taken seriously and that they get more co-ordinated help where this is required for their well-being, health and development. It requires that all services young people and their families - social work, health, education, police, housing and voluntary organisations - adapt and streamline their systems and practices to improve how they work together to support children and young people, including strengthening information sharing.

Responses to children and young people need to prioritise their individual protection as much as tackling behaviours that have impact on others, promoting community safety and social wellbeing. This has most impact in relation to discussions about risk; when discussing risk assessment and management in relation to young people consideration of their vulnerability as well as the risk they may present to others in terms of harm need to be taken into account (Fraser and MacQueen, 2011).

The GIRFEC values underpin all work in relation to risk assessment and management with children and young people who offend. This approach to risk assessment and management conceptualises risk in a particular way, seeing risk and need as interrelated, and linking risk taking behaviour to the expression of unmet need. A key objective is that those young people that present a significant risk, should be managed within a community based setting wherever possible. This work is also underpinned in primary legislation within the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

These three perspectives in social policy - preventing offending, the child protection context and GIRFEC prioritise the welfare aspect of the criminalisation of children and young people.



### 3.1 The 'Whole System' Approach

The youth justice policy and practice landscape in Scotland has also seen the recent introduction of the 'Whole System Approach' (WSA) to dealing with young people who offend. The WSA is similarly founded on the principles of early intervention with young people who are engaged in offending behaviour, including those who come to the attention of the Children's Hearings System, the police, the courts or other agencies. The WSA operates across the 8 – 18 year old spectrum, and aims to ensure that a consistent and evidence-based approach of what is considered effective is delivered to support young people who are responsible for offending and/or who have been harmed. The stated aims of the WSA are to prevent unnecessary use of custody and secure accommodation wherever possible and appropriate, through the availability and use of services, and; to seek opportunities to engage such young people more productively in education, skills and positive activity, by putting in place a more streamlined and consistent response that works across all systems and agencies (a 'whole system' approach) to achieve better outcomes for young people and their communities (Scottish Government 2011). This is consistent with the National Performance Framework aims of better outcomes for young people, improved life chances and making lives safer. In recognition of the importance of early and effective intervention an aim of the WSA is to try to ensure that only those under 18 who really need formal measures – such as compulsory supervision by the Children's Hearings System, prosecution, secure care or custody – are taken through this process. This incorporates the idea that less serious behaviour may be better dealt with by diversion and positive supports than with courses of action that label the young person an offender (McAra and McVie, 2010).

The WHA also emphasises child status of under 18s and ensuring 'welfare' needs continue to be met. The policy challenges existing practice – for example terminating supervision because the child is not co-operating or because there are offences. This is important to TfC because many girls have drifted into Cornton Vale because supervision requirements are terminated because of 'unco-operative behaviour' and the girls lose a service – Jemma and Kathleen are good examples.

The WSA is intended to include the following interventions and responses:

- Introduction of multi-agency early and effective intervention to ensure young people get a timely, appropriate and proportionate response to early/minor offending and are directed towards positive activities.
- Introduction of multi-agency screening to identify opportunities for diversion from prosecution and diversion from custody ensuring that young people get an immediate and effective response that meets risk and need and that channels them towards options that will develop their capacity and skills.

- Improvements in the use of risk assessment and risk management planning to support decision making, ensuring the most expensive resources are targeted at the highest risk young people and that these are deployed effectively.
- Greater use of restorative justice as a disposal.
- Greater use of community disposals.

The principles of early, and effective intervention that is timely, supportive and appropriate, and the linking of risk taking behaviour to the expression of unmet need, together with the aim of the prevention of custody and secure accommodation, were encapsulated in the development of the TfC service, and incorporated into the key objectives of the Project itself.

## **4 OFFENDING YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS: AN OVERVIEW**

### **4.1 The nature and extent of young female offending**

It is very well established that girls and young women offend less than boys and young men, and that those who do offend commit less serious offences, pose less of a risk to the public, and have shorter criminal 'careers' than boys and young men (Burman 2004; Gelsthorpe and Sharpe 2006; Burman and McIvor 2011). Like boys, girls tend to 'grow out' of offending, but at an earlier age, so that the gender gap in offending widens markedly after adolescence (Moffitt et al 2001). This is often explained as due to the earlier maturity of girls as compared to boys, such that girls 'reach and pass through the turbulent period associated with offending' at a younger age (McAra and Smith 2004:13).

Internationally, young women are responsible for only a minority of recorded offences committed by the under-18s (see, for example: Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Carrington 2006; Ministry of Justice 2009). Although the gap between male and female youthful offending (in terms of the percentages who report committing illegal acts) is smaller when self-reported offending is considered (Graham and Bowling 1995; Flood-Page et al 2000) boys are still more likely than girls to report having committed all but the least common offences (Jamieson et al 1999), and the gap between males and females widens significantly when more serious delinquency is considered (Lanctôt and Le Blanc 2002; Smith and McAra 2004).

### **4.2 Responses to young female offenders**

Despite the clear differences in both the nature and scale of offending between young men and young women, the rate at which many young women are drawn into and through the justice system has increased markedly, leading to the claim that young women constitute the fastest growing population within youth justice systems internationally (Carrington, 2006). There is also evidence that young women are increasingly being convicted at a younger age (see for example, Steffensmeier et al 2005). In England and Wales, Sharpe and Gelsthorpe (2009) report that minor youthful transgressions, which make up the majority of offences by young women, are being formally policed at an unprecedented rate, and research by the Youth Justice Board found that the number of offences committed by young women resulting in a disposal rose between 2002/3 and 2005/6 by 38.7 per cent compared with a comparable 6.6 per cent for boys (Youth Justice Board 2007).

The reasons for increased numbers of young women being drawn into youth /adult justice systems are complex and diverse, and not explicable by a single factor, though there is little evidence that it reflects marked or sustained changes in levels or patterns of female crime. The increase has been attributed, variously, to the differential impact on women (of all ages) of changes in legislation and policy that have been introduced in some jurisdictions;

the increased social and economic marginalization of women, coupled with a rolling-back of welfare services; decreasing levels of tolerance of youthful transgressions leading to a greater arrest rate, and; a more punitive, media-driven, approach to the sentencing of younger women in particular (Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2003; Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Steffensmeier et al 2005; Frost et al 2006; Gelsthorpe 2006; Hedderman 2010; McIvor 2010; McIvor and Burman 2011). It is also posited that the breakdown of informal social controls in many families, neighbourhoods, schools and residential care homes has led to an increased reliance on the police to intervene with 'troublesome' youth; this is particularly relevant to girls, given the importance of informal, unofficial, private and familial mechanisms of control in the history of female youth justice (Sharpe and Gelsthorpe 2009). In similar vein, Chesney-Lind (2006) has suggested that apparent 'increases' in female offending may be due to the introduction of a 'zero-tolerance' approach within the contexts of schools and residential units, to behaviour that would previously have been dealt with informally or simply ignored, alongside changes to how domestic arguments have been perceived more often as assaults (Rigby, Jardine and Whyte, 2011). Moreover, the decline in statutory care and welfare provision for children, young people and their families has all but closed off non-criminal justice avenues of support for many young people in difficulty (Sharpe 2009). Undoubtedly, changes in legislation and policy hinder analysis of recent trends in girls' offending and official responses to it, although there is substantial evidence which highlights that female offenders (of all ages) are much more likely than young men and adult males to commit low level, non-violent offences such as theft, shoplifting and drug possession (see for example, Burman 2004; Sharpe and Gelsthorpe 2009).

Given that females are typically convicted of relatively minor crimes which pose little public risk, it is not unreasonable to presume that they are less likely than males to receive sentences for imprisonment, on the basis that the use of prison should be restricted to offending which has a strong impact on public safety and where public protection from serious harm is the key objective. Yet, the use of custody for females - in terms of both direct sentence and remand - has increased dramatically in many western jurisdictions over the last 15-20 years as evidenced by increases in the numbers of females given sentences of imprisonment, in daily female prison populations and in the rate of imprisonment (see for example, Carrington 2006; McIvor 2010; McIvor and Burman 2011). In many countries the rate of detention is increasing faster for young women than young men. For example, young women aged 16-17 years old in England and Wales are five times more likely to receive a custodial sentence as opposed to a community sentence, compared to young males who are only twice as likely to receive a custodial sentence in place of a community sentence (Gelsthorpe and Sharpe 2009).

### **4.3 Young women, offending and custodial detention in Scotland**

Scotland has also seen a marked rise in female imprisonment, although this is most marked in relation to adult females.<sup>2</sup> In the decade from 1999-2000 to 2008-09, the number of women remanded to custody almost doubled (from 1,176 to 2,338), as has the number of adult females received into prison under direct sentence (from 458 to 906), yet at the same time there has been no overall change in the level or seriousness of detected crime involving females, and no increases in female convictions (McIvor and Burman 2011). In addition, the length of custodial sentences imposed on females has increased from 228 days in 1999-2000 to 271 in 2008-09. This has given rise to renewed disquiet about the increasing female prison population in Scotland (HM Inspector of Prisons 2007; 2011; Equal Opportunities Committee 2009) and the reduction of the female prison population is once more a key policy objective. Most recently, in 2011, it has led to the establishment of a Commission on Female Offenders to find a more effective way of dealing with females who offend.

For some years there has been a tendency within media and political discourse to consider young women as a key part of the 'youth crime problem' (Batchelor 2005) and there have been some high profile announcements about the need, in particular, to tackle the growing problem of violent and disorderly females in Scotland (Burman and Batchelor 2009). But the picture is complex, as the statistical and administrative data from a range of sources on young females and offending demonstrates. Data from the Scottish Children's Reporter Association reveals that whilst the overwhelming number of referrals to the Children's Hearings System for both boys and girls are on care and protection grounds and there has been a general decrease in referrals, there have been rises in the numbers of referrals of girls on offence grounds, with an increase of 58 per cent from 2,852 in 1994 to 4,320 in 2007/08. For males, the numbers increased by 25 per cent over same period, from 10,545 to 13,151 (Scottish Children's Reporter Association 2008).

However, there has been no overall increase in the numbers of females (all ages) reported to the police over the period 1999-2000 to 2008-2009, and an actual decrease in the numbers of young women aged under 21 years reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), with the numbers marked for court for this age group also decreasing steadily (McIvor and Burman 2011). The overall number of young women aged under 21 years with a charge proven has remained relatively stable during the past ten to twelve years, but there have been some changes in trends for specific crime and offence categories. Among young women under 21 years of age, there has been an increase in convictions for miscellaneous offences and slight but proportionate increases in numbers convicted of crimes against public justice and vandalism; there has also been a striking

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<sup>2</sup> There have also been steady increases in male imprisonment, though the rise in custody rates has been disproportionately higher for women than for men (McIvor and Burman 2011)

decrease in the numbers of young women convicted of crimes of dishonesty, which now account for only 14 per cent of all females with a charge proved, compared with 35 per cent in 1999 (McIvor and Burman 2011). However these trends need to be placed in context; because the actual number of young women involved in offending is low, small numerical changes can make a great deal of difference in terms of reported percentage changes (Burman 2004; Batchelor 2005). It is particularly interesting to note that the number of young women under 21 years of age given a custodial sentence has *decreased* in Scotland since 1999, while the numbers given community sentences and other disposals have increased; analysis of sentencing decisions by age and offence type suggests courts have become less likely to imprison young women under 21 years convicted of property offences but more likely to imprison those convicted of crimes against public justice (McIvor and Burman 2011).

Scotland stands alone as the only western European country to routinely deal with 16 and 17 year olds in the adult criminal justice system and imprison this age group at a higher rate than elsewhere in Europe, contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Johnstone and Burman 2009). Each year around 10,000 16 and 17 year olds are drawn in the criminal justice system in Scotland, and significant numbers end up in custody, although as Table 1 and Table 2 both show, the vast majority of these are male. Moreover, around 88 per cent of 16 to 20 year olds released from custody are reconvicted within two years with 45 per cent receiving further custodial sentences (Scottish Government 2011). As stated in the Scottish Prisons Commission report *Scotland's Choice*: 'when 16 and 17 year olds are sentenced to detention, not only are their family ties, educational chances and job prospects damaged, they are forced to form relationships and, no doubt, learn from more experienced offenders' (2008).

The Tables below reveal the significant numerical differences between males and females aged 16 to 21 years in prison receptions and the average daily population in Scottish prisons and young offender institutions.

**Table 1. Receptions: males and females, 16-20 years, 2009 – 10**

Age	Male	Female	Total
16	84	5	89
17	293	30	323
18	541	29	570
19	516	32	548
20	585	29	614

Source: Scottish Consortium on Crime and Justice (2011) Youth Justice Report

**Table 2. Average daily population: males and females, 16 – 21 years (as at 30.06.2009)**

Age	Male	Female	Total
16	44	2	49
17	146	13	159
18	248	7	255
19	290	8	298
20	320	16	336
21	338	10	319

Source: Scottish Consortium on Crime and Justice (2011) Youth Justice Report

But notwithstanding these clear gender differences, the unnecessary use of prison, for both young men and young women, is liable to build up an institutionalised group of young people who have not yet established themselves in society, and are liable to reoffend and return to custody once again.

Although boys are numerically superior, there is an over-representation of girls in local authority secure care accommodation in Scotland, representing another form of detention. There are two routes to secure care: through a court order under the provisions of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, or via the Children’s Hearings System. Under section 51 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, the court can remand a young person awaiting trial on criminal charges to secure accommodation. This may include 16-17 year olds already subject to a supervision requirement made by the Children’s Hearing Panel. Through this process, young people are committed to the care of the local authority (known as ‘looked after’). In addition, young people may also be sentenced by the courts to be detained in custody within secure accommodation. Under section 70 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, the Children’s Hearing Panel may authorise the placement of a child or young person in secure accommodation providing that s/he ‘(a) having previously absconded, is likely to abscond unless kept in secure accommodation, and, if he absconds is likely that his physical, mental, or moral welfare will be at risk; and (b) is likely to injure himself or some other person unless he is kept in secure accommodation.’ Whilst boys outnumber girls in secure accommodation the ratio is changing. In 2000 there were 71 boys in secure units and 16 girls, whereas five years later, in 2005, there were 65 boys and 35 girls. In March 2010, young women constituted four per cent of the secure population. This represents a rise of fourteen per cent since 2006 and a two per cent increase from 2008/9 (Children’s Social Work Statistics 2009/10). At the same time, there have been some marked increases in the use of secure accommodation for young women deemed to be a risk to themselves. This group of young people present some of the greatest challenges to the staff who care for them, as they require high levels of support and resources to meet their needs (Social Work Inspection Agency 2006). A study tracking outcomes for young

people admitted to secure care via the Children's Hearings System during 2008/2009 found important differences in the reasons for admission for boys and girls. Whilst boys were more likely than girls to be admitted for serious offending behaviour or violence, girls were mostly admitted for issues such as absconding, substance misuse, self-harming or other risky behaviours which render them vulnerable (Kendrick et al 2008).

#### **4.4 Risks and needs**

Over the past 15 years, the risk factors approach to devising preventative strategies has become a dominant discourse in youth justice, and research evidence from the identification of both risk and protective factors has established the potential for strategies to reduce young people's risk of offending. Although this is an area characterised by intense theoretical and methodological debate, there is something of a consensus around the precipitative factors of family conflict, truancy, drug use, irresponsible or lack of parenting, low intelligence, delinquent peers, and community organisation (Muncie 2009). Far less established are the causal mechanisms linking risk factors with offending. In particular, what is not clear is how much these are predictive risk factors and how much they co-exist, or form one of a number of interacting or interrelated factors which affect the onset of offending (Farrington 2007), but increasingly the indication is that it is the clustering together of a number of factors, such as the experience of abuse, the witnessing of domestic violence, poverty, lack of educational and/or familial engagement, personality characteristics such as impulsivity and pro-criminal associations which, in combination, contribute to offending behaviour (Arnull et al 2005; Farrington and Painter 2004; Smith and McVie 2003: 12). Smith et al (2006) suggest that there is a relationship between traumatic experiences and delinquency, to the extent that where one is present the other appears more elevated than for the general population. Research has also identified other – protective – factors which are linked to positive outcomes, and which protect young people from difficulties, even when they are growing up in adverse circumstances and are heavily exposed to risk.

The international research literature is divided on whether or not risk or predictive factors are the same for girls/young women as boys/young men, and risk/needs assessment is influenced by two theoretical perspectives. The so-called 'gender-neutral' model, as initially developed in Canada and derived largely from research with young, white males (Andrews and Bonta 1998), suggests that similar models of criminogenic risk factors apply to both boys and girls, such as anti-social attitudes, pro-criminal associates and peers, lack of parental supervision and unconstructive leisure time, and also that the risk factors identified may actually be better predictors of potential offending by girls than boys (Cauffman et al, 2004). The 'gender-responsive' model as developed in the US by feminist researchers holds that female risks, needs, characteristics and values are different, and so suggest the need for specific and gender-responsive strategies which also take into account young women's needs which are not directly related to their offending behaviour (see for example Bloom et



al 2003; Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004). Gender-responsive approaches contend that the relative infrequency and distinctive nature of female offending means that existing actuarial predictors, derived from studies of male offenders, are inappropriate (Hannah-Moffat and Shaw 2001; Hannah-Moffat and Maurutto 2001; Worrall 2001), and it is misplaced to simplify the needs of women and girls to discrete criminogenic factors, as these needs are not necessarily 'treatable' dynamic factors (Kemshall 2008). From this perspective, it is argued that risk assessment and screening processes need not only to properly reflect the needs of girls and young women, but also need to be supplemented by other measures which explore the reasons behind problematic behaviour, particularly in relation to mental and emotional health and self-esteem, suggesting the need for a more individualised and gender-sensitive assessment process (see for example, Moretti et al 2004; van Wormer 2010).

Gender is not, by itself, considered a risk factor, but research has consistently shown that certain factors have stronger correlations for females (Bloom et al 2003). Of particular importance here are: previous victimisation (which includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse); weakened or absent support networks (which includes low parental supervision); peer influence of others (especially boys and/or boyfriends) involved in offending; unsupervised leisure time; low self-esteem, and; material deprivation. Undeniably, many young women and girls who offend have been sexually and physically abused, and have experienced poor relationships. The impact of these experiences cannot be ignored, and a body of research has been concerned with investigating the link between past victimisation and abuse and offending (see for example Smith et al 2006; Chapple et al 2004; Austin 2003; Hubbard and Pratt 2002; Chesney-Lind 2001). That concerned with adult female offenders indicates a high co-existence of abuse experiences (especially sexual abuse) and delinquency/offending and suggests that this is higher than for boys (Austin 2003; Chesney-Lind 2001).

It should be noted however that much of the research on risk factors and young women stems from the US, and has been conducted on girls within the juvenile system. The US context is dissimilar to UK in many ways, not only because of significant differences in relation to ethnicity and socio-economic status of young people in the justice system, but also because of a high proportion of girls incarcerated for 'status offences' particularly 'running away' (Belknap and Holsinger 1998).

In a British context, socio-economic status and poverty are stated to be key risk factors in relation to girls (Farrington and Painter 2004; Hubbard and Pratt 2002) particularly with regard to their impact on other factors and to the likelihood of 'being caught' (Smith and McVie 2003:189). In Scotland, Burman et al (2007) found that practitioners tended towards the view that many of the risk factors for girls' offending were the same or similar as those identified for boys, in particular, peer pressure, boredom, education, and family issues, but that there were gendered differences in the ways in which these were experienced. This

resonates with research by Hollin and Palmer (2006) who suggest that while criminogenic needs may be similar between males and females, some, such as physical and sexual abuse, may have a different impact.

Recent years have seen a shift in the ways in which young women's needs, circumstances and vulnerabilities are perceived and, notably, 'rebranded as criminogenic needs and risk' (Rigby, Jardine and Whyte: 2011:4). This refers to the ways in which vulnerable, isolated, and/or marginalised young women have been re-positioned within media-led discourses as a group which pose a greater threat to public safety than previously perceived (Burman and Batchelor 2009; Worrall 2009), alongside a shift from a welfare approach to young women's behaviour, which in many cases is associated with experiencing trauma throughout their childhood and adolescence, to a more punitive approach (Sharpe and Gelsthorpe 2009). Yet, as is well-established, young women's offending is rarely serious. Some argue that the conceptualisation of 'risky' girls is a key contributory factor leading to the justification for youth justice involvement, and the increase of young women entering criminal justice systems. As Rigby et al (2011) caution:

*"While the language of risk factors (Farrington, 2007) is now widely used in practice, the notion of risk(y) processes is underemphasised. Practitioners need to exercise caution as the risk factor prevention paradigm individualises offending, suggesting that risk factors are 'modifiable' by the individual alone rather than by society. In reality many risk factors appear to be beyond a young person's control." (Rigby et al 2011:4).*

In many ways, young women are caught between a cleft stick: the emphasis on risk assessment in youth justice means that girls are often considered to have a high level of need and subsequently assessed as 'high risk', and; in addition a comparatively more 'welfare'-based approach to female offending means that girls are often considered to be in need of greater protection than boys (Burman and Batchelor 2009; Worrall 2009; Gelsthorpe and Sharpe 2009). This has important consequences for the ways in which young women who offend are both perceived and responded to in youth/adult justice systems.

#### **4.5 Taking account of age and gender**

The lower numbers and relative invisibility of young women have significant practical implications, in terms of the availability of dedicated programmes and interventions, but also in terms of developing effective working with this particular group (Batchelor and Burman 2004; Chesney-Lind 2001; Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Sharpe 2010). Girls and young women are generally not a priority for service and programme provision. Programmes and initiatives both within custodial establishments and, in particular, within the community, that are designed specifically with girls and young women in mind, are few

and far between. Indeed, across the UK, much of the available service for females has tended to be premised upon male patterns of offending, male needs and male social and personal circumstances, giving rise to gender-neutral, or gender-blind approaches (Worrall 2009) wherein girls are assessed and treated in the same ways as boys. Whilst research evidence suggests that there is some overlap in needs, provision designed for males does not necessarily meet the needs of females (Gelsthorpe, Sharpe and Roberts 2007).

Within the context of 'What Works' and risk assessment, girls and young women are often subject to the same intensive cognitive behavioural programming as boys (see, for example, Blanchette and Brown 2006; van Wormer 2010). Yet, for example, generic anger management programmes are insufficient to address female needs as research shows that what prompts aggression and violence is different between girls and boys (Campbell 1993; Campbell and Muncer 1998; Patallaz and Bierman 2004). Evidence on the backgrounds of young women in custody show that for many young women feelings of unresolved grief and anger in response to experiences of abuse and neglect are important triggers for understanding the onset of offending (Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004). This is important as, for many young women, exposure to violence is an everyday lived reality (Burman et al 2001). Rather than being an irrational response to intimidated harms, anger and violence should be considered a reasoned response and often a 'necessary means to establish respect, to protect against and pre-empt victimisation and preserve self-integrity' (Batchelor 2005).

It is increasingly recognised that much of the 'What Works' approach is not only inappropriate for girls because of the gender-neutrality, but is also potentially detrimental, due to the intrinsic assumption that cognitive deficits are the root of a young person's decision to offend (Augimeri et al 2010; von Wormer 2010; Bloom et al 2003). Such deficit-based interventions, once again usually based on male experiences, tend to take it for granted that females have unfettered access to opportunities to change. The actual power of young women to effect genuine change is limited by their structural position (Batchelor and Burman 2004; Chesney-Lind 2001b; Kendall 1998). In reality many young women in trouble have few legitimate options and opportunities and 'as important as enhanced thinking skills are, they can only be, at best, a prerequisite to empowering women to make better choices if the choices genuinely exist' (Worrall, 2001). It is therefore important that those working with young female offenders acknowledge not only their individual agency, but also the wider social and institutional structures within which they are constrained (Batchelor 2005).

Attention is being increasingly paid, in the international academic literature and in criminal justice policy and practice, to the gender-specific needs of female offenders (Corston Report 2007) but there remains a tendency to present females who offend as a homogenous group, meaning that the age-specific needs and deeds of girls and young women are easily overlooked (Burman and Batchelor 2009; Sharpe 2010). The circumstances and needs of young women either directly involved with the criminal justice system, or those

marginalised young women at the periphery - but at risk of being drawn into youth and/or adult justice systems, including the use of secure accommodation and custody - are different to those of their young male counterparts. Precisely because of their age and developmental stage, neither are their needs exactly the same as adult women. Attention needs to be paid to the gender-specific psychosocial factors which have influenced the developmental and psychological growth of young women that find themselves in contact with the criminal justice system (Pepi 1998). There are important differences between young women and young men, and between young women and adult women that not only need to be acknowledged, but also require different approaches (Burman and Batchelor 2009). Programmes, projects, and services for this group therefore need to be both gender-specific *and* age-specific.

Gender-specificity refers to approaches, models and services that comprehensively address the particular needs of a targeted gender group. Age is a crucial factor both in defining, and in meeting, the needs of this particular group, and so, gender-sensitive programmes developed with women in mind are of questionable suitability for girls and young women (Batchelor and Burman 2004). Gender and age differentiated approaches and models are rooted in the everyday gendered experiences of young women and girls; they incorporate an understanding of female adolescent development, and take account of the research evidence in relation to the criminogenic needs and protective factors which are particularly associated with young women and girls. For example, whilst offending by adult women tends to be 'utilitarian in nature or precipitated by other problems and stresses' (Mclvor 1998:47), offending amongst girls and young women tends to be linked to other risk-seeking behaviours (Batchelor 2007) and, in particular, is 'associated with a search for identity in the transition from adolescence to adulthood' (Mclvor 1998:47). The real-life context of young women's offending therefore demands a consideration of the key determinants of both gender *and* age, and the key lies in ensuring that any initiatives developed are flexible enough to address the specific experiences and concerns of young women, and take into account the social realities from which young female offenders come and to which they will return (Burman and Batchelor 2009:12). Yet, in terms of service provision very few gender and age-specific non-residential services have been targeted at young women and girls in Scotland, and there is a dearth of appropriate transitional support or support services as a means to reduce the risk of further involvement within the justice system (Mclvor 2010).

#### **4.6 A challenging group?**

Young women and girls that are already in, or at risk of being drawn into, custodial detention present a number of challenges for effective working. Research highlights that such young women are as likely as older women to have multiple presenting problems and a range of unmet needs – high levels of drug and/or alcohol problems; poverty and social deprivation; physical, mental and/or sexual abuse, low self-esteem, problematic family relationships - which commonly include a history of unmet health (including mental health)

needs (Loucks 1998; 2004; Cook and Davies 1999; Howard League 1997; Gelsthorpe, Sharpe and Roberts 2007; Corston Report 2007). Such experiences and characteristics can shape the ways in which women engage with services in important ways. Moreover, the significance of age-and-gender sensitivity is relevant when considering young women's experiences and needs, as these may be exacerbated by virtue of their youth. Research for the Youth Justice Board on female health needs in young offender institutions in England and Wales highlights that girls and young women in the criminal justice system display higher rates of mental health problems with a prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and low self-esteem (Douglas and Plugge 2006). This research highlights the extreme vulnerability of young women in custody, many of whom have previously experienced multiple forms of abuse, neglect and social exclusion, with over 40 per cent having been previously looked after, and 90 per cent having left school before the age of 17. It reveals the extent to which young women in custody score considerably less favourably on health status measures than working-class women in general and adult women prisoners in particular; with higher rates of self-harm (especially cutting) and lower levels of self-esteem, as well as high prevalence rates of co-existing mental health and substance misuse disorders (Douglas and Plugge 2006). Eating disorders are also common amongst this population (Hutson and Myers 2006), as are STDs, and concern is commonly expressed amongst practitioners about such young women's risky sexual lives and/or experience of sexual exploitation (Batchelor and Burman 2004).

Many girls and young women at risk of custody and secure accommodation have experienced abuse, abandonment and/or rejection, often at the hands of a parent or 'carer' (see for example, Batchelor 2007; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004). They are likely to have witnessed violence within the family home, and experienced physical and sexual abuse from adults known to them (Burman and Batchelor 2009; Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004). Their lives are often characterised by chronic parental absence (through drink, drugs, divorce, death, homelessness or imprisonment), often at a critical stage of their social and emotional development, (Batchelor 2007; Burman and Batchelor 2009; Chesney-Lind 1997). Girls and young women display different coping mechanisms than boys and young men in such circumstances, manifested largely through negative emotional behaviours such as self-blame, self-harm and risky sexual behaviour. As many researchers have observed, young women are also prone to running away from home to escape abuse or neglect, only to enter into more perilous situations on the streets (Gilfus 1992; Chesney-Lind, 1997), which can in turn catapult them into homelessness, addiction, and risky 'survival sex' (Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004: 5).

Research also shows that many justice-involved young women have been forced, prematurely, into independence or, perhaps more accurately, fending for themselves, due to a lack of parental and/or financial support, and this can also lead to the taking on of domestic or care responsibilities of siblings or parents (Schaffner 2006). Perhaps unsurprisingly, many young women in this situation have very complex relationships to their

families, especially their mothers, who are seen as both a source of anger and guilt (Burman and Batchelor 2009). Problematic family relationships and experiences of victimisation can lead to feelings of anger and resentment as well as a sense of isolation. Batchelor's (2005; 2007) research with young women in prison for violence, reveals that their anger and aggression is often related to their experiences of family violence and abuse, and the acquisition of a negative world view in which other people are considered as being 'out to get' them, or ready to 'put one over' them.

Peers take on even greater significance for young women with backgrounds of family disharmony and abuse (see, for example, Barter and Renolds 2003). Peer groups are an important source of identity and status, and young women are more susceptible to bullying and negative peer pressure than adult women, particularly in an institutional setting (Howard League 1997). Peer group cultures are a common feature of residential and secure care (Renold and Barter 2003; Wade et al 1998), with young people in care settings routinely reporting that they 'go along with' risky behaviours in order to 'fit in' with a new peer group and establish respect or status (Batchelor 2007).

Another set of practice challenges which hamper effective working with young women and girls stems from perceptions of them as 'troublesome' and 'difficult to work' with compared to young men (see, for example, Alder 1998; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998; Worrall 2001). Given the multiplicity of problems that they bring with them into their encounters with practitioners, it is perhaps not surprising that girls are seen to pose particular challenges due to their 'emotional needs' which are difficult to address effectively, and which render them difficult and 'demanding' (Carpenter and Young 1986). Batchelor and Burman (2004) highlight a further difficulty arising from the relatively small numbers of offending girls and young women - practitioners may have limited experience in working with this specific group of offenders. Young women are also more likely than young men to disengage with services which they perceive do not address their specific needs. As such, engaging and sustaining contact with this population can be problematic, and they are often considered recalcitrant, and unlikely to willingly engage in programmes and services or take up available support (Alder 1996; Worrall 2001).

#### **4.7 Emerging research and best practices in working with young women and girls: turning 'deficits' into strengths**

Given the multiplicity of problems and needs that characterise the lives of so many young women in contact with youth/adult justice it is perhaps unsurprising that many policies and services tend to focus on these perceived 'deficits' and their status as 'victim' within a broader context of limiting social and structural conditions (Burman and Batchelor 2009). A consequence has been the medicalization and pathologisation of the female offender within policy discourse, reinforcing an image of her as hapless and dependent (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorate for Scotland 1998). Yet young women do not always fit

the stereotype of passive/dependent victims (Batchelor 2005; 2007), and there are a number of strengths that many young women possess that can be usefully built on.

### **Gender-responsive approaches**

In the US and Canada, a number of programmes have been developed which have sought to be gender-specific and to respond to girls' multiple needs, and which are also strengths-focused. As Covington and Bloom (2002) maintain, gender-responsive means 'creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women's and girls' lives and addressing their challenges and strengths.' Gender-responsive programmes tend to be structured but nurturing, and include therapeutic interventions aimed at the individual, family or group, with a focus on the areas of self-esteem, a positive self-concept as a female, and the development of pro-social skills. Such approaches take into account contemporary theoretical perspectives in young women's pathways into youth/adult justice systems, which fit the psychological and social needs of young women and reflect the social realities of their lives (Bloom et al 2003). Importantly, services are based on young women's competencies and strengths, and promote self-reliance.

Such programmes are growing steadily in number, and practice reviews offering guidance on working with girls and young women are becoming increasingly available (see for example, that produced by the Center for Gender and Justice at Sonoma State University). These highlight core areas for working, including: interventions focusing on education, training and employment targeting socio-economic needs, and interventions which are closely matched to the needs of individual young women and girls (see for example, Florida 2006). The Oregon Guidelines suggest how to implement gender-specific work (Patton and Morgan, 2002) and, although developed in the US, these guidelines have informed both the content and structure of gender-specific programmes in the UK. The Guidelines maintain that programmes should address victimisation and trauma, physical and sexual health, emotional and mental health, substance use, spiritual health and rites of passage. In addition, they also suggest that it is important for programmes to create a safe physical and emotional environment which, crucially, values young women; takes a holistic approach to their needs; builds significant relationships with caring adults in a girls-only environment; seeks to teach new skills by building on existing strengths; teaches personal respect and; importantly, allows girls some control.

### **Holistic services**

The interconnectedness of the needs of young women who offend require that programmes be 'holistic' (Patton and Morgan, 2002), and recognise and address the multiple problems (physical, emotional, mental and sexual health, self-esteem/self-worth, substance abuse, victimisation and trauma) that frequently characterise young women's lives. The most

successful programmes and interventions employ a comprehensive and holistic strategy aimed at addressing girls and young women's multiple needs in a continuum of care (Batchelor and Burman 2004). This demands an engagement with underlying reasons for their challenging behaviour, undertaken within the context of an informal, supportive, respectful and safe environment that allows sufficient time for workers to explore young women's needs and strengths in order to create individualised and effective plans and also, crucially, time for reflection on the part of the young women themselves. Bloom (2012) argues that to fully address the needs of young women, a variety of interventions may be used, drawing on behavioural, cognitive, affective/dynamic and systems perspectives.

### **Trauma-informed**

According to Bloom and Talbot (2009) trauma occurs when an external threat overwhelms a persons' internal and external positive coping resources. Trauma can be precipitated by events such as emotional, sexual or physical abuse, neglect and abandonment, rape or assault, witnessing violence, adverse childhood experiences, stigmatisation, and bereavement. Because of the high incidence of past victimisation and high overall rates of childhood trauma exposure experienced by criminal-justice involved young women, gender-specific interventions and services are becoming increasingly 'trauma-informed' both in their approach and objectives (Covington 2003; Harris, 1998; Copeland and Harris 2000). According to Falot and Harris (2006) the core principles of a trauma-informed approach are: ensuring physical and emotional safety; trustworthiness; facilitating choice; collaboration, and; empowerment. Creating a safe environment for the individual, and an empathetic approach are key. Trauma informed services take the trauma into account; avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or further traumatising the individual, and; work to allow individuals to manage their trauma symptoms successfully, so that they are able to access, retain and benefit from services (Falot and Harris 2006).

Responses to a traumatic event can include intense fear, helpless or horror, which can in turn develop into a state of chronic threat requiring the use of aggression in order to manage it. Young women and girls need opportunities to address their feelings of anger and frustration – and, as stated previously much of this is directed toward other family members, often mothers and those who have abused them in the past - and some may inevitably require specialised counselling, although research suggests that approaches that rely primarily on the provision of counselling alone are not likely to succeed (Chesney-Lind 1997).

### **Importance of relationships**

The centrality of relationships is a key theme in the research literature on women's pathways into offending (Burman and Batchelor, 2009), and also in the desistance literature (Weaver and McNeill 2010). For many girls and young women who offend, their only



experiences of relationships are characterised by subordination, exploitation and abuse. Emerging best practice suggests that girls need to be able to build positive and trusting relationships with staff in order to engage, and thus programmes should have low client to staff ratios (Chesney-Lind and Okamoto 2001). The development of positive relationships with knowledgeable, empathetic and understanding workers is crucial in the engagement of girls and young women. This also highlights the importance of specialised training for workers in areas such as gender identity and female development. As Durrance and Ablitt note (2002) 'Women respond to an environment that recognises their individual worth and provides a supportive and positive atmosphere. The examples set by staff in their interactions with others, and within the group are crucial' (2002, p.248). Whereas boys are more likely to adhere to rules because they respect rules or want to avoid consequences, girls are more likely to co-operate where they have established a relationship with workers and feel they respect them and have their best interests in mind (Ryan and Lindgren 1999).

Research also indicates that girls favour the building of one-to-one relationships and a female-only environment, whereas boys prefer more structure (Harper and Chitty 2005). In Canada for example, Lanctot's (2003) research examined the assessment of male and female needs on an individual basis, rather than 'gender membership'. She found that girls: rated the development of social skills slightly less highly than boys; rated the importance of preventing victimisation as very important, significantly more highly than boys; rated the development of autonomy more highly than boys, but the development of parenting skills and taking responsibilities less highly than boys, and; rated finding a job as very important at a much higher rate than boys. Lanctot also found that girls: wanted to be worked with in a more personal way and on a one-to-one basis, building an empathetic relationship with their practitioner, and that boys, on the other hand, attached more importance to rules, leading her to suggest that programmes with similar structure and content may be applicable to both genders, but the ways of working with boys and girls should be different (Lanctot 2003). These findings have been supported elsewhere (Harper and Chitty 2005) and as such are potentially important indicators of both programme content, which might be found to be relevant to young people who offend, and to styles of working and engaging with them.

Interactions between workers and young women that are able to tap into their 'natural' affinities for close and supportive relationships, provide a context for young women's participation in positive relationships, and can also assist them to recognise the ways their relationships provide opportunities for them to structure their lives and resolve conflicts (Worrall 2001). Whereas work with boys and young men tends to be more successful where it takes place in a structured, rule-bound environment, successful programmes for girls 'focus on relationships with other people and offer ways to master their lives while keeping these relationships intact' (Belknap et al 1997, cited in Dougherty 1999, p.119). This highlights the potential for utilising peer support and involving families in work with girls and young women.

### **Incorporating young women's views**

Justice-involved young women are a socially silenced group whose views are seldom elicited (Burman et al 2001). But successful work with girls and young women requires listening to their views and experiences, and wherever possible incorporating their insights into work with them (Alder 1996; Burman et al 2001; Batchelor and Burman, 2004; Chesney-Lind 1997). This includes addressing needs and issues through problem-solving approaches that involve reaching agreement between workers and young women on identifiable goals and on strategies to achieve them. When collaboration is solicited through authentic and meaningful ways, through involvement in the design and implementation of programmes, young women can gain leadership skills, develop supportive intergenerational relationships and experience themselves as active participants in social change (National Council for Research on Women, 1998:87, cited in Worrall 2001).

McIvor et al (2004) argue that in order to meet the needs of girls who wish to desist from offending it is necessary to target both attitudinal and behavioural factors. This is based on their findings suggesting that girls who desisted were more likely to cite moral rather than utilitarian rationales and to 'emphasise the relational aspects of this process', such as the views of parents, no longer mixing with delinquent peers, experiences of victimisation, and becoming a parent (2004:194). They suggest that programmes seeking to engage with young women therefore need to work both on moral engagement and behavioural aspects. A focus on moral judgements and cognitive distortions is also supported by the research findings of Larden et al (2006), which found that girls and boys were, on the whole, similar with regard to the relevant risk factors for developing delinquent behaviour, but that in general girls made more mature moral judgements and had less self-reported anti-social cognitive distortions.

The importance of involving participants in the development of meaningful programme initiatives has also been highlighted by Dixon (2000) who also identifies the importance of spontaneity and creativity as very important in desistance work:

*"The point is that for change to occur offenders need to experience the value of change efforts for themselves. This is unlikely to emerge when offenders go through the motions prescribed to them by others. The exchanges in the group have to strike a personal chord with each offender. Each has to feel that at various points something uniquely relevant to her or him has happened, and that the exchange makes sense to the person in terms of personal life experiences." (Dixon 2000, p.18)"*

### **Building confidence to change**

For work with girls and young women to be effective, they need to feel confident that they are capable of making changes in their lives. Raising self-esteem and increasing feelings of self-worth for this group can be very challenging, given that many young women in trouble have very low self-esteem (Alder 1996; Eaton 1993). Some researchers maintain that self-esteem is not an area which can be usefully affected by programme content and that it bore too complex a relationship to offending to attempt to treat in a programmatic way (Larden et al 2006). In particular, where they have direct experiences of abusive relationships, girls' and young women's sense of self-efficacy is highly likely to be eroded. Work with young women, therefore, should assist them in developing an understanding of their victimisation and encourage them to accept the power not to participate in abusive situations in the future (Greene, Peters and Associates 1998). If they are to make meaningful and responsible choices, young women need to be advised as to the availability of resources and the implications of their decisions (Dauvergne-Latimer 1994). Young women will only change their lives 'if and when they have access to the structural preconditions of social justice— housing, employment and health facilities' (Worrall 1999).

### **Collaborative partnership working**

In order to provide a multi-dimensional, gender, age and culturally responsive service, it is important to develop partnerships with a range of community organisations, both public and private sector (Bloom 2012). Collaborative partnership working can facilitate the development of co-ordinated case management that is strengths-based, relational and culturally competent. Effective mechanisms for communication and information-sharing are also key. Successful inter-agency communication is important both in terms of ease of access and minimisation of inter-agency distrust or subversion of each other's endeavours when sharing the same group of clients (Carlen 2001).

The issues discussed in the preceding sections provide an important background context. TfC was set up with the explicit intention to provide age-specific and gender-responsive service provision for young women and girls which not only recognises the differences between young men and young women's pathways into offending behaviour, and their differing needs and characteristics, but which also draws upon research-informed practice approaches likely to be effective in supporting young women to stabilise their lifestyles, and work toward desistance in the longer term.

## 5 TIME FOR CHANGE

### 5.1 The Time for Change Service

The Tfc service is delivered on an outreach basis and includes elements of practical support, partnership, one to one focused work and 24/7 crisis access. Tfc project workers respond to all calls for service provision, with managerial support, via a duty on-call system. Tfc also offers consultation and advice to other agencies.

Service provision is primarily delivered through intensive and consistent contact with service users, primarily through one-to-one meetings, but also by telephone, text, and e-mail (including prisoner email). There is also access to an out-of-hours helpline for young women to seek advice, or practical assistance. Using a relationship-based and asset-focused model, work with young women and girls can include promoting personal safety, self-esteem, health, and the establishment and maintenance of appropriate community and family support. Where appropriate and feasible, and when the young women and their families are receptive, Tfc endeavour to establish or maintain contact with family members.

#### Staffing

At inception in 2010, Tfc had an operations manager and two dedicated project workers, both of whom were full-time. The staff contingent has since grown to include (as at September 2011) five dedicated project workers, three of whom are full-time.

The gender-specific nature of Tfc is a particularly important aspect to the way in which intensive support is interpreted, delivered and received. The project built upon available expertise within this practice area, with the Chief Executive of wider Up-2-Us organisation taking developmental and operational responsibility of Tfc. Subsequently, frontline practitioners were recruited who demonstrated their capacity to effectively engage with vulnerable young women within a youth justice context and who valued a relationship-based practice approach. Two of the project workers are male, one of whom is focused primarily on education, training and employment. The decision to deploy male workers in this project goes against the views of most proponents of gender-responsive services who advocate for female-only staff and environment (see Bloom et al 2003). This was a considered decision however, both in order to provide positive male role-models and assist the development of pro-social relationships with males.

All front-line staff are professionally qualified, in either social work; community work; community development; community education, or; youth work. Senior staff are very experienced practitioners, with backgrounds in statutory social work, child protection and youth justice.

In-house training and development focuses on how to prepare staff to understand the complex issues of young women's lives and how to work more effectively with those involved in the youth or adult criminal justice system. Staff are supported to attend external conferences, seminars and training events on topics directly pertinent to young women such as legal issues, mental health, effects of trauma, addiction and overall physical health.

## 5.2 Organisational Ethos and Practice Principles

The overarching organisational ethos of TfC is mirrored within worker training and practice, namely the emphasis upon the following key principles:

### Relationship-based practice

The worker-service user relationship is deeply valued within TfC, and a key objective for workers is to try to build trusting, honest and helpful working relationships with young women. This is rooted in research evidence on the importance of the quality and consistency of this relationship for developing young women's' understandings of positive relationships, namely their key components of, for example, positivity, equality, safety, care and so assist them to increase their sense of self-worth and be better equipped to form and maintain positive, non-threatening, relationships with family, partners or friends and, importantly, to be better placed to identify threatening and potentially damaging relationships, and also to effect meaningful change (e.g. Mearns and Thorne 2007; Farrall 2002). It is a stated intention of TfC that the emphasis upon relationship building and pro-social modelling should begin from the first meeting between potential service users and workers, and that this is consistently 'worked at' in order to sustain a positive, effective relationship where the possibility for change is significantly greater when compared to those 'helping' working relationships where trust, empathy, honesty nor warmth is not present.

### Person-centred theory into practice

Alongside other more directional practice approaches, TfC workers aim to practice from a genuine person centred perspective, with a commitment to:

*"non-judgemental working relationships where genuine empathy is demonstrated and felt; the belief that people in some way wish to be essentially 'good' and have capacity to make positive, rational, informed decisions, with the appropriate kind of support and encouragement."*  
(Mearns and Thorne 2007).

Derived from the work of psychologist Carl Rogers, person-centred theory informs a non-directive approach where the person as a whole is understood to be able, at some level and at some point, to improve their own circumstances (Rogers 1979; Mearns and Thorne 2007). The theory is focused upon the relationship that can be provided by a 'helper' in relation to

those who seek their help, with key conditions requiring to be achieved by the practitioner within the therapeutic relationship (Rogers 1979) and core principles that must be met for a person centred therapeutic relationship to be meaningfully established. These are 'unconditional positive regard' whereby the practitioner provides a non-judgemental, warm and caring attitude, valuing the person as a unique, worthy human being capable of positive change and self-development, and; the 'provision of genuine empathy' toward the client or service user whereby the practitioner genuinely values the subjective experiences of the service user, and is able to offer appropriate empathy within the helping relationship. From this perspective, Tfc workers aim to respond to young women as individuals with diverse needs, although with the recognition of some similarities among this group.

### **Systems perspective**

The systems perspective which underpins much of the US 'gender-responsive' work with female offenders has grown out of general systems theory, which tries to understand phenomena displaying a multiplicity of variables, by attending to the complex interactions of these variables (Covinton 2003, 2012; Zaplin 2008). The Tfc ethos incorporates insights derived from the systems perspective, in recognition that the lives of offending young women are embedded in a complex social reality, encompassing their relationships, their personal history, and intricate social, structural and contextual factors, which cannot be ignored (Zaplin 2008:84). Embedded in Tfc practice is an acknowledgement that the prospects for desistance and rehabilitation cannot be easily separated out from this complex context, and this needs to be taken into account in work with young women. The systems perspective provides concepts, language, and tools which enable practitioners to work effectively with a female offender, taking account not only of her individual characteristics, but also in the context of the interactions and influences that have impacted on her. According to Zaplin (2008) the perspective is inclusive of:

*"the interrelationships of the characteristics of the female offender herself, the impact of informal social controls, the nature of her criminal offences, services designed for her, the characteristics of correctional institutions and agencies that deliver these services, and the external socio-political environment including the role of policy makers and legislators, and the society at large."(Zaplin 2008: 84-85)*

In practice terms, this means not seeing young women exclusively as offenders, but beyond this characterisation to assess the underlying reasons for their offending. It requires exploring young women's circumstances holistically, taking into account the various components of young women's individual lives, alongside the wider structural forces that have impacted upon them, including their experiences with other agencies and organisations.

Effective working from a systems perspective is facilitated by engagement of all involved criminal justice and/or child protection services, as well as family members, education, health, and social services, in conversation with, and about individual young women. It requires networking of information and resources, and above all, coordination (Pepi 1998) implying the necessity of collaborative partnership working. The recent Scottish Government youth justice policy development, the 'whole system approach' draws centrally on this aspect of systems perspective, in its objective to implement a more streamlined and consistent response that works across all systems and agencies.

### **Strengths focused practice**

Another key principle of TfC is the adoption of a strengths-based approach. A strengths-based model of planning and practice, which aims to facilitate or enhance young women's ability to self-advocate within a supportive environment, is related to the systems perspective. This entails attending to the identification and enhancement of young women's existing strengths, and using these as a foundation upon which to further develop pro-social behaviour, and support women on their journey towards stability and desistance.

### **Solution-focused practice**

Consistent with the widely accepted goals of feminist therapeutic practice (see for example, Dutton-Douglas and Walker 1998; Worell 2002; Worell and Goodheart 2006) a solution-focused approach to treatment or intervention adopts particular assumptions about change; specifically that positive change can be facilitated by focusing on solutions and competencies instead of deficits, problems or pathologies (Myers 2008). Importantly, solution-focused work has a clear future orientation, and TfC claim a commitment to practice in which workers work alongside young women to assist them to formulate and develop plans to address presenting problems, and agree solutions. The focus on solutions to affect change is also based on a systems perspective, and crucially, a belief in the resources, potentials, and capacities inherent in human beings (Myers 2008). This entails working in partnership with young women, and where appropriate other involved agencies, to assist them in formulating and pursuing solutions to, for example, problematic housing matters, compliance with community sanctions, or managing family conflict, with the support of TfC workers. According to advocates of this approach, it is a validating and collaborative process in which young women may be facilitated in discovering and amplifying life goals appropriate to their unique life context, and enhancing their own resourcefulness (Lee 1997).

### **Crisis intervention**

At the heart of TfC philosophy is the recognition that young women and girls at risk of custody or secure care are very likely to be in a time of crisis. They may have experienced an event or series of events producing emotional, psychological, physical or behavioural stress or problems. Often living in marginalised and precarious conditions, frequently addicted to

drugs or alcohol, and likely to be exposed to high levels of victimisation, such young women are often highly anxious and agitated, and many have immediate safety needs. Securing a young women's safety (either from herself and/or from others) is considered a practice imperative, along with the provision, wherever feasible, of short-term emergency help and care.

### **Respite placements**

TfC also has access to facilities for residential placements, through the Up-2-Us parent organisation resource team which provides respite to vulnerable young people in times of crisis in two locations in the west of Scotland. The number of available beds is small however and, initially, young people could be placed for up to seven days, although this has risen to a stay of up to one month continuously, and a maximum of 120 days per year. Respite offers a base, space from risk and pressures, small group living in a house which tries to be 'normal'.

### **5.3 Referrals to Time for Change: Processes and Patterns**

TfC has a fairly broad catchment area that spans several local authorities in the west of Scotland, and accepts referrals from a range of statutory and non-statutory sources. Given the distinct lack of dedicated and appropriate intensive service provision for young women in adjoining local authority areas and, because of the prior existence of support provision for vulnerable young women and girls within Glasgow, it was decided not to take referrals or offer direct service provision to young women residing in the city of Glasgow local authority area, despite the relatively high number of young women and girls potentially likely to fit the TfC referral criteria.

There were important structural changes between introducing the projects and getting started – some of the early messages were lost.

When TfC was set up, all local authorities in the west of Scotland were canvassed to raise awareness of the Project, and to seek referrals of young women considered to be at high risk of custody or secure care. Initially take-up of services was slow, with variations in referral rates across the local authority areas. Staff undertook various awareness-raising activities, including email alerts to relevant networks and personnel based with local authorities; arranging face to face meetings with potential referrers to explain the Project's key objectives and practice approach, and; presentations to key groups of practitioners and their resource/operational managers (with workers continuing to maintain this practice). A key aim of this is to highlight the nature of the services provided by TfC and convey the distinctiveness of the age-and-gender specificity that characterises the Project. Interviews with stakeholders conducted after the Project had been running for almost a year clearly show that the purpose of TfC is both well understood, and appreciated:



*"I understand the purpose [of Tfc] to target intensive support of young women and girls at risk of secure accommodation, the criminal justice system.." Resources Manager Children's Services, Local Authority*

*"To help young women who are at risk throughout the criminal justice system...going into or out of prison, leaving care...at risk of further offending.. but with a key focus on gender-specific needs." Local Authority Social Worker, Youth Justice*

*"To work with young women at risk of offending, to prevent them going into jail or secure care or to support them following a period of time in jail or secure." Local Authority Social Worker, Children and Families*

Since inception, Tfc has made positive progress in developing good professional relationships with potential referrers. Awareness has grown and interview data from stakeholders within local authorities, secure care service and custodial providers highlights the overall development of positive working relationships with Tfc, with a strong recognition of the need for the services offered:

*"It's to help young women who are at risk through the criminal justice system either through going into the women's prison, or in my case a young person leaving care who has an offending history and is at risk of further offending. You know, because gender [is] really key, the issues that relate to that, how young women's needs can be met." Local Authority Social Worker, Youth Justice.*

*"For me certainly one of the reasons that we engage with Time for Change was that we felt that just the whole step was about keeping young people away from the criminal justice route." Local Authority Social Worker, Children and Families.*

Interview data gained from those making referrals noted that overall the process of referring young women to Tfc was 'easy' and 'without any substantive difficulties being raised.' Indeed most stated that the referral process was quick and responsive.

Six referrals made to Tfc over the period of the Evaluation were not taken on. This was either because the young woman did not meet the eligibility criteria as she came from outside of the project catchment area, or because the referrer was seeking advice. In the former most cases Tfc referred the case onto another service, such as Glasgow Includem and Barnardos.

#### **5.4 Engaging young women and girls already in secure care and/or prison**

Although Tfc set out with the aim of preventing girls and young women from being sent to secure accommodation or prison in the first place, it soon became clear that an increasing

number of referrals were either already placed within secure care and therefore requiring support upon discharge, or were already being held in custody either via remand or direct sentence. Following ongoing concern about the imprisonment of women on repeated short term sentences and the lack of support on release, TfC commenced a professional working relationship with HMP YOI Cornton Vale, a female Young Offender Institute and Prison, and the Good Shepherd Centre, a secure unit for young women and girls.

In HMP YOI Cornton Vale, TfC work with prison and medical staff, to ensure that all potentially eligible young women entering the prison either via remand or direct sentence – of an appropriate duration – are made aware of TfC. Prison staff have been receptive, recognising the value of the services provided by TfC, especially for those aged under 18 years and those with minimal contact with families. Information about the Project is made available to all young women, and project workers maintain a consistent presence in the Links Centre (with twice weekly visits by full-time primary allocation workers) to explain TfC's service provision, and its ethos and to offer services to the young women that have been received into custody that week, in order to assist re-integration and minimise risks of returning to custody. Commenting on the evolution of the Project's referral mechanisms, one of the TfC workers said:

*"So I suppose in terms of our project referral process... it's kind of evolved. We had introduced ourselves to these girls [in Cornton Vale], and this one girl didn't have a social worker, she had no current agency involvement, no support, no family round her, and said 'please help me, please support me'..."*  
TfC Worker 2

It would be fair to say that we/I had not anticipated the number of girls in Cornton Vale who did not have social work interest and we probably had to paddle hard to encourage links with local authorities. A lot of this simply relates to the way the Adult Criminal Justice Budgets are worked out. I approached all secure units in Scotland – GSC to their everlasting credit responded well from Managers down.

Within Good Shepherd, staff make direct referrals to TfC, most commonly to provide support and assist in transition back into the community with a primary goal of supporting the young woman to re-integrate positively, and work towards minimising risks of further admittance to secure care or imprisonment.

## **5.5 Referral Sources**

In the period from May 2010 up to March 2011, TfC received a total of 44 referrals. from a range of sources including statutory criminal justice, youth justice and children and families

social work services within local authority areas, health agencies, as well from voluntary sector organisations working directly with a young woman or her family/carers.

Referral sources are illustrated in Table 3. As can be seen, most referrals emanate from HMP YPI Cornton Vale (n=16). These are followed by referrals from secure accommodation personnel within the Good Shepherd Centre (n=8), mainly seeking transitional support for young women due to be discharged from secure placements into the community.

Of the community-based referrals, most came from South Ayrshire (n=5), followed by Renfrewshire (n=4) and North and East Ayrshire (n=3 respectively). Three quarters of the young women referred to TfC are in the upper age range of 16-18 years (n=33), and most of whom are already in custodial detention in prison (n=16) or secure care (n= 4).

One 19 year old was accepted on account of care history and diagnosed MH problems. At referral only 9 girls were 18 or close to 18 at referral.

**Table 3: Time for Change referrals by age and referral location**

Referral location	Age Groups							Total
	13yrs	14yrs	15yrs	16yrs	17yrs	18yrs	19yrs	
North Ayrshire	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	3
Renfrewshire	-	2	1	1		-	-	4
South Ayrshire	-	-	2	2	1	-		5
South Lanarkshire	-	-	-	-	1		-	1
East Ayrshire	-	-	-	-	1	2		3
Argyll and Bute	-	-	1	-		-	-	1
East Dunbartonshire	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
West Dunbartonshire	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Good Shepherd	2	2		3	1	-	-	8
HMP YOI Cornton Vale (self-referrals)	-	-	-	1	7	7	1	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9 (10)*</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>43 (44)*</b>

Note: Total number of referrals in Table 3 equal 43, as one referral source of a 16 year old is missing.

**Table 3a: Breakdown of area for Good Shepherd Centre and Cornton Vale**

	Ren	SL	NA	ED	WD	SA	NL	East Ayr	
GSC	1	1	1	1					Others from Fife & Glasgow connected to other services
CV	3	4			1	2	1	2	Others from Inverclyde (1), Glasgow (1), Stirling (1) connected to other providers – one from Inverclyde now with TfC

Young women imprisoned at the point of referral are recorded as ‘self-referral’ because they essentially refer themselves to the TfC Project. However, it is important to note that TfC staff offer a high level of encouragement and sustained proactive follow-up of potentially suitable young women who are deemed likely to benefit from intensive support. Therefore, these must be acknowledged as ‘solicited’ by workers, recognising that without such pro-active identification, additional information and general encouragement, there is a likelihood that a number may not have self-referred or taken up the offer of intensive support.

This suggests that, despite young women’s eventual agreement to participate, they remain somewhat ambivalent at the initial stages of engagement, highlighting the potential difficulties in forging relationships and working with this group of young women, who often demonstrate a degree of reluctance to address their presenting difficulties, and their association to their offending and related behavioural issues (Batchelor and Burman 2004).

**Case Study: Susan 1TfC**

Susan (18 years old) began receiving support from TfC whilst she was in custody on remand. She has been in prison on remand (pre-trial and pre-sentence) six times since a supervision requirement ended when she was 16 years old. Despite the amount of time spent in custody, she has never received a custodial sentence in response to her offending, which consists of public order offences and low level assaults. Susan’s offending is triggered by her excessive consumption of alcohol when out with a certain peer group. She also has difficulties managing her anger and aggression, which her alcohol consumption exacerbates. Susan has a long history of involvement with statutory social work services and the Children’s Hearings System, and was made subject to a supervision requirement due to welfare concerns regarding her parent’s inability to care appropriately for Susan and her siblings. At age 10, she was removed from her mother’s care, and placed with her grandmother. Her brothers were placed in foster care at the same time, and this continues to cause her pain and upset. Susan also self-harms and when she gets drunk this increases

her emotional distress and risk of harming herself. Susan 'self-referred' from within HMP YOPI Cornton Vale, but had no formal support from statutory social work or family at the time of referral.

## 5.6 Reasons for referral: identifying vulnerable and 'high risk' young women and girls

Potential referrers generally have an informal discussion with a Tfc support worker before making a formal referral to the service. The opportunity for informal discussion is considered important by all professionals involved. Following this discussion, and in order for Tfc to effectively assess whether or not eligibility criteria are met, a short referral form is completed providing reasons for referral; including a brief assessment of risks posed to, or by, the young woman; any presenting problems (e.g. addiction; anger); an overview of her offending behaviour, and; information regarding current legal status (e.g. whether any charges are pending) where available. This is considered necessary to ensure that referrals are screened and workloads managed.

There are often multiple reasons why Tfc engagement with any one young woman is sought. Although there were a small number of cases (7) where no reason for referral was provided, in 20 of the 44 cases, there were three referral reasons; in 10 cases, two reasons were given, and in seven cases, just one reason was provided. This illustrates the complexity of many young women's lives. Table 4 shows the six categories of referral reason recorded.

**Table 4. Time for Change, Reasons for referral**

Reasons for referral						
Offending	Behaviour	Court	placement	Child protection	Intensive support	Emergency
21	16	11	7	9	9	1

**Note:** figures refer to number of cases in which particular referral reason is recorded; as more than reason is usually recorded, total adds up to more than total number of cases.

The single most common reason for referral, listed in almost half (21) of all cases is offending behaviour which is liable to lead to a form of custodial detention, or, in the case of those already detained in secure accommodation or prison, following their return to the community. Anti-social behaviour was given as a reason in 16 cases, and court involvement (active and/or pending) in 11 cases. Child protection was given as a reason in nine cases, and placement requests in seven cases. Child protection and placement requested co-occurred in five cases. In nine cases, intensive support was cited as a reason for referral, primarily arising from perceived risks posed by young women to themselves due to lifestyle

(e.g. absconding; consumption of alcohol or drugs; peer association); concerns about self-harm, and; difficulties at school (e.g. truanting; exclusions).

Interviews clearly reveal the range of reasons that necessitate referrals to TfC, as the following quotes from statutory social workers across different local authority areas show. In particular, young women with a prior history of secure accommodation are considered to be at heightened risk of being returned to secure:

*“She had been in secure for six months and was returned home by a Children’s Hearing Panel without any preparation, and against our recommendations, and so there were concerns and the risks around that young person’s safety and the possibility of her being returned to secure accommodation.”* Local Authority Social Worker

Precarious living circumstances and risky lifestyles, which can render young women more vulnerable to contact with criminal justice, prompt many referrals:

*“It was primarily for her own safety, rather than offending, although in the process of putting herself at risk, she was involved in offending behaviour - mainly assaults...[in the] community and mainly against the police, but also family members as well as during periods of crisis and stress.”* Local Authority Social Worker

*“She was taking overdoses and placing herself at risk, using alcohol to excess and then taking paracetamol. And there had been other concerns about use of ligatures whilst in police custody and also cutting herself ... It has been said that she is the highest risk young person that we have in the whole of [local authority]”* .” Local Authority Social Worker

*“Our main concern is the risk to herself, yes, but she certainly does pose a risk to other people, you know, at times.”* Local Authority Social Worker

Social workers are acutely aware of the ways in which past victimisation increases young women’s vulnerability and social exclusion, and is often at the root of their absconding, truanting, and running away.

*“I had been working with this young person over a period of three years at [point of referral]. The key issue that had always been around this young person was absconding... Initially from home and then every placement that we found for her so she had absconded from foster care, from residential care, from the children’s unit and she continues to do that ..... very mild concerns around alcohol but there are more concerns around drugs and her association around people who take drugs. The other concern, the major*

*concern was that [young woman] when absconding, would take up with much older males. You know, just random people, not people that she had any great contact with..."* Local Authority Social Worker, Children and Families.

Young women can be referred to TfC whatever their involvement in the youth/adult justice system may be (e.g. following arrest, on probation, in through care). Young women's engagement is voluntary, although there have been two occasions when a referral to TfC as additional source of support has been included as part of a court order, on request from a social worker.

The nature of the intensive support requested of TfC by referrers is recorded in all but two of the 44 cases. Referrers primarily seek provision of support for young women who they know to have multiple and complex needs to prevent escalation of risk (n=11), or make placement requests for respite for young women and girls (n=3), for example when they are in significant crisis, to maintain safety, or where they have nowhere else to go. For those in custody, referrals seek support with transitions from secure care/prison or local authority accommodation into the community, including accommodation issues (n=28).

If the young woman is deemed eligible and considered likely to benefit from TfC support, referrers are asked to provide more detailed information, with the consent of the young woman, such as: court reports if available; Children's Hearing or child protection assessment reports which provide greater clarity around familial background; previous interventions including statutory and non-statutory involvement, and; any significant life events that may have had a traumatic or otherwise significant impact upon the young woman's emotional and/or physical well-being and development.

Differences exist across local authority areas in terms of access to information on those referred to TfC. Staff report some difficulties surrounding the sharing of historical and background information, such as social enquiry reports and Children's Hearing information. In some social work services information tends to be passed on verbally and relevant reports can take some considerable time to be passed on. Information sometimes has to be 'chased' by workers, particularly when there is no allocated social worker. This may be due to practitioners who hold/held the case having left or being on leave, resulting in cases 'drifting' and a lack of knowledge of the young women in question, despite the availability of case recordings. Lack of information is a continuous source of frustration for workers.

TfC have also found significant difficulty in accessing appropriate mental health or learning disability assessment and provision for young women within certain areas, which results in TfC working to contain the situation until appropriate psychological and/or psychiatric provision can be successfully accessed for young women who unable to be categorised as having a 'chronic and enduring' mental illness, due to their age and stage of development.

Where a young woman has ‘self referred’, gaining sufficient information about offending behaviour and legal status in particular, can be difficult, as often the young woman in question has limited understanding of the reasons for arrest, nature of current and/or pending charges; potential sentencing outcomes; alongside a general lack of information regarding the general court and justice system. Indeed, initial priority tasks for TFC in such cases are to liaise with solicitors, court officials and youth or criminal justice social work services in efforts to clarify each young woman’s legal status, as well as potential outcomes of court trials and sentencing hearings. This reduces anxiety and uncertainty for the young women, as well as being a practical and useful way of starting to forge positive working relationships.

### **5.7 Young women and girls referred to Time for Change**

Data from the case files provides some information on current and previous accommodation, educational/employment status, contact with youth/adult justice, and familial and social background, providing a general picture of those referred to TFC. It should be noted however that some of this information is not available in all cases, and so totals in the following Tables do not always total 44.

As Table 5 shows, over half (n=24) of the young women and girls were either in prison (remand or under direct sentence) or accommodated within secure care at the time of initial referral to TFC. Just six were living at home with their family, with two others living with a friend or other relative. Six were in local authority accommodation and six were in some form of temporary accommodation. Many have a chequered accommodation history; with almost two fifths having been accommodated by the local authority at some point in their lives, including foster care, residential care, and supported accommodation.

**Table 5: Accommodation at time of referral**

<b>Accommodation at time of referral</b>	<b>Number</b>
Custody	16
Secure care	8
At home with family	6
Friends/other relatives	2
Local authority accommodation e.g. supported accommodation; residential unit	6
Temporary accommodation e.g. bed and breakfast; hostel	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>



Whilst the majority (n=35) reported having some contact with family members at the time of referral, in many cases this was sporadic and infrequent, and a not inconsiderable source of anxiety or anger for several young women, which resonates with research findings (see, for example, Chesney-Lind and Pasko 2004; Batchelor 2005; Burman and Batchelor 2009). Notably around three quarters of referrals come from lone mother families.

As Table 6 shows, almost half (n=19) were not in education or employment at time of referral. Those in education really reflect the children in care or secure.

**Table 6: Education/Employment Status at Referral**

Education/Employment status at time of referral	Number
Not in education or employment	19
In full-time education	16
Truant from school	2
Excluded from school	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 *</b>

**Note:** total adds up to 38 as information missing in six cases.

### **Agency contact at time of referral**

Of all 44 young women referred, all but one were either subject to compulsory social work intervention and/or criminal proceedings, or were under sentence at the point of referral. Justice-involved young women's lives are complex; several were subject to a supervision requirement from the Children's Hearing, as well as being on remand; others were subject to secure accommodation and also in receipt of deferred sentences. Thirty nine had an allocated social worker at point of referral, but there were wide variations in levels and frequency of social work contact.

### **Offending Behaviour**

The majority of young women referred to TfC have histories of police involvement, arrest, conviction and/or involvement with the Children's Hearings System on offence grounds (as well as welfare grounds). In 21 of the 44 referrals, offending was cited as a key reason for referral. However, detailed information in regard to earlier offending histories or the specific circumstances that brought them to the Children's Hearing System, is sometimes lacking. In some instances (such as Layla in the following case study), historical information in respect of statutory social work involvement during childhood had been 'lost' by the local authority; in other cases, background information is limited, such that information about young women's backgrounds and pathways into offending have to be pieced together over time and from various sources. The lack of documented background information seems

particularly acute in relation to those in their later teens, and is possibly due to the fact that the case is no longer 'active' for children and families and/or compounded by there being inadequate systems in place to ensure appropriate requests for information with the consent of clients/service users are followed through in a timely manner.

Young women themselves are often very hazy about the details of their offending backgrounds, and have difficulty recalling the frequency or reasons for arrest, the sanctions imposed on them or even the specificities of their current legal status. The lack of information about earlier involvement in youth justice can hamper early productive engagement with TfC, and may also entail workers undertaking considerable background 'detective work.'

#### **Case Study: Layla (5TfC)**

Layla (18 years) self-referred whilst in prison on remand awaiting trial for four charges, although she was initially very guarded about her past. Whilst statutory social work services confirmed that she had been known to them since the age of 14, and had been subject to compulsory measures of supervision by the Children's Hearing System in relation to offending, they were unable to provide about her earlier. With Layla's permission, TfC workers forged contact with members of her family and found that her mother had committed suicide when Layla was 9 years old, and she was subsequently cared for by an aunt and grandmother. Layla's father had been absent for some years. Layla's behaviour (including offending) became increasingly challenging as she grew into adolescence, and she was placed in local authority residential accommodation at 14. Layla became pregnant and at time of referral had a 12 month old daughter who was on the child protection register and was living in the care of Layla's grandmother. Layla continued to offend, and this led to detention in secure care. Upon leaving secure care, her offending continued to escalate in frequency and seriousness and she was drawn into the adult criminal justice system. Layla engaged well with TfC whilst in prison (she was serving a seven month sentence), but upon release contact broke down. She was difficult to make contact with and often missed or refused to attend planned contact sessions. Following a missed court hearing, Layla was drawn back into custody for a short period and contact with TfC resumed in prison.

Layla was supported to make the transition back into the community; this included significant assistance with finding suitable accommodation. Layla's engagement with TfC was much improved this time, and she required a lot of support in order to structure her week. She recognised and acknowledged her drinking could be a problem, and was actively seeking stability in order to gain access to her child. Although Layla was, at one time, considered difficult to work with, at case review it was noted that she was *"engaging well, no further offending, complying with community service order."*

For information: Layla has not reoffended. She is currently in the Isle of W with family and will phone occasionally!

Information about recent or current offending is more readily available than earlier offending history. Whilst a small number of the young women were charged with violent offending (including murder, attempted murder and serious assault, and assaults committed whilst in prison), most were involved in more minor offending: such as, breaches of the peace; vandalism; malicious mischief; criminal damage; breaches of the Telecommunications Act (making threatening telephone calls); and; a range of road traffic offences, including drunk driving; having no insurance and/or driving licence; leaving the scene of an accident, and; being a passenger in a stolen car. In line with Batchelor's (2005) findings several had accrued charges of resisting arrest, in addition to breach of the peace and minor shoplifting charges. Several were in custody due to breaches of probation and/or community service orders, and failure to attend court hearings, resonating with research by Burgess et al (2011) and Barry and McIvor (2008).

### **Risk/Needs**

Rigby et al (2011) note the difficulties associated with adequate screening of young women for risk, as well as the problems for practitioners of identifying vulnerable and 'at risk' girls and young women. Girls and young women assessed as vulnerable are not necessarily involved in problematic offending behaviour. Interviews with referrers suggest that they consider the young women whom they refer to TfC to be in need of support and are, for the most part, vulnerable and pose a risk of offending and/or to themselves. Yet vulnerability and risk are not the same and there is a danger of conflating the two (Rigby et al 2001) and hence intervening inappropriately or too soon (McAra and McVie 2007).

Few young women referred to TfC in the period May 2010 to March 2011 appear to have undergone any formal standardised risk assessment; just seven cases contained reference to the use of risk tools (Asset or LSI) and in these cases scores were low or moderate. In all these cases, the young women had previously offended. In interview TfC workers confirmed that risk/need scores are rarely available on referral and reported relying on whatever information is available or that which they can obtain at the time. Worker are concerns about an understanding of risk posed is therefore gleaned over time, as relevant reports from statutory services are obtained, and workers are better able to make an assessment of the type of risks associated with each young woman. TfC seek to draw upon their practice experience of working with girls, using the terms 'risk' and 'vulnerability' in ways which are relevant to each young woman, drawing upon a range of information gained from referrers or other relevant agencies, in order to both assess risks posed by the young women and those toward young women. As previously highlighted, there are a number of conceptual, and practice difficulties in identifying 'high risk' and/or 'vulnerable' young women. There is increasing recognition internationally that positioning young women as 'risky' is often too inadequate a depiction of the complexities of their personal circumstances, of which offending is usually just one aspect of a very complex personal situation characterised by adversity and challenge. In most cases, the greater risks posed are toward the young woman

herself, as the level of self-harm and destructive behaviours exhibited are extensive, often in response to historical and recent (or ongoing) experiences of trauma, such as childhood sexual abuse, familial conflict, attachment difficulties and loss. Failing to recognise that more often than not young women pose a greater risk to themselves than they do the public, ignores the multiple vulnerabilities faced by young women, limits the chances of working with them in an effective and holistic way, and hinders the opportunity to support young women to make positive changes within their lives. Nevertheless, the lack of formalised risk data is somewhat surprising, given that many of the young women referred have been justice-involved for some considerable time.

#### **Case Study: Kelly (18tfc)**

An emergency referral seeking “intensive community support” was made to TfC by a social worker in respect of Kelly (18 years old) due to significant concerns about her vulnerability and riskiness due to alcohol dependence, past offending behaviour and an outstanding charge. Compounding her vulnerability, Kelly was also homeless, and residing in a hostel. In addition she was neither in education nor employment. There was limited detail provided on referral in relation to her family circumstances, history of statutory involvement or her presenting problems. From subsequent discussions with local authority social work, it was found she has significant mental health issues, no history of secure care and was a first time offender with just the one offence, a breach of the peace, currently outstanding. It was also ascertained that the breach of the peace was being dealt with through the Children’s Hearing System, which is unusual for an 18 year old.

TfC accepted the referral and made considerable efforts to meet with Kelly. But Kelly could not be found; she had gone missing following a warrant for her arrest, for another (unknown) offence.

Thereafter for several weeks after initial referral, there were difficulties in getting updates from the allocated social worker on Kelly’s situation, although it was finally discovered that Kelly had been placed in hospital as a result of her alcohol and/or mental health issues and then transferred to a rehabilitation centre to treat her alcoholism. At this time, one month after referral, TfC were also advised that Kelly now had several other agencies/practitioners involved within her support plan, including a psychologist, an educational transition team and an addiction team. Consequently Kelly’s social worker advised that it was not appropriate for TfC to be involved at this stage, but that TfC services may be of use in the near future following Kelly’s discharge from the rehabilitation centre. TfC agreed to defer the referral but, at Kelly’s transitioning back into the community three months later, were advised by social work that TfC input was not required at that point as there was sufficient supports in place. Almost five months later (and ten months since initial referral) Kelly was re-referred to TfC whilst being held on remand in prison.

The case study of Kelly highlights a number of important issues around perceptions of risk and vulnerability, and also raises questions about consistency of response. It reveals practice differences in terms of the age at which young people are disengaged from the Hearings System and are drawn into the adult justice system, and also provides insights into the ways an ‘emergency’ referral is conceived and interpreted. Whilst there was no formal risk assessment information available, social work clearly considered Kelly to be at risk and also extremely vulnerable. There appeared to be a greater risk perception when Kelly was maintained within children’s services, and arguably the risk perception was reduced once she became involved with adult community care.

### **Presenting problems**

While most young women are referred on the basis of their offending behaviour, vulnerability factors are also noted in case files for many young women, for example; severe isolation and lack of understanding of the court and justice system whilst remanded in prison; homelessness and housing difficulties; use of alcohol as a coping mechanism; mental health issues; self-harming; negative peer or familial associations; childhood trauma, loss or attachment difficulties.

Table 7 lists presenting problems at point of referral/first contact with TfC, the most common of which is offending (present in 20 cases); followed by alcohol/drugs (n=12); Self-harm (n=20); associates/peers (n=12); being outwith parental; control (n=8); absconding (n = 8), and; school (n = 3).

**Table 7. Presenting Problems**

<b>Offending</b>	<b>Alcohol/ drugs</b>	<b>Self- harm</b>	<b>Associates /peers</b>	<b>Parental control</b>	<b>Absconding</b>	<b>School</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>

In just under half of cases (n=19), it was recorded that there was a health or disability issue, but with no little detail on the exact nature of health needs. However, case file notes concerns by referrers around vulnerability and young women deemed to be at high risk of harming themselves. Where there is ongoing involvement with mental health or addiction services this is recorded. It appears that 2 girls had children – interestingly the second (TfC 27) was the product of extreme domestic violence as a young child and her daughter is cared for by the grandparents!

Whilst accommodation/housing problem were identified, there is no recorded information about the financial situation of the young women, for example whether those living in the community were in receipt of unemployment benefits or incapacity benefits.

## 5.8 Time for Change Practice: working with young women and girls

### Initial Engagement

The programme offered by TfC is designed to meet the needs of individual young women. A key worker is allocated to provide support throughout the period of engagement. Although all support plans are individually tailored, the first phase of involvement usually focuses on engagement, relationship-building and maintaining stability; it is aimed at preparing young women for the commitment needed to engage with TFC.

Many young women referred to TfC have followed a sad trajectory from the statutory care system into the youth justice system, to the adult justice system and then into custody, where they are caught in the 'revolving door' of offending/prison. Some, in the words of one of the TfC workers have *'fallen through the cracks between every available service.'* Allie (7TfC) is a typical example: when she first became involved with TfC she was not enrolled in any other service. Following a breach in her probation, she received a custodial sentence and did not have a criminal justice worker. Neither did she have a mental health or a social worker; she was also estranged from her family.

A small yet significant number of young women spoke of having intentionally committed offences with the aim of being arrested, charged and returned to prison, due to feeling unsafe, isolated and unable to cope within the community. This group have minimal everyday living skills, health problems, addiction issues and, often a very gloomy outlook. They can also be deeply distrustful, and fatalistic about their future, as the following extract from a key worker's case notes reveals:

*".....very pessimistic about her future and thinks that she will be in and out of jail throughout her life time. We discussed this further and she informed me that her mother is not long out of Cornton Vale; her step-father is currently in jail and her brother is on remand. "*

TfC workers and social work referrers are clear about the remit of TfC, and emphasise the importance of providing support to young women who are likely to be experiencing a range of personal challenges and (often structural) circumstances that make it difficult to desist from offending and/or comply with the requirements of a statutory order. A key benefit of TfC is the time available to workers to develop relationships with individual young women, and to be able to respond flexibly to needs as they arise.

Early on, workers aim to get a clear sense of the main priority areas of unmet need which are typically related to the young women's offending, and which may act as a catalyst for re-offending. However, workers emphasise they see and respond to young women primarily as complex individuals, not solely as offenders:

*“I mean I think that we are responsive in terms of trying to meet what the needs of the girls are rather than a ‘one size fits all.’ [TfC worker 1]*

Priority areas are identified and discussed, and decisions taken jointly by young woman and workers, and where appropriate with other involved agencies, as to how best to meet needs in an effective and holistic fashion. This then forms the basis of ‘individual support plans’ where key tasks, aims and objectives are set out that are worked at in the next phase of engagement. Workers try to work in partnership with each young woman, to ensure her views are taken account of in the development and fulfilment of her own support plan. This encourages responsibility for engagement with the support available, rather than there being a sense of the imposition of a care plan which has been designed ‘for’ young women rather than ‘by’ them.

This may include a consideration of young women’s pasts, in order to support them in planning for the future. It may also include: support to develop new coping strategies and to make informed choices; support to develop new pro-social relationships, or mend severed relationships; facilitate improvements to physical and mental health; enhance practical living skills; assist in introduction to new social experiences; linking young women into other appropriate services and activities in order to address social exclusion; address reasons for young women’s offending behaviour, and; assist in the development of plans for education, training and employability.

Individual support plans are subject to internal monitoring and review at specific intervals of initially one month then at regular intervals thereafter. This tends to be an informal process between the TfC key worker and young woman, but where other agencies are involved with the young woman, their views are also solicited, and the plan is linked in with other plans in place. In summing up the service offered by TfC, one staff member said:

*“We provide relationship based, one to one support, with the girls wherever they happen to be, we link in with the plan in place and add a different dimension, and that has to include ownership and, as you would say, a proactive approach to addressing the issues which not only the referrers but the girls themselves identify as needing attention in order to help them. I suppose it really is about managing their life in less risky ways for themselves and other people.” [TfC worker 4]*

### **Frequency of Contact**

Where possible high frequency of contact is maintained between TfC workers and young women, time varies from one to daily contact – usually at transition or periods of relapse or where daily contact offers some structure to the day. More often if the young woman is considered to be particularly vulnerable or at risk. For those in prison, in particular, such high level of contact is welcomed:

*"I usually see her every second day...and she's always' phoning me, she 'phones like every day and that to see if I'm alright." [Charlotte, 2TfC]*

Interview data with young women evidenced that TfC workers are reliable, consistent and accessible, with ongoing contact maintained by workers. Notably case file analysis evidence also highlights that when young women miss planned contacts, significant efforts are made by workers to ensure some kind of contact went ahead, and/or re-arranged within the next day or two.

The nature of face-to-face contacts provide an illustrative example of the organisation's commitment to person-centred and relationship-based support. Such contacts are active and can be informal, and, for those based in the community, often take place outside the office environment. Where possible, temporal and psychological space is created for young women to share and reflect upon their feelings and experiences, including their offending behaviour, and to be listened to. Contact meetings are also of significant duration - typically around two hours, but often longer. Contact can include various relationship building activities, and one-on-one therapeutic support (including life story work, addressing presenting problems) focusing upon identified priority areas such as self esteem, alcohol misuse and offending behaviour, and; importantly include ongoing recreational pursuits to assist young women to develop greater self confidence, and encouragement to participate engage in structured activities. Comparing the nature of TfC contact with other forms of agency contact, one worker said:

*"...we can go and do kind of light hearted things and take their mind off their issues but then as it goes along, because of that, they'd be able to trust us enough to open up .... you hope, you would hope (laughs...) [TfC Worker 1]*

Workers utilise a range of novel and creative approaches to engaging with young women, ranging from sports, swimming trips, shopping, and drawing, but efforts are not always successful. The following example which draws on case file notes by the key worker illustrates the imaginative way in which she engaged with a young woman in the early stages of referral:

*"Visit to Cornton Vale to see Susan as planned ...brought along a doodle pad and colouring pencils as Susan likes to be doing something throughout our contact. She was very appreciative of this and instantly responded well." [TfC worker 2]*

But some young women can be extremely difficult to engage, frequently missing appointments and not answering telephone calls. Sometimes this is due to young women's unsettled lifestyles, addiction problems or homelessness. Lack of suitable or permanent



accommodation can have a significant de-stabilising effect and is widely considered by social workers and prison staff to be one of the most challenging issues facing young women upon release from custody, as the following case study indicates.

**Case Study: Norah (8TfC)**

Norah (aged 17 years) self-referred from prison where she was serving a sentence for breach of probation. Norah first became known to social work services as a baby and was reported to the Children's Hearing System on offence grounds following the death of her mother four years previously when she was 13 years old. Norah began mis-using drugs and alcohol from that time. She also self-harmed by cutting herself. After her mother's death, Norah went to live in local authority accommodation and also spent periods in foster care. After her mother's death, she met her father and siblings for the first time; and she remained in telephone contact with her father and an uncle. She was prescribed medication for depression and suffered from anxiety.

Whilst in prison, Norah engaged well with TfC, meeting with her key worker 2-3 times a week and maintaining regular contact via prisoner e-mail. TfC provided emotional support to Norah, accompanied her to various court appearances, and communicating with Norah's solicitor on her behalf. TfC also tried to secure accommodation for Norah pending her release but this proved very difficult.

Norah was released from prison into homeless accommodation where she remained for a few days before moving into her uncle's home; after four days she moved in with her sister and then 10 days later moved back into homeless accommodation, and then, a week later, moved back in with her sister once again. She maintained almost daily contact with TfC during this time. She also made extensive use of the telephone crisis line, as she found it hard to adjust to release and her unsettled life-style.

After less than a month post-release, Norah was remanded in custody on an attempted murder charge which seemed to have occurred when she went to visit a friend and became involved in a domestic argument in the friend's home. TfC continue to work with Norah on her return to prison.

There are key differences between older (those aged between 16 and 18 years) and younger girls engaged with TfC. Because of their age, the 'older' group tend to have experienced more (and often significant) involvement with the statutory care and/or justice system, including periods of imprisonment, as in Norah's case discussed above. They are less likely to be involved within children's services; more likely to be exposed to adult criminal justice services; more likely to have addiction problems (mainly alcohol), and; more likely to be involved in risky lifestyles. The older group also tend to have more limited sources of

(informal and formal) support, and therefore require a high level of worker contact and support in order to maintain their safety. However, according to TfC workers, the older teenagers with whom they work are generally more receptive to engaging with the intensive support offered. All of the older group interviewed talked positively of the services provided by TfC, with several claiming a positive working relationship with their key worker, and a good knowledge of other project workers. This also ensures that if a young woman's key worker is unavailable, or she calls the 24 hour helpline, she has some knowledge of the practitioner that responds.

However young women's engagement with TfC is not always straightforward or easy, or productive, despite sustained efforts to build relationships and rapport. In a small number of cases, individuals remain doggedly resistant to engagement with TfC (or indeed any other support service), missing appointments, being uncommunicative, and/or refusing to participate in any meaningful way. TfC staff report that younger girls are more difficult to build relationships with and more resistant to meaningful engagement, which resounds with much of the literature on working with girls (Alder 1998; Baines and Alder 1996; Batchelor and Burman 2004). This latter group are considered to be the most concerning; as they are precisely the group most vulnerable to custodial detention. In addition, many of the younger girls are on compulsory orders, and are more likely to have several agencies involved in their care plan. As well as this being a likely factor accounting for engagement difficulties with this group, it also raises concerns about unnecessary duplication of support. Therefore, there is need to ensure that young women are not overwhelmed by number of practitioners involved within their lives, but to ensure that TfC is selected as an appropriate means of support where key criteria are met.

Girls, in particular, are also more prone to absconding or running away which inevitably works against any kind of fruitful working relationship, as the following case study illustrates:

#### **Case Study: Joy (4TfC)**

Joy (aged 15) was referred to TfC via children and families social work, with whom she has had extensive involvement over several years, since she disclosed sexual abuse by her brothers, and physical abuse by her mother. Following the subsequent criminal investigation, she was rejected by her family, and spent periods living with other relatives and foster carers. At time of referral, Joy was subject to a residential supervision requirement in a children's unit. She was truanting from school and her risk of secure care on protection grounds was escalating due to her continual absconding from the unit, frequently on a daily basis. She had no offending history at that point, but the situation was deteriorating. The primary reasons for referral were for the provision of intensive support to try to stabilise her current placement, minimise the likelihood of onset of offending, and

address the historical abuse which social workers and residential workers believed was at the root of Joy's difficulties.

Joy initially engaged relatively well with TfC but due to her absconding she rarely kept any scheduled appointments, but would call the 24 hour help line. She spent a period of respite with Up-to-U's, and achieved some stability during that time. On her return to the children's unit, however, she absconded once again, this time committing offences with two others. She returned to Up-2-U's for a second period of respite care, but absconded once again and was eventually sent to secure accommodation due to serious concerns about the risks she posed to herself and to others. Shortly after her arrival in secure care it was found that Joy was pregnant. Up-2-U's continue to try to work with Joy but progress is slow.

### **Practical and flexible**

Importantly, TfC workers are able to engage with young women in an informal and responsive way, not solely through scheduled office-based appointments. The flexible working approach was appreciated by young women as well as social work respondents who recognise that TfC workers can engage with young women in a relatively informal way and can respond quickly to needs.

Much of the value of the service lies in its flexibility, and ability to respond to the diverse (and multiple) problems encountered by young women in their daily lives. TfC workers hold various roles within young women's lives depending on the need and presenting circumstances. These include: advocate, 'counsellor', support worker, listener, referrer to required services, housing support, practical helper, and representative, as the following interview suggests:

*"I'm a juggler, right, I juggle. And it's quirky sometimes..... so it's rapport building if nothing else, but some of the kids that we work with will have skills, and they are all learning something or another. And instead of saying, you know, we have a range of tools to facilitate outcomes, we can write the outcomes down that's fine, we know that. But it's how we get to there though - sometimes the end justifies the means, and it does to a great extent - we shouldn't be trapped into traditional approaches to everything. The end bit is important, I'm not saying we do outrageous things, although that's not outwith the realms of possibility either [laughs]; the outcome is what we are aiming for, and however you travel to that particular destination, is less relevant than reaching the destination, but it's not as good a journey, if what you've done is you've restricted it to the bus only, you know, if you don't use the car and the bike and your feet and the roller-skates and everything else that potentially, you might not think about, then you restrict or reduce the possibility of your outcomes being successful" [TfC Worker 3]*

In recognition of the chaotic circumstances that characterise some young women's lives, much of the support provided by TfC is practical in nature and this is embedded in the individual support plan: for example, assisting in budgeting, applications for housing or financial assistance, securing appointments with doctors and dentists, contacting social services and other agencies where difficulties could be encountered making contact, or when the young women were just not confident enough to do this themselves. Making and meeting appointments can be a real challenge for those who have spent considerable time within residential care and/or custody where a sense of institutionalisation can present problematically. As one young women said:

*"... I probably wouldn't have done it myself and I actually know I wouldn't have went myself, I get embarrassed doing something myself for the first time, so she [worker] came with me."*

Part of the role of TfC workers entails assisting and supporting young women to attend appointments with social workers, and to enable compliance with community disposals and court hearings, and frequently this requires them to physically go and collect the young women and provide transport to wherever they need to go. In providing such hands-on practical assistance, the relationship between worker/client is continually developing, and independent living skills are being brought into focus.

Young women are particularly appreciative of the advice and advocacy provided by TfC workers in relation to practical matters, such as legal and housing issues. Workers are considered to be easy to talk to, easy to get hold of and young women appreciated being able to phone or text them as required. Many commented on how their worker assisted their understanding of their current legal status, which is often a source of significant anxiety, especially for those in custody with limited access to any support systems. Interview data from workers, and young women, as well as case file data highlight this to be a significant challenge; many incarcerated young women had scant grasp of the court processes or the potential outcomes of their case. With their consent, TfC workers liaise with young women's solicitors and criminal justice social workers in order to explain in accessible language their legal situation. For example, a young woman who had spent time in custody on a few occasions believed she had accumulated "about five or six" convictions for assault and public disorder offences; yet when explored by TfC it was found these were charges for which she has spent time on remand, which had either not been progressed or resulted in an acquittal. This highlights the wider need for clear and accessible information about legal status to be provided to young people who are justice-involved.

The physical location of a young women is inevitably very important in the design and delivery of support that can be provided, as well as the nature of contact. As part of their case-load, key workers may be supporting young women in prison, in the community and in secure care; this necessitates flexibility as this quote from a key worker reveals:

*“ .....one of my girls is in prison, two of my girls are in secure, so I really only have one that’s in the community at the moment, so [practice] vastly varies between these. The girl who is in prison, well its relationship building just now. We have only actually, we have discussed doing focused work, but right now I’m there for an hour and a half sometimes two hours and she is just spilling her heart out ...and I’m just being there as an ear. But also our role is ... its becoming clear in the prison that we can provide a role that no other services appear to be able to, and that’s just about tying the links together and keeping the contact with the girls inside the prison to the agencies outside, particularly in relation to their solicitors, and very much their social work as well, they don’t get the chance to go up and see them so right now it’s just about being there for the girls .... We are going [to prison] and we are actually working on functional things just now like preparing them for the court process, and identifying any questions they have and if we can’t answer them then we go and speak to the solicitor or arrange for the solicitor to come and see them. For the girls in secure, well, they are completely different because their risk is heightened all the time it appears while they are in secure. And so right now .... it’s difficult for one of my girls in secure to have any lengthy time spent with her because she gets bored so it’s about trying to identify the activities that are maybe right for her whereas my other girl will just sit and draw for hours and just blether to you while she is drawing. And so it’s about identifying what the right way to approach working with them is,. And in the community ..... she is not attending college so I am driving her to college sometimes and doing functional things like that and making sure she goes to her alcohol counsellor and then also just listening to her, you know just do light things we’ll do leisure activities things like that, it really varies ...” [TfC Worker 1]*

### **Residential Respite Placements**

TfC is part of the wider organisation Up-2-Us, which holds a similar commitment to holistic, person centred approach to working with young people (boys and girls) involved with or at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. TfC can and do draw upon Up-2-Us additional resources, such as the residential facilities which are used to offer a respite service where young women can reside for up to seven days. Several young women interviewed had utilised this provision at times of crisis, and all spoke highly of the opportunity provided by the respite care.

Workers also emphasised the value of the opportunity to work with young women on residential placement in TfC:

*"I think it's excellent that it's the same organisation .... the ethos is the same, the approach is the same .... It's consistent .... it also holds onto [service users], it gives them a sense of belonging. And a lot of these young women don't have a sense of belonging and therefore I think it assists that process and sometimes if it happens at the earliest part, it's very good, because it almost makes the half standing for where they are going with the rest of the project. .... We can also be, I think, a different experience of residential accommodation because we are very much into participation and allowing young people to direct their time here" [TfC Worker 4]*

The respite care was also considered very valuable by social workers who recognise the need for 'time out' for some young women particularly in times of crisis.

### **Emotional Support**

The gender-specific nature of TfC is an important aspect of the way in which intensive support is interpreted, delivered and received. Operating from within a gender-sensitive paradigm, the emotional support provided to young women is considered extremely important and seen by TfC workers as a key part of their role. Data from interviews with TfC staff and analysis of referral and case progress information highlights that a high number had been exposed to considerable familial conflict, and/or physical and emotional neglect or sexual abuse at points during their childhood. The implications of experiencing some kind of abuse, loss or trauma is often evident in young women's behaviour, whether this be alcohol or drug related offending or direct self harm. Most young women had difficulty initially in discussing their experiences of abuse, especially when this involved any sexual violence, although these are assessed by TfC as being important contributory factors in young women's behaviour and unstable personal, emotional and social circumstances.

An early TfC management decision was taken to appoint two male workers, (the girls were asked about the appointment of the second male worker) in order to assist the development of pro-social relationships with males. Male workers do not tend to work as key workers but staff the emergency telephone line and work primarily in the area of education and employment development. The presence of male workers was not seen as problematic in any way by young women interviewed, although workers (male and female) drew attention to the fact that some young women will only speak about their traumatic experiences of childhood sexual abuse, rape or other male violence with female workers, although due their normalised culture of not 'grassing' they may struggle to actually articulate this to workers. It is therefore important to be sensitive to this issue.

Key workers also get involved with families, making contact, relaying information, attending relevant meetings and providing support for young women when meeting with their families. As in the case of Ashley (3TfC) detailed in the case study below, TfC have been instrumental in re-establishing contact between young women and their estranged family,

sometimes after some considerable time apart. In common with wider research findings (Batchelor 2007; Burman and Batchelor 2009) longstanding difficulties with family relationships and, especially with mothers, are a common characteristic of the young women engaged with TfC:

*"I think the most common [emotional issue] is almost all our, probably about 95% of our girls have not been brought up by their Mum, or have serious issues with their Mum, or their Mum's aren't present in their lives right now. Every one of my girls, every single one of my girls have big, big issues around Mum. Most of their offending is to do with Mum, most of their fall outs are to do with Mum, most of their emotional issues are to do with Mum, they've not been brought up by their Mum since they were about 10, Mum is a big, big, big feature, in almost all, everyone of my girls." [TfC worker 3]*

The provision of emotional support is also held in high regard by referrers as, often, it is time-consuming and ongoing nature of this kind of support which is difficult for social workers and other service providers to provide.

#### **Case Study: Ashley ( 3TfC)**

Ashley (17 years) 'self-referred' from prison where she was on pre-trial remand for a serious violent offence; her first experience of custody. She had very limited understanding of the court process or her legal status and was unsure whether she had been convicted or remanded. Ashley has extensive experience of social work involvement due to a lack of parental care; her mother was absent for much of her childhood, resulting in feelings of abandonment. Following her parent's break-up when she was 5, Ashley went to live with her uncle, who she alleged abused her. At 13, despite fractious relations, she returned to live with her mother - who she described as 'a stranger'. During this time both Ashley and her mother received threats from the local community. Ashley was diagnosed with ADHD and developed drug and alcohol problems; she also began self-harming. Following the breakdown of the relationship with her mother, Ashley accessed homeless accommodation and then went to live with her partner (also her co-accused).

Throughout her time in prison, Ashley engaged well with TfC, meeting at least twice weekly, and she was supported to identify priority areas of need and work through issues from her past, including building positive relations with her mother in order to try to resolve longstanding difficulties. A number of priority areas were identified by Ashley and TfC: provision of information and support in relation to her legal status, incl. liaison with solicitor and accompanying to court appearances, in absence of any family support; liaison with GP in relation to diagnosis/medication for ADHD; work towards rekindle/forgive relationship with mother, and; promote development of problem solving skills, incl. decision-making. At the

point of TfC review, Ashley's relationships with prison staff and statutory social work service had improved, and contact re-established with family members, including her mother. During interview for this research, Ashley (in prison) said she was very relieved and pleased that she was given help explaining the legal process and jargon, but also by offering direct support to both Ashley and her mother in efforts to resolve longstanding difficulties and conflicts.

*"Because I haven't had my mum,...to tell me stuff and [TfC worker] has just like helped me like all the time...from wee stuff...to all that kind of important stuff."*

*"...I've never ever like spoke about, spoke to people about my past but see like holding it all in?...it's - you can't - it hurts you more holding it all in and with [TfC worker]...I just feel as if I can talk to her."*

Ashley was convicted, but discharged from prison and placed on probation. Contact with TfC continued and she was supported in her transition back into the community. Whilst in prison Ashley developed an intimate relationship with another young female. On her release, Ashley moved in with her and her non-parental primary carer in an unfamiliar area. This proved a highly volatile relationship, rendering Ashley's housing unstable. She felt isolated and began to self-harm again, and there was a heightened risk of non-compliance with court orders. Contact with TfC intensified with work around self-harm, relationship with partner, development of self-worth and decision-making.

After 9 months of TfC support (prison and community based) there was evidence in the case files and TfC database of pro-social change in the following areas: relationships with staff; relationships with statutory criminal justice service; compliance with court orders; engagement with appropriate supports and services (mental health); communication skills; decision making; reduction in episodes of self-harm; self-esteem; enhanced family relationships, and; independent living skills.

### **Transitional Support (from prison or secure care)**

Work with young women in prison and in secure care, in addition to addressing individual needs and key presenting problems associated with their offending behaviour, is focused strongly on transition support and therefore most intensive in the lead up to discharge, with the overall objectives of continued working with young women within the community.

The transition from secure care or prison into the community is well recognised as a time of great stress (Bloom et al 2003; McIvor 2004). As a result of broken family relationships, disaffiliation, addiction and abuse problems, housing can be problematic and the potential for homelessness is high. Access to suitable accommodation is seen as one of the biggest challenges, by both workers and young women. Some spoke of their fears of having to go



into hostel accommodation or other temporary or unstable accommodation. The prospect of living alone is also a source of consternation for many young women who may have been in care or in custody for most of their lives, with several worrying how they will be able to cope with day to day living.

Maintaining mental health and ensuring appropriate access to mental health services in the community is also considered to be a particular problem in transition. Workers report difficulties in dealing with mental health services and point to inconsistencies across areas:

*“We’ve got girls who can access psychiatric services, psychiatrists in the jail but have been told that they can’t access it in the community, and girls who are on, quite hefty anti-psychotics in the jail, but can’t access them outside the jail. [TfC Worker 1]*

*“The inconsistency doesn’t make any sense. You’ve got [girl] on the one hand where they wouldn’t phone an ambulance cause they are saying ‘she is refusing treatment, its her own problem’, and then we’ve got a girl being hand-cuffed and taken to hospital night after night after night because she’s refusing treatment. [TfC Worker 2]*

The severance of family relationships and the alienation that young women often feel upon release from prison or secure care may make them more vulnerable to inappropriate peer contact and abusive relationships. The risks that young women get back into problematic relationships shortly after moving into the community are high. For some young women, disengaging from the ‘prison in the head’ can be particularly problematic, particularly if they have been institutionalised for some time. Several reported thinking more about what their friends inside were doing and imagining what was happening during the prison day, rather than focusing on trying to make a life for themselves outside. TfC workers recognise this as a particularly challenging time, where young women may become unwilling to take up available services and fall back into old habits, and work hard to put in place a raft of support mechanisms. The 24 hour on call is particularly helpful here, and young women spoke of using this when it seemed likely they were heading into trouble:

*“Well I ‘phoned her – I was in Glasgow at the beginning of the week and we could’nae get back, and there was hundreds of stuff happening, and I ‘phoned her and she came and got us and got me a train home and that” [Susan, 1TfC]*

### **Crisis Intervention**

Time for Change offer a needs-led, wraparound service, which offers a 24 hour on call, where young women can call whenever they feel in need or at risk. Depending on the situation, workers may simply offer a listening ear to allow a young woman space to reflect on her feelings and to encourage a rational and appropriate response to the specific situation, or may offer practical support. As one young woman said in interview:

*"I just talk to her [TfC worker] about it and that, like when I feel that I'm going to go off my head or something like that I just phone...and she's there, so she's helped a lot."*[Kelsey, 14TfC]

Significant value is placed upon the out of hours 24 hour on call by social work respondents, who made specific reference to how useful this is for young women. The implication also inferred from such perceptions of this element of the intensive nature of TfC provision, is the ways in which this helpline can contribute to reducing risks faced by young women, as well as the potential for minimising their risk of further offending when posed with certain situations. As one social worker said:

*"...certainly for the young person in particular that we are working with it [24 hours crisis help-line] was appropriate but it was certainly....now how can I describe this....the young person was certainly not wrapping up a lot of offences in the community but certainly she was associating with people who had a lot of offences."* Social Worker, children and families

Workers also feel that 24 hour on call fills a significant gap in service for this very volatile and vulnerable group:

*"...I think a lot of the agencies .....social work for example, they jump on the 24 hour service thing and even the residential staff. Initially one said to me 'oh but we can be on 24 hour' but as it has come into play they can't, they have so many other children they have to look after there, they can't leave once she goes missing, to go and look for her or to respond instantly when she phones whereas we can and so I think, I think that's kind of filled a gap that was maybe there before."* [TfC Worker 4]

Crisis intervention can take the form of encouraging a young woman to remove herself from a situation or, as is frequently the case, going out and attending to a young woman in a risky or potentially risky situation, and physically removing her from such risk. This is undoubtedly a novel and resource-intensive approach to risk management, but it meets the needs of vulnerable young women who recognise (albeit rather late) the potential danger they find themselves in, as in the following example:

*"I was at a birthday party and a big fight started...and [TfC worker] had just phoned me and, to stop me getting lifted, because the polis were about... she said she'll come and get me and bring me home. So she did that so that I wouldn't get into any trouble, everybody else got lifted and I never, 'cos she brought me home and just stayed in the house. So I never went back out and got into any trouble."*[Susan 1TfC]

This kind of emergency crisis service is time-consuming and demanding, and can place real demands on the resources of TfC and on the key workers. Yet, a key mantra within TfC is *'with crisis comes opportunity*. As one of the TfC workers put it:

*"...it's so true, especially, I mean there's girls that I can think of that I've had no relationship with, and it's been so hard to build as you can't get at them, and you can't meet them in a planned way, and then... they call you once, for a crisis, and that's you in, because you are able to just go, at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning or whenever ....." (TfC Worker 1)*

As another TfC worker said:

*"...a perfect example on Friday night, we've got a girl who just refuses to meet us, and she fell down the stairs and slashed her hand open – whether that's what happened or not I don't know – but it obviously dawned on her she had no one to help except us, which is a horrible realisation, but at the same time that realisation was made, she phoned our on-call service. [Worker] picked her up, took her to A&E, stayed with her .... and then put her home again, and that might just be the catalyst to get her to use our service, so I think that, the on-call service works. It's probably the best part of our project ..." [TfC worker 2]*

There is clear recognition that workers are committed to, and go the 'extra mile' for young women they are working with, and this is particularly significant and valued by those who have had no one do so for them before.

*"I think it's great for people like us...because it helps – they help you more...and they go out of their way... to help you like" [Charlotte 2TfC]*

Despite the gains made in relationship-forming and trust-building, responding to crisis can be extremely difficult where workers are, in effect, splitting their time and energy amongst several young women located across wide-ranging areas. The demands created by unplanned, or responsive work because of whatever happens in one or more of the young women's lives can impact not only on the resources of the key worker but also on the workload of other members of the team.

Emergency crisis work can disrupt schedules and affect plans for meeting with other services users. It is also difficult to maintain a level of flexibility if one or more young women are in crisis and this can have a knock on effect on workers' ability to retain contact with other, more stable service users. Workers also reported working long hours, in excess of

that agreed contractually in terms of their own contracts but also in terms of the work plan for young women:

*“If you talk about your 40 hour week .... regularly doing 60, 65, 70 hours, because of the fact that 40 hours have already been utilised within that plan. In addition within that standard kind of 40 hour plan, there have been extra bits which have kinda stretched the plan to maybe 50 hours, then there’s the stuff when we are doing standby and its been particularly onerous with call outs, I mean on 2 or 3 occasion when people are on standby for calls ..... you can be on the phone frequently during that period of time, I mean on the phone for 6, 7, 8 hours six, seven, eight hours, that is active work, ...” ( TfC Worker 2]*

This clearly raises issues around sustainability of resources, protection of workers’ personal time, as well their own well being and work life balance.

#### **TfC worker and social worker roles**

The majority of young women receiving support from TfC have a significant history of social work involvement, sometimes stemming from pre-school age. All were very aware of the distinctive roles of social worker and TfC worker, and the experience of working with TfC was perceived as very different to the type of practice and provision offered by statutory social work services. The TfC worker was generally considered to be easier to speak to in depth, had (much) more time, and could be approached informally in a variety of ways (by phone, text, in person) including outside scheduled appointment times:

*“They interact with you more. The only time you see a social worker is if she wants you to look at a report, that’s the only time I saw my social worker, you can never get them on the phone.”*

As such, young women felt more able to meaningfully engage with TfC practitioners than social workers, claiming that social workers did not visit them much, did not listen to them, or take their views into appropriate account, and when they did have contact this tended to be related to writing of court-requested reports and reports to the Children’s Hearings System. Social workers tended to be constructed within stereotypical discourses, although some young women held what they clearly believed were legitimate concerns in respect to previous experiences of statutory social work intervention: of being accommodated and placed in foster, residential or secure units. Negative perceptions of social work services must be placed within the wider context of the legislative duties held by social work services to safeguard a child’s welfare. Whilst this may have been the best course of action to protect the child at the time, this experience often leaves young women with a tainted view of statutory provision, and as responsible for family fragmentation. As stated by one young woman:

*"...I didn't really like social work, just like what they done to the family and stuff"*

Susan (1TfC) had an extremely negative perception of social work services and feels that throughout her time on supervision, her allocated social worker did not help her and she has never had a positive working relationship with any workers:

*"I hated them!...they were always just in your face and always there..."*

*"Social work, well they're just there to look for a reason to like, take us away and stuff like that, but [TfC worker] she's no. They were only there because they had to be..."*

TfC workers were seen as more reliable, consistent and most young women wanted to continue engagement with the TfC service, whilst most were looking forward to no longer having an allocated social worker. Through their actions and dialogue, TfC workers also try to ensure that young women realise they have a different role to that of social workers:

*"...I need her to know that I am there for her, so I try to do things like make sure I am that one that picks her up, I am the one that takes her there [to meeting with social worker], I am the one that goes out for coffee afterwards, I'm the one that, so I try to reinforce that." [TfC Worker 2]*

Social work interview data suggest that respondents are very aware of the ways in which they are perceived by young women. The ability to make referrals to TfC were generally seen as appropriate and welcomed by social workers, some of whom indicated that their role was increasingly one of case management, leaving them limited time to spend directly with individual young women. They welcome the additional in-depth information that TfC workers may be able to provide and their insights into young women's needs and general progress. It was generally felt that good relationships were in place and that TfC workers could undertake tasks that social workers had probably identified but did not have time to address, providing them with an opportunity to focus on issues more directly related to offending or order compliance/completion. Overall, social work interviews suggest trust and faith in TfC's services in supporting vulnerable, and 'high risk' young women.

*"We need these things. I think the really important thing is that this is not short term work, this is a long term, 'stick in there' work...and training and support for the workers who are doing it is crucial in order to retain this because what we need is consistency so that workers can 'stick with' young people.. we can't to same extent. So you need quality staff doing that who*

*have been properly trained and who have proper supervision and are supportive, to do a good job.” Social Worker, Children and Families.*

### **Partnership working**

Whilst TfC offer a distinct service that is quite different to that provided by statutory services, clear efforts are made to ensure that young women recognise that all key agencies are communicating and working together to try and support and assist them in making positive progress, and in creating greater stability within their lives:

*“...we try to make sure we all get the same message across, and we are all supporting her, and we are all doing this, and of course at our meetings we are all sitting together...”[TfC Worker 4]*

For the most part, communication processes between Up-2-Us and other services and agencies are considered to be working well. Where referrals are considered appropriate, three-way meetings are frequently held between the TfC key worker, the young woman and social worker to conduct an assessment and develop or review the individual support plan. Communication processes were seen to be working well with good information sharing in place, especially at the initial stages of a young women’s engagement with TfC. However some interviews with referrers revealed a desire for increased agency involvement, such as routine attendance at a formalised review meeting, with a number noting that they would prefer greater communication of the progress in the work being undertaken with young women and their response to it. This suggests the need for more inclusive review systems.

Scheduling of Children and Family meetings can be problematic because of the number of people involved and the number of meetings. TfC are generally not consulted about scheduling. In most areas meeting attendance has improved through our insistence on smaller planning meetings.

## 6 THE IMPACT OF TIME FOR CHANGE ON YOUNG WOMEN

The underlying basis for the TfC intervention is that intensive one-on-one support provided to vulnerable young women will have a positive impact on young women's lives and lead to one or more positive outcomes, such as: recognition of problematic behaviour; development of better coping strategies and practical life skills; greater resilience and stability; improved physical and mental health; positive engagement with appropriate services; better community integration, and; improved compliance with statutory and court orders, such that young women are less likely to (re)offend and/or engage in risky behaviour and thus avoid incarceration in prison or secure care.

Interviews as well as case file data provide evidence of the impact of TfC on the everyday lives of young women engaging with the service. Textual information on general progress was recorded in case files following interactions between key workers and young women, and some information on (positive and negative) changes in young women's lives and circumstances (in relation to accommodation, health and offending status) were recorded at each review and inputted into the TfC case database. The time between reviews varies according to individual circumstances. Taken together, this information relates to changes across the period of engagement with TfC.

Whilst a detailed analysis of outcomes was never a specific objective of this Evaluation, it nevertheless seems appropriate to include some brief discussion of outcomes as far as is possible given the limitations of the data in this regard. There are important caveats to be borne in mind. It should be noted that whereas information on the needs, characteristics and material circumstances of young women at the point of referral can act as a proxy baseline measure against which to measure progress, there is limited available information focusing specifically on outcomes for those engaged with TfC or data that could lend itself to a more quantitative measurement of improvement. In addition, in discussing outcomes, it is important to emphasise the fact that this evaluation has been undertaken over a relatively short period of time; and the complex psychological, familial and social difficulties experienced by this group of vulnerable young women may be deeply entrenched. In addition, at the end of the period of evaluation, virtually all young women engaged in long term support plans (25 of 44) continue to be engaged at the end of the first year for periods varying from 1 month to 10 months (referral is continuous), 3 of the girls terminated and were re-referred. Other girls received short term support or advice involving up to 6 sessions, others were connected to more local or appropriate services. It is a small number who are high maintenance – generally long periods in care, fractured families, abuse within family, mental health, authority issues – descending into alcohol/drugs/offending lifestyle from early teens. It is imperative to build compensatory experiences and networks – this is the biggest challenge facing TfC.

As should be evident from the preceding chapters, many of the young women referred to TFC have experienced a raft of prior statutory and voluntary interventions, which have not resulted in sustained or significant positive change. Many have had difficult and distrustful relationships with professionals and have been resistant to working with agencies. Yet for most of the young women engaging with TFC, there is evidence of some positive incremental progress in some areas.

### **Recognition of problematic behaviour/situations**

One of the most challenging areas of work with young women is that which encourages recognition of the problematic consequences of their actions or behaviours. Yet this was an area in which many young women showed demonstrable progress. Interviews with young women and analysis of case files revealed increasing recognition and acknowledgement of the risks posed by their drinking and drug use (*"I get oot ma face all the time, that's ma problem"*); the adverse attention they drew to themselves by hanging out with some peer groups or specific individuals (*"If ah carry on hanging 'round with the same people I usually hang about with, things'll get worse."* *"When I'm with [boyfriend] we are almost always stopped by the police"*). For example, by engaging with her TFC worker in meeting the conditions of her probation order (something which she has been unable to do until TFC's support) and in addressing offending-related issues, such as her alcohol misuse and emotional difficulties, Susan increased her awareness of the factors that can contribute to her risk of offending and to her risk of self-harming. Susan says she was picked up by police 65 times (no corroboration) prior to 16. Susan recognises that without the support of her worker she would likely be continuously in and out of prison and carrying on with her previous behaviours. :

*"Oh I'd probably been back in the jail by now...because I've done like six remands or something and they never gave me any help –five or six remands I've done, I've just finished doing a full year!...So I did, and they never gave me any help with that but now this time I've got [TfC worker]. When I got out I've stayed out longer than five days this time" [Susan, 1TfC].*

Susan's key worker notes that:

*"Susan can relate to other people's feelings now – she is aware of the impact of her custody on her family and moreover is able to express sympathy for those who are victims of crime. She can relate this to her own actions and has shared her thoughts and feelings about past behaviours. "*

*"She is motivated to do the right thing even when in custody and has actively sought out support from TfC. She has struggled to understand sometimes why she finds herself involved in wrong doing without minimising her part in such actions. She wants to use her time to make the connections to her past*



*unhappy life to her behaviours in attempts to fully understand why she does them and how to prevent situations happening.”*

As in the example above, case file information reveals changes in some young women’s attitudes towards working with the service, for example through regular attendance at scheduled appointments and a greater degree of stability in engaging with TfC.

### **Development of practical skills**

Another area of steady progress is in the acquisition and use of practical living skills, often accomplished in conjunction with the achievement of more stable living arrangements. Many young women referred to TfC have very limited experience of living alone, and lack basic budgeting, house-keeping, shopping and cooking skills. Consequently, they are ill-equipped for independent living, and many are fearful of living outside institutions. Indeed some have been in institutional care for most of their lives.

The practical support provided by TfC in helping young women to plan, to budget, to obtain accommodation, to shop etc. is highly valued by social workers and other referrers.

### **Case Study: Kelsey (14TfC)**

Kelsey (aged 17 years) was referred to TfC by her social worker shortly before she left residential accommodation to take up a tenancy in the same local community as her family. Kelsey has been known to social work services since birth and has experienced many placements, including local authority children’s homes and residential units. Kelsey has a history of absconding and is known to take risks; she also self-harms. She was first taken into police custody at age 12 for setting fires, and has a longstanding history of drug and alcohol use. She has sporadic contact with her mother and two brothers, but has not lived at home for some time. Relations with her family were deteriorating in the run up to her leaving residential accommodation.

The key reason for referral to TfC was to provide intensive support to Kelsey as she makes the transition from residential accommodation to living alone in a flat in the community. Kelsey is considered by her social worker to be vulnerable, timid and shy, with little access to any personal supports, but presenting risk of further offending due to her use of alcohol and association with certain peers.

The TfC worker maintained very close contact with Kelsey through-out her transition from residential accommodation. Priority areas of work included practical skill-building, confidence-building and work to reduce her reliance in alcohol. According to case file notes, Kelsey displays a “*mix of resourcefulness and fragility*” but shows very strong commitment to working with TfC. Throughout her time of engagement with TfC, Kelsey showed good

progress; whilst she continued to struggle with family rejection, she did not re-offend; her alcohol consumption diminished markedly; her confidence improved, and; she became increasingly able to cope with living alone. TfC continues to work with Kelsey to improve her relationships with family members.

### **Illegal Substance Use**

This is an area in which it is acknowledged to be difficult to evidence sustained change, particularly as young women's substance abuse is often closely linked with their life-styles and (negative) peer relationships. It is also well established that there is often an escalation in the frequency and severity of substance use and drug-related offending with age (McIvor et al 1999). When a young person is living within the community, the challenge of desisting from alcohol and drugs can be immense, and many young women struggled in this area ,as the key worker notes at a review of Poppy (27 TfC) *"Good progress though alcohol is a continuing issue. Tends to flit through relationships and there have been three periods of homelessness."*

Interviews with service users and case-file data did reveal that the 24 hour help-line tended to be accessed more by older young women who became increasingly more able to recognise that they were in situations where their drinking may get them into trouble. TfC workers also note other evidence of increases in help-seeking behaviour in relation to substance abuse by, for example, making direct contact with key workers by phone or text, and; a growing ability to identify/avoid risky situations involving drink and drugs. Given the background context of young women's lives, the ability to call for help should be seen as a positive step.

### **Improved community integration**

The role of TfC workers in supporting young women to access a range of services was viewed by social workers as very important, both in terms of addressing social exclusion and also achieving compliance with court orders. One social worker stated that TfC was making a *'great difference'* to young women she had referred to the service, noting that many would not have managed to keep important appointments without the emotional support and practical assistance provided by TfC.

Several young women considered that TfC had helped them cope with their statutory order and/or get through their court order, and helped them comply with conditions. All appreciated the practical and emotional support they received and were of the view that this support helped them to deal with/avoid problems developing in other areas of their lives.

Some young women spoke of their aspirations of attending further education college or undertake training for a career. All felt that their ambitions had been supported by their key worker and others working in TfC.

**Case study: Angela (12 TfC)**

Angela (18 years) was referred to TfC by a social worker shortly after she was given a deferred sentence. Angela was brought up by her father until 3 years previously; her mother left the family home in 1996 and Angela has had no further contact with her since then. At the time of referral to TfC was living in a hostel, but for the previous three years she had lived in non-local authority residential accommodation. Angela had problems in controlling her alcohol consumption and was associating with a group of young people who were drawing the attention of the police. Social work considered that Angela was at high risk of re-offending. She was referred to TfC so that support could be provided with personal/emotional issues, to help her meet appointments, and to encourage engagement with alcohol services, and to be able to offer an option to the court in the form of additional community support.

Angela engaged well with TfC from the start; she was receptive and developed a very good relationship with her key worker. Shortly after commencing involvement with TfC however, Angela was sexually assaulted by a young man known to her. This caused a lapse in her progress, and she started drinking again but since then she has been supported to make changes in several areas of her life and has made excellent progress overall. She has developed a good understanding of the reasons for her problematic behaviour and has taken responsibility for her actions. Her drinking has reduced. With TfC's support, she found suitable accommodation in a different area and no longer associates with her old peer group. She also began working part-time. After four months of engagement with TfC there have been no further arrests or charges.

**Escalating Risk**

Given the characteristics of this population, it is perhaps unsurprising that some young women appear resistant to positive change and rather than making positive progress, their behaviour and/or situation appears to regress. For example, as in the following review statements:

*“ situation deteriorating over past two years, secure accommodation being threatened for child protection reasons” [Joy 4TfC]*

*“referral earlier was tracked but not wanted as Kelly involved with health services -this appears to have broken down and chaos resurfaced” [Kelly 18 Tfc]*

*“has very serious behaviour issues - attempted suicide, pregnancy, anti-social behaviour - been to secure screening group - suggest revamp existing support” [Sonia 39 Tfc]*

It is important to note that changes in need can also be the result of developing relationships between a young woman and her key worker; for example, it may mean that the young woman was able to disclose difficulties rather than simply indicating deterioration or heightened risk. In cases such as those cited above, the Tfc flexibility of response allows for speedy revisions to the support plan to take account of Kelly’s presenting health needs, and Sonia’s pregnancy and attempted suicide. The rapidity of response is essential given the zig-zag nature of progress, which is a recognised characteristic of the ‘desistance journey’ (see for example, Weaver and McNeill 2010).

There is a high incidence of mental health problems amongst the group and two young women in particular continued to pose very serious risk of harm to themselves throughout their period of engagement. One young woman, Holly (11Tfc) seriously self-harmed three times over the four months she had been engaging with Tfc and also picked up new charges of breach of peace. The second young women, Eva (15Tfc) was moved to an adolescent mental health unit due to her suicidal tendencies for a period of stabilisation, although continued to engage throughout with Tfc. With such entrenched difficulties it is perhaps overly optimistic to see clear positive progress in such a short period of time.

### **Reductions in Re-offending**

The impact of interventions such as Tfc require time to demonstrate the longer term impact of the service in relation to reductions in reoffending/reconviction, increases in compliance with orders and ultimately reductions in the number of young women being imprisoned or sent to secure care. Moreover, the wider context of increased punitiveness in relation to the sentencing of women in Scotland is an important background factor which creates real challenges for those working with female offenders of all ages (McIvor and Burman 2011). However, there is some, albeit limited, evidence of reduction in the frequency of arrest and charges made against the young women engaged with Tfc.

Given the short time frame of the evaluation, and the fact that virtually all of the young women’s contact with Tfc is ongoing, it is not possible to produce data on re-offending/reconviction, which would normally require two years from the end of an intervention and larger numbers in order to draw meaningful conclusions. However, the Tfc database contains some information on new charges incurred following engagement with Tfc. For the majority of young women, there was a reduction in the rate of offending

recorded; this group however also includes those who had no offences recorded when commencing engagement with TfC as well as those who were in custody or secure care throughout this period. Just seven of the young women incurred a new charge, and an eighth was arrested twice but not charged on either occasion. The new charges ranged from breach of the peace, theft, and vandalism to serious assault and attempted murder. It must be noted however that the period of involvement with TfC is variable in each case – ranging from one month to six months.

### **Key transitions: moving on from TfC**

The overall length of time of engagement with TfC is not entirely clear, but is dependant on the progress of individual young women and level of their need. Because of the multiplicity of need in these justice-involved young women's lives, taken together with the relatively short time frame of the evaluation, no young women had been supported to move on from TfC, so it is not possible to provide meaningful information about the processes or experiences of exiting from the service. Nonetheless it is anticipated that this is highly likely to prove a very difficult and challenging process for both young women and their key workers. It is likely to pose particular difficulties for those young women who had previously struggled to sustain relationships, but had succeeded in building a strong one with a key worker.

Exiting is a very important, but often under-considered, aspect of services such as that provided by TfC; so much effort is expended in attracting and retaining service users whose needs and vulnerabilities are so marked that moving on from the service can be a fraught process for all parties. Most young women interviewed said that they were not looking forward to ending engagement with TfC, and expressed the view that they would very much appreciate the possibility of contact after formal engagement with TfC had ended. Some young women also said that whilst they may not require further regular support after their formal contact with TfC had ended, but would like access to a drop-in service or continued use of the 24 hour help-line. Key workers also recognised that individual circumstances vary and some young women may require ongoing support for some time, if not indefinitely. Clearly though this has implications for key workers case-loads and use of resources.

Young women need to know here they can access continued, responsive support services should they chose to. This speaks to the importance of developing strong partnership working across agencies in the community. TfC have developed active links with a variety of community services who have a role to play in supporting young women, although with such a small workforce there is limited time available to do this as well as actively managing a case load that is so resource intensive.

The anticipated difficulties associated with exiting TfC signals the need for a community-based, group-work programme that will assist in maintaining wider support networks for young women that adheres to the principles of age and gender-responsivity. Yet this also

must be set against the wider background context of the redistribution of resources, and cuts in welfare provision and services that inevitably impact on attempts to integrate socially marginalised young women into local communities.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Young female offenders are a largely invisible minority whose offending pathways and distinctive needs have gone largely unaddressed and whose voices are seldom heard. In responding to this group, the TfC service draws closely on international research which points to the importance of needs led, strengths-based gender-specific provision for working with young women and girls, to be delivered by well-trained, research-informed and committed practitioners working in partnership with young women and other relevant agencies, to identify and respond to priority areas of need and risk, forge positive working relationships within a safe and secure environment, to assist young women to develop pro-social skills, and support them to work toward their aspirations.

In evaluating practice and service provision, a key consideration is the extent to which TfC are able to fully adopt a genuine gender-specific and tailored, person-centred approach, when working either alongside or from within a statutory model of service provision, where legislative rights and obligations take supremacy. Working within the boundaries of existing policies and legislative framework, TfC make considerable efforts to practice from a person-centred standpoint with each of the young women with whom they work, and the agencies they work alongside. There is strong evidence of an organisational culture which values the core principles of this approach.

It is clear that TfC adopts a strong assets focus in work with young women, first identifying and then concentrating on what resources the young women have, and supporting them to develop and apply these strengths in positive ways. Overall, the evaluation indicates that TfC is highly valued by young women attending the project, workers in other agencies, and particularly social workers with responsibility for administering statutory and court orders imposed on young women. Referrers and stakeholders have a strong understanding of the ethos, values and aims of TfC, and recognise the model of service delivery as being research-informed.

TfC's reputation has grown significantly since its initial development, with the service beginning to be recognised as a much-needed alternative to secure care or custody. TfC have developed strong working relationships with local authorities, HMP YOI Cornton Vale and the Good Shepherd Centre.

Responses from young women engaging with TfC have been largely positive, with young women claiming they have benefitted specifically from the relationship-based support provided by key workers and others within TfC; the advocacy work in clarifying their legal situations; the assistance and support they have received in accessing additional services (i.e. housing, health, advice) and, in particular, the length of time and intensity of contact that key workers are able to provide. This is contrasted with that provided by statutory

social workers, who often struggle to give of their time to this vulnerable and marginalised group, given the number of pressing demands on their time and resources.

TfC was introduced against a background of concerns about a rapidly increasing female prison population in Scotland and, in particular, responses to young women vulnerable to custody or secure care. This wider context of rising female imprisonment and the punitive sentencing climate (McIvor and Burman 2011) impacts on the potential for initiatives like TfC to be able to demonstrate any significant impact in the short term. Importantly, it should be noted that services such as TfC take a significant period of time to develop and establish, and while the service is 'bedding in' it can be difficult to evidence clear outcomes or hard 'results'.

However, there is evidence that young women who engage with TfC are likely to experience improvements in a number of areas of their lives, which reduce vulnerability and reduce risk of custody/secure care. Information from case files, TfC database and interviews with both young women and TfC workers indicate that young women have experienced improvements in terms of: their relationships with key workers; their recognition of their own problematic behaviour and its likely consequences; their interactional skills; their overall confidence, self-esteem and perceived self efficacy, all of which is likely to support personal resilience. Integration into the community is also enhanced, as many young women have been supported to link into other community based resources and agencies (including health, addictions, and housing) which they have been unable to do so effectively before involvement with TfC.

Although only indicative, the analysis of re-offending suggests that young women who engage with TfC do not generally continue to re-offend; for those who do, in the short-term at least, the rate of their offending appears to be reduced.

Like many other third sector community-based services, TfC is funded for a fixed term and future funding is uncertain. A negative aspect identified by all groups of respondents was the short-term funding of TfC and the consequent uncertainty this brings. The main reasons for winding down community-based projects for girls and young women are usually financial, however lack of funding can mask other shortcomings, notably: change of objectives, poor or adverse publicity, loss of gender-specificity, non-use by the courts and/or social work services, and inappropriate expectations by funders. Based on the impressions and experiences of managers of gender-specific programmes in custodial and non-custodial settings, Carlen (2001) found a general convergence of opinion regarding attributes of sustainable projects. These include a resistance to the erosion of gender-specificity; an evolutionary and flexible organisation (whereby the relationships between project provision and the varied or changing situations of those attending the project are monitored); a holistic (co-ordinated) approach to service delivery; a democratic model of policy-formation to enhance staff morale and project success; and a principled approach to



probity in human relationships. It is evident that TfC encompasses these key requisites, in that it cleaves closely to the principles of gender-specific, age-appropriate provision with a holistic approach to service delivery and demonstrates flexibility in its responses to the young women with whom it engages. There are also clear and discernible material benefits and improvements to young women's lives as a result of this engagement.

To summarise, the findings of this evaluation provide support for the benefits of TfC, despite some of the uncertainties currently experienced due to short-term funding arrangements. Incarcerated young women and those at high risk of detention in prison or secure accommodation, remain a group in great need of appropriate resource provision, both from welfare and penal policy and practice. There is also a need for further substantial research to develop greater understanding of how best to effectively meet these needs, and balance any risks, as a way to work toward desistance and a positive quality of life for these young women, rather than the current situation where the revolving door of short custodial sentencing continues into the next generation, with limited resources focused upon welfare, rehabilitation and community re-integration.

## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- TfC to seek wider recognition by the courts as an additional support option as part of community orders imposed on young women.
- TfC to consider the adoption of a standardised data capture tool to track case progress and a specified range of short to medium-term outcomes for young women engaging with the service.
- TfC to develop more inclusive review systems with other involved agencies and services regarding young women's progress
- The length of TfC intervention is not entirely clear. TfC should give close consideration to the ways in which young women are supported to move on from TfC with consideration of incorporating this within individual support plans.
- TfC to continue to develop strong and active links and partnership working across agencies in the community to ensure integrated service provision. Young women need to know here they can access continued, responsive support services should they chose to.
- The way forward is to ensure there is a substantial growth of diversionary programmes to enable young people at risk of custody, to be supervised constructively and effectively within the community where they live.

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## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The evaluation draws upon both quantitative data (from the Time for Change programme database), and qualitative data, specifically, documentary analysis of case files, and interviews with service users, TfC staff and key stakeholders, in order to assess the extent to which the TfC Project addresses its key aims and objectives:

- to provide dedicated intensive, relationship-based, support of young women and girls within the community in order to minimise the escalation their offending and /or involvement with the youth and adult criminal justice systems;
- to assist young women and girls resolve current or past conflicts or trauma, familial difficulties and emotional issues associated with their offending behaviours;
- to enhance young women's positive social relationships, interests and access to suitable education, in line with research findings on resilience and desistance and with an asset-focused, strengths-based approaches to practice

The evaluation sought to analyse quantitative data and obtain views, perceptions and expectations of those parties involved with the TfC project, namely TfC workers, service users and relevant agencies in order to identify the experiences, perceptions and opinions of individuals directly involved with TfC, so as to:

- gain an insightful understanding of the complexities of the targeted client group, both in regard to levels of need and risk, and the practice challenges encountered by TfC;
- obtain feedback from service users and stakeholders on key elements of the TfC services and its collaboration with other agencies, including the model of service delivery and principal practice approaches;
- assess expectations of key stakeholders, including their views on the age and gender-specific approach adopted for this client group;
- examine the impact of TfC on the young women using the service, and;
- ascertain how the work of TfC and its model of service delivery could be improved.

All research undertaken has been done so in accordance with the University of Glasgow's ethical requirements. Formal ethical approval for the research study was obtained from the

University of Glasgow, School of Social and Political Science Ethics Committee in August 2010.

### **Quantitative data**

Numerical data was obtained from an existing TfC programme database, which records basic information on all referrals made to TfC, whether or not these referrals have been accepted. The data base provides information on referral source, reasons for referral, key presenting issues (e.g. health, addiction), familial circumstances, legal status, any history of anti-social or offending behaviour, and current accommodation, as well as any history of statutory involvement including periods spent within Local Authority care and accommodation, and any involvement with the Children's Hearing System. A TfC manager assisted the research team in collating and extracting data, all of which was collated on an anonymised basis. All statistical information was used in aggregate to give an overall picture of the service user group and local context rather than to identify individual participants. In total, data from 44 referrals were collated and analysed, representing all referrals to TfC over the period from its inception up to March 2011.

### **Qualitative data**

Documentary analysis of referral forms was carried out to provide information in terms of referral routes and reasons for referral, and familial and social background.

Analysis of support plans (which included identified areas for priority work), case file data and case review information also yielded textual information about the nature and frequency of contact between TfC workers and service users, and the practice models implemented by TfC support in their work with young women..

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with:

- Service providers – TfC project workers and associated service and operational managers;
- Key stakeholders - agencies involved in some way with TfC, usually by referring or supporting and/or 'supervising' young women referred to TfC (criminal justice, youth justice and children and families social work practitioners and relevant managers within the statutory sector, including prison and secure accommodation staff);
- Service users - young women receiving a direct service from the Project.

Initially, it was intended to undertake two sets of interviews with each group, one set of interviews at the outset of the research, and a follow-up set six months later, in order to

assess the impact of TfC services over a period of time. However, this was not feasible due to the time constraints of the research period, and the fact that TfC took some time to establish itself in terms of actively receiving referrals. Instead, interviews with both service users and stakeholders have been conducted throughout the research period. This has allowed for a greater diversity in the sample population, and enabled the inclusion of views from those with variable lengths of involvement with TfC.

Interviews with TfC staff investigated their use of different practice models; experiences of management and support of TfC workers; clarity of roles and responsibilities; resourcing for the Project, and; views about how the services of the Project may be enhanced or developed. Initial interviews were undertaken with TfC support workers and managers at the beginning of the research, and follow up interviews were undertaken towards the ends of the research period as a way to gain an understanding of how the Project has developed, changed and responded to the needs and circumstances of the young women with whom they work, and what TfC staff learned from their experiences. A total of six TfC staff were interviewed (one operations manager and five workers), five of which participated in a follow up interview.

Interviews with stakeholders investigated their views about the service provided by TfC; referral processes; procedures for information-sharing about individual service users; shared planning processes; collaborative working, and their perceptions of the impact of TfC interventions on young women's offending and social circumstances. A total of 12 stakeholder interviews were carried out. Most of these were face-to-face, although due to difficulties with work scheduling, three interviews were conducted by telephone.

Interviews with young women service users considered their personal histories and current circumstances; their reasons for engaging with TfC; their expectations of the Project; their relationships with both statutory and TfC support workers; their perceptions about the impact and effectiveness of the Project on their lives, and; their views about any potential barriers to effective engagement with TfC.

Up-2-Us seeks blanket consent by means of a form signed by parents/carers for all activities that take place as part of their projects. The form authorises the Project and its staff to act on the parents' behalf in relation to project activities. But in order to provide additional safeguard, all TfC service users were provided with information sheets in advance of fieldwork (via their support worker who was thoroughly briefed by the research team) explaining the nature of the evaluation, why their views were being sought, and detailing what participation in the research would entail, with a request to take the information home and to discuss it with their parents and/or carers, where feasible. This information sheet made it clear that if parents or carers have any objection to the study, they can opt out their young people. It was also made clear to young women that their participation, or lack thereof within the research evaluation, would not impact at all on their involvement

with their support services from TfC, and they were invited to complete a consent form if they were willing to be interviewed by the research team.

Before each interview, researchers verbally reiterated the nature of the research and the reasons for asking about young women's individual circumstances, provided further copies of the information sheet, ensured that the young women were aware that they can opt out at any time, and checked that the young women were content to proceed. Gatekeepers and other project staff were not present during these meetings in an attempt to allow the young women to make an independent decision about whether or not to participate.

In total, 19 consent forms were completed by young women involved with TfC, of which five were in custody or secure accommodation. Five young women declined to participate on the day of the interview (one of whom was in custody) therefore interviews were conducted with a total of 14 service users.

The data from interviews was digitally recorded where permission was obtained from interviewees; transcribed, coded and analysed. The indicative case-studies were collated by the researchers, in consultation with TfC support workers.

Qualitative data analysis (from case files and interviews) enabled identification and assessment of the following:

- referral routes of young women and girls into TfC, and the reasons for referral;
- the nature of the service provided by TfC;
- the reasons that potential service users agree to participate or choose not to engage in TfC;
- the existence of relevant supports available elsewhere in the community (including that from family members and other service providers) an overall picture of the intensive support offered and impact of TfC intervention, particularly in relation to: immediate and short-term risk reduction and or changes to social circumstances;
- the overall progress of young women whilst engaging with TfC, in terms of the de-escalation of offending and/or decreased involvement with the youth and adult criminal justice systems;
- the identification of indicators of longer term pro social markers in young women's behaviour, attitude and social circumstances, considering the potential for sustained desistance.
- any difficulties young women have in participating fully with TfC, and exploration of possible solutions to these;
- professional working relations and information-sharing between TfC staff and other stakeholders
- how the TfC practice model and means of service delivery, including monitoring and reviewing processes, could be enhanced or improved upon to effectively address

young women's vulnerabilities whilst minimising the risk of being placed within either secure care or custody.