



Rhodes Foundation Scholarship Trust

Working with women who offend Learning from South Australia

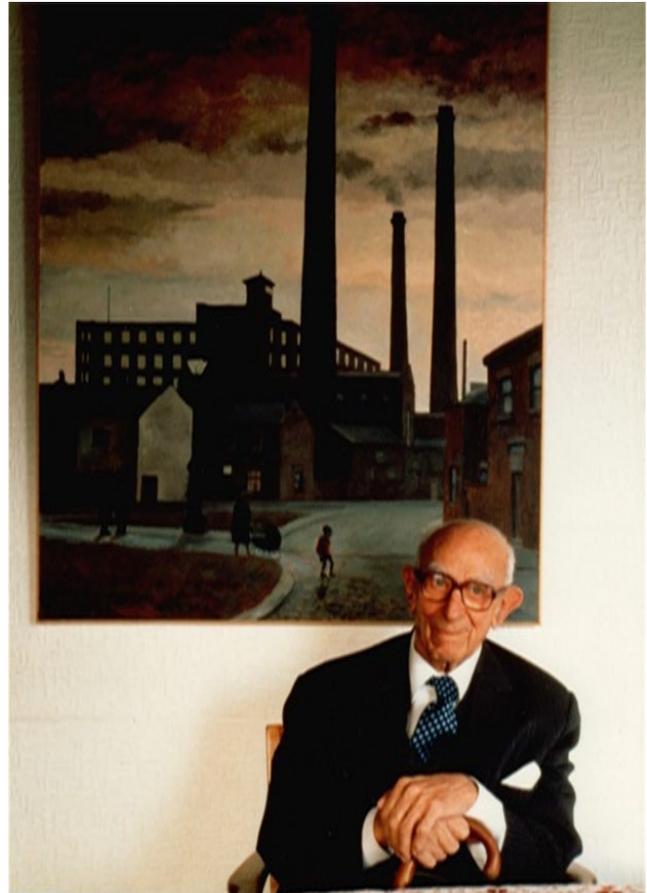
A Rhodes Foundation Scholarship (2019)

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**Hervey Rhodes, Baron Rhodes of Saddleworth, KG, DFC, PC, DL
(12th August 1895 – 11th September 1987)**



The Rt.Hon. the Lord Rhodes KG DFC PC DL
12 August 1895 - 11 September 1987

Lord Rhodes's life connected the 19th and 20th centuries in many ways: the changing face of work and industry, the political, social and cultural landscapes as well as the contribution of philanthropic and voluntary movements anchored in a tradition of public service to which he was unwaveringly committed.

It was no surprise that when approached by the Lancashire South East Probation Service he unhesitatingly agreed to be the first President of the Selcare Trust when it was founded in 1971. The Selcare Trust developed innovative ways of working with offenders and their families which gained national recognition.

On Lord Rhodes' death in 1987, the then Chief Probation Officer of Greater Manchester, Cedric Fullwood proposed that the Rhodes Foundation Scholarship Trust should be established in honour of his unstinting support to the work of the Probation Service.

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This study would not have been possible without the hospitality of Joanne McFarland who is the Principal Advisor for Women Offenders, within the Offender Development Directorate Department for Correctional Services in Adelaide. Ms McFarland facilitated my visit and organised an itinerary for the duration of my trip. I am grateful for the kindness and generosity of her colleagues and for their invaluable assistance.

I am particularly grateful to my colleagues in the Warrington Probation Office for looking after my caseload and ultimately enabling me to undertake this trip. Special thanks to Kerry Robertson, Senior Probation Officer and John Davidson, Head of the Cheshire Local Delivery Unit for granting me permission to undertake this research trip.

Heather Simpson
September 2019

1. Introduction and Background

This report aims to explore how the Department for Correctional Services in South Australia work with females both in the community and in a custodial environment. I will focus on the *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* which was introduced in South Australia in June 2014 and has been described as a 'milestone' for the Department for Correctional Services. The initiative aims to 'lay a strong foundation of rehabilitation opportunities for women offenders and identifying clear pathways to transitional support and community reintegration' (Department for Correctional Services 2019).

In May 2015, the Department for Correctional Services published the 'Consultation Report: Phase 1 Women Offender Framework Development Project' (Department for Correctional Services 2014). The findings challenged their previous practices and called for a new shared vision for addressing offending by females. It was emphasised within the report the importance of women's gender and cultural needs in respect of correctional environments, services and practices. It also highlighted the importance of designing and implementing approaches that strengthen the reliability and quality of services to support women's community reintegration.

The *Framework and Action Plan* has been developed based on research into effective engagement and intervention with females who offend. The Framework recognises the importance of holding women accountable for the crimes they commit but also acknowledges the resilience and resourcefulness of women and their ability to focus on a new lifestyle for themselves and their families.

The Framework sets out practical steps to allow women the opportunities to access the support and resources they need in order to sustain the necessary changes in their lives. The initiative has also been introduced to give communities, the opportunity to contribute to building a safer environment. It recognises the importance of broadening social relationships for female offenders, encouraging them to associate with pro-social peers. Pro-social peers are individuals who demonstrate pro-social behaviour by obeying rules and conforming to socially accepted behaviours. These actions may be motivated by empathy or by concern about the welfare and rights of others.

The *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* was introduced to build on the developments already being made in South Australia and to enhance the correctional environments and capabilities. Through this initiative, South Australia are in a position whereby they can increase their capacity to deliver dedicated infrastructure, programmes and resources better tailored to females who offend. There are a mixture of strategies set out within the *Framework* and a clear emphasis on the importance of working with private sector partners and communities. As well as observing current practice, I was also keen to provide input into the advancement of this important initiative by sharing my own practice.

When the *Women Offender Framework & Action Plan 2014-2019* was formally launched, there was a high level of expectation and I had the opportunity to witness and observe some of the outcomes that have been achieved over a five-year period. I was also given the opportunity to be introduced to a new action plan for 2019-2024. The new action plan presents an opportunity for the Department of Correctional Services to consult on their future direction and seek feedback and to further consolidate actions and initiatives. The introduction and development of a further five-year action

plan demonstrates a recognition from the South Australian Government that there is a need to continue to 'progress activity and service approaches that meet the unique needs of women intersecting with the correctional system' (Government of South Australia 2019).

Within the UK, the Government is also committed to protecting and supporting the most vulnerable people in society. The Government recognises that there is a higher prevalence of need amongst female offenders. Many women experience chaotic lifestyles which are often as a result of their experiences of abuse and trauma. Almost 60% of female offenders have experienced domestic abuse (Ministry of Justice 2019).

In June 2018, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice in the UK presented the *Female Offender Strategy* in Parliament. This highlighted the prevalence of need amongst female offenders such as mental health problems and self-harm. It was stated that if the right approach to working with female offenders is implemented - one that addresses vulnerability, taking into account evidence about what works in supporting them to change their lifestyles - it could have substantial benefits for not only the female offenders but for the victims, families and wider society (Ministry of Justice 2018).

This strategy sets out the Government's commitment to a new programme of work for female offenders, focussing on three priorities: earlier intervention, an emphasis on community-based solutions and an aim to make custody as effective as possible. This strategy is in its early stages, whereas the *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* in South Australia was introduced in 2014. I was able to witness how this framework has improved rehabilitation opportunities for women offenders in South Australia and how these have been developed to support community reintegration.

In December 2018, Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) introduced a new Policy Framework: *Guidance on Working with Women in Custody and the Community*' (Ministry of Justice 2018). This was a revised Policy Framework and was created in order to help prison and probation staff manage women in a way which best enables them to address the issues related to their offending. This is an evidence-based strategy much like the *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* in South Australia and responds to the unique risks, needs and complexities of women in the criminal justice system.

Prior to my visit I had read and noted various information regarding the *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* and I had already noted comparisons between this Framework and the *Female Offender Strategy*.

In Adelaide I visited:

- Port Adelaide Community Correctional Centre
- Port Adelaide Women's Health Service
- Bail Accommodation Support Programme - *The Arches*
- Department for Correctional Services Central Office, Adelaide
- Adelaide Women's Prison
- Adelaide Pre-release Centre
- Cleland Conservation Park (The Parks Preservation Programme where prisoners work within the Cleland Wildlife Park)
- A factory whereby prisoners within the pre-release centre initially work
- Borderline Personality Disorder Centre, Adelaide

2. Methodology and Learning Goals

Before my visit in June 2019, I had been in contact with the Department for Correctional Services in South Australia. This Department has an important role in the criminal justice system in South Australia and it maintains safe and secure facilities for prisoners and organises the supervision of offenders in the community. My visit was being facilitated by Joanne McFarland, Principal Advisor for Women Offender Services and she advised that she would be able to assist me with the following activities as part of my visit:

- Facilitate a tour of Adelaide Women's Prison (AWP) to meet the General Manager and some staff
- Facilitate visits to organisations whose services tie into the *Women Offender Framework*
- Discussion about the current *Women Offender Framework* that is in place, which is a series of initiatives
- Consultation on the new *Women Offender Framework Action Plan*

The aim of my visit was to compare practice and current methods of rehabilitation with female offenders and to learn from South Australia's current system.

The *Female Offender Strategy* which was launched in the UK in December 2018, aims to improve outcomes for women who have offended. The *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* shares the same aims and my main outcome was to implement the learning and skills obtained from this experience and relay this back to my own organisation and to utilise these skills within my own practice and to share this learning with other colleagues. Having read about the Framework prior to completing my trip, I recognised that there was a greater focus on innovative community provisions outlined within the Australian framework and I was keen to find out more about these provisions, as this is included within the *Female Offender Strategy*.

The *Women Offender Framework and Action Plan* is a series of initiatives which sets out practical steps to enable women to access the opportunities, support and resources they may need to make and sustain necessary changes in their lives. My intention was to learn more about these initiatives and to ultimately assist the National Probation Service to build on the significant investment we have already made in order to enhance our service.

As well as observing current practice within South Australia I was also keen to provide input into the advancement of this important initiative, particularly by sharing my own practice and how we as a service within the UK work with female offenders.

3. Port Adelaide Community Correctional Centre & Women's Health Service

Port Adelaide Community Correctional Centre

During my visit I was given the opportunity to visit Port Adelaide Community Correctional Centre. The courts in South Australia can sentence adult offenders to serve penalties in the community rather than send them to prison. Many of these offenders are required to be managed, monitored and supervised. The oversight of these offenders is the responsibility of the community correctional centres.

Community Corrections also supervise offenders who are released on Parole or Home Detention to ensure that they follow the conditions of their release. When supervising offenders in the community Correctional Officers apply a risk-based model to offender supervision whilst also promoting a rehabilitation approach. The evidence-based approach promotes a balance between compliance and rehabilitation (Government of South Australia 2019).

Port Adelaide Community Correctional Centre



Port Adelaide's Women's Health Service

Port Adelaide Correctional Centre have opened a women's community reporting centre in partnership with Women's Health. Female offenders are given the opportunity to attend their appointments at Port Adelaide's Women's Centre, where a female correctional officer is based at the Centre on set days and will offer appointments within this setting. The Centre is a Women's Health Service providing specialised, trauma-informed, women-centred, evidence-based interventions for women who have difficulty accessing the health system. The Centre offers counselling and mindfulness-based groups as part of their emotional health and well-being services. This partnership with the Department for Correctional Services optimises women's access to the health system, as well as ensuring they are able to address any underlying social and life issues affecting their health.

I was able to have a detailed discussion with a Correctional Officer (Anna) who supervises women in the community and often works from the Women's Centre. She highlighted how she uses the one to one model; ensuring she uses an individualised, trauma informed, therapeutic approach. The

officer expressed her commitment to continue to supervise women this way and how the response to this way of working has been positive. The females she supervises have stated that they prefer this environment and feel less embarrassed than if they had to attend at a Correctional Centre. The Officer involved is keen to expand on this model.

Ms McFarland expressed a desire to create a group supervision session 'working with women with lived experience', whereby females who have lived in a custodial environment can attend a support group with other female offenders, co-facilitated by a correctional officer. 'Lived experienced' refers to individuals who have spent a period of time living in a custodial environment. This will help to reduce social isolation and give women the opportunity to engage with other individuals with similar experiences. It has been proposed that this can be used towards their community service hours.

Port Adelaide's Women's Health Service



James Henderson (2018) has been promoting the practice of Probation Group reporting, specifically in relation to domestic abuse offenders. He suggests that groups should be gender specific as gender-responsive programming recognises that each gender has differing needs and relate differently to other group members. He interviewed probation officers who had implemented group supervision sessions with females and the officers reported that the women were talking to each other and providing support outside the group, reducing social isolation for some of the women.

4. Tomorrow's Women Wirral

I have previously delivered probation services from within a Women's Centre and during this time there was a positive relationship between the local centre and the Probation Service; however, this arrangement did not continue. Visiting the Women's Centre in Adelaide highlighted the importance of offering an alternative environment, specifically for women and it will be beneficial for me to liaise with other local organisations in order to improve the services we provide, utilising any established centres and services available for females within the local area.

Prior to my visit to South Australia I had the opportunity to spend a day observing at *Tomorrow's Women Wirral*. Tomorrow's Women Wirral, a voluntary sector charity, is a project designed to benefit all women aged eighteen and over in the community and is committed to reducing female imprisonment, re-offending and to provide assistance to those women who want to make positive lifestyle changes (Tomorrow's Women Wirral 2016). They offer a full timetable of courses that address women's needs and I was lucky enough to be able to observe a session from their six-week domestic abuse programme - *Finding me* - in addition to attending a mindfulness session. The feedback from the service users was positive and they stated that they did not feel judged and were able to integrate with women who want to share their own skills and experiences.

Tomorrow's Women Wirral



Members of staff from Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company are currently based within Tomorrow's Women Wirral, enabling all women the opportunity to access support from several different agencies. This has been welcomed by the female offenders as it offers a safe space in a women-only environment so partner agencies can work with women, some of whom may not have accessed services previously.

5. Adelaide Bail Accommodation Support Programme 'The Arches'

During my time in Adelaide I was also given the opportunity to visit a bail hostel. The South Australian Government for Correctional Services (DCS) has established the Bail Accommodation Support Programme (BASP) to provide short-term accommodation for offenders on bail who lack accommodation, as an alternative to being remanded in custody. The BASP is a purpose-built facility in Port Adelaide and comprises of 30 self-contained accommodation units designed to accommodate adult males and females. Support is provided to residents to maintain links to family, employment and other services whilst moving into long-term accommodation.

I was given a tour of the facility by the Bail Accommodation Manager (Richard). 10 of the 30 self-contained units at BASP are reserved for women. There is a specific floor for females only and there are strict rules and regulations in place to ensure the safety of those women who are residing within the facility. The Department for Correctional Services has engaged in significant consultation over the past four years. Some of this consultation specifically focused on women and included consideration of children affected by entry of a female carer to the correction system.

Bail Accommodation Support Programme - *The Arches*



The Policy relating to the management of women in community corrections extends to the continuity of contact with children and safe child residency arrangements when a court directive is issued about approved residential placement; including bail accommodation. The BASP is committed to prioritising the needs of children; whereby scheduling of visits with children takes into account the best interests of the child. Specific focus is on increasing and supporting women's access to their children, improving health and well-being of children and tailoring service delivery to meet the needs of the women residing within the establishment (Offender Development Directorate 2018).

6. Adelaide Pre-Release Centre & Adelaide Women's Prison

Adelaide Pre-Release Centre

Day two of my visit included a trip to the Pre-release Centre in Adelaide. I met with a corrections officer, Reg, who provided me with information about the work opportunities available for females in the Pre-release Centre. They have many community partnerships and in the past year \$376 000 of value was provided to Adelaide communities via the prison-based community services (Government of South Australia 2019). Adelaide Pre-release Centre has established employment partnerships with many companies and organisations. These partnerships place prisoners into meaningful paid employment and provide stability to assist with their reintegration into the community.

Females are given permission to work outside of the prison and are initially required to spend a period of time at the Northern Distribution Centre; preparing food packages for prisoners. They are then given the opportunity to complete other off-centre placements; including a programme where prisoners work within Cleland Wildlife Park and Blackhill Conservation Park.

Adelaide Women's Prison Pre-release Centre



I was lucky enough to visit Cleland Conservation Park (Department for Environment and Water) with Reg and I also met with one of the managers who facilitates this off-centre employment within the wildlife park. This programme has been and continues to be very successful, with a number of female prisoners obtaining both qualifications and employment. The women can work within the on-site café or they can work outside within the park grounds.



Following my visit to Cleland, I was taken to the Northern Distribution Centre, where prisoners are initially sent on their off-centre employment placements. There was a positive atmosphere at the Northern Distribution Centre and the women appeared to be enjoying their time and working hard to develop their skills and to progress to further employment. Off-centre employment opportunities allow the women to socialise with members of the public and to integrate back into society. It gives them structure and routine and provides them with references for when they are released, which could ultimately result in paid employment.

Adelaide Women's Prison

I was given the opportunity to visit Adelaide Women's Prison. This Prison accommodates female remand and sentenced prisoners. Programmes and services delivered include crisis intervention, specific support services and Integrated Offender Management which focuses on involving family members and community support workers to assist in the transition process from prison back into the community. The prison employs a multi-disciplinary approach to managing the needs of female prisoners.

The Department for Correctional Services implemented a policy in 2018 - *Management of Women in Prison and Community Corrections*. The Policy statement details the responses of the Department for Correctional Services:

Our responses take into account the gender and cultural needs, characteristics and life experiences of women within broader offender management practices and as part of development of infrastructure, environments and service pathways.

(Department for Correctional Services 2018)

The Department for Correctional Services commitment is to ensure the women centred principles established in the ***Strong Foundations and Clear Pathways: Women Offender Framework*** are reflected in their work:

- Gender and culture matter
- Environments, services and practices need to be responsive to the reality of women's lives and needs
- Relationships matter

Adherence to these principles means that policies, programmes, services, management practices and environments must contribute to community safety by:

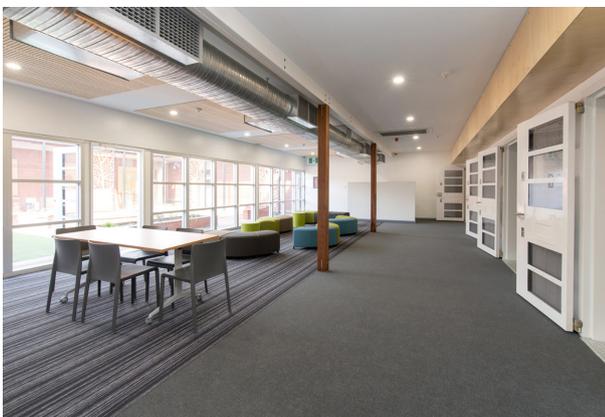
- Taking into account research and theory relevant to women and offending by women;
- Ensuring assessment and case management practices utilise *Gender Analysis* and take into account women's gendered and cultural needs and offence profiles;
- Recognising diversity and reflecting responsiveness to women's cultural, community connections, social realities and unique individual needs in operational practices and processes;

- Paying attention to changes required to achieve gender equity, visibility, empowerment and participation of women in programmes, education, training and work;
- Applying gender and cultural analysis, understandings of gender relations and trauma informed care to ensure women are managed in safe, respectful, non-confrontational and dignified ways. Trauma informed care takes into account past trauma and the resulting coping mechanisms when attempting to understand behaviours and treat the individual;
- Recognising the care/connection between women and children and that the attachment of an infant/child has with its mother informs the child's emotional, physical and psychological development and well-being;

Adelaide Women's Prison is currently undergoing an upgrade and I was given a tour of the new building which is still under construction. Some of the females within the prison worked on the *U-turn project* whereby they contributed to the upgrade of the prison. A joint partnership was formed with Mossop Construction, Total Space Design and The Master Builders Association

This project focused on the redevelopment of the Women's Centre at the Adelaide Women's Prison. Part of the project focused on women undertaking accredited training to enable them to participate in construction at the site. In this context the accredited training provided led to the women obtaining a recognised qualification (bricklaying, joinery etc). With the incarceration rate for women on the rise, it is a project South Australia's correctional services hope will also help reduce the rate of repeat offending. The prison believes that programmes like this will go some way to help stop recidivism.

Once completed, the prison will have an education block and a health centre. The Department for Correctional Services does not currently provide prison-based accommodation to women with children. However, the Policy makes provision for this and the health centre will contain facilities for women with children to reside for a period of time. While women are responsible for taking steps to address their personal and offence related circumstances, the Department for Correctional Services recognise that it is essential that their service design and system responses take into account Women's unique role as mothers, especially to dependent children. The children of criminalised women are among the most vulnerable members within a community and are at heightened risk of themselves entering the criminal justice system in the future. Preventative action to keep children safe and well connected to their female carer (where possible) is an investment in better futures (Department for Correctional Services 2017).



During my tour of the prison I met some of the prisoners who were involved in the South Australian Living Artists (SALA) Festival. South Australia have used a model based on the Koestler Awards in the UK. Since 1962, the Koestler Awards have played a unique role in motivating prisoners to take part in the arts. Adelaide Women's Prison have used this model to explore options for transforming its prisoner art activities into a comprehensive programme based on international and national best practices with a focus on prison industries, rehabilitation and reintegration. I was able to view the art created by the women and talk to the artists about their pieces. It was clear that they were passionate about their work and were keen to develop their skills.



During my third day of the trip I met with Dr Jeremy Ryder, who is the art co-ordinator for the Department for Correctional Services. He believes that the arts and creative activities have the power to change lives and can act as a catalyst for identity transformation, employment pathways, financial independence and community partnerships which contribute to reduced re-offending and community safety. Creative industries have multiple benefits for prison management, prisoner well-being and positive engagement with the community. Numerous studies have demonstrated the therapeutic, expressive and educational benefits of engaging prisoners in creative activities. Experiences of success in creative activities can also stimulate interest in further self-development and educational opportunities. Creative activities can also open up opportunities for social inclusion.

Maruna (cited in Cheliotis and Jordanoska 2016) discusses the concept of *secondary desistance*, which refers to changes in self-perception that function to challenge and disrupt prior offending behaviour. The concept of *secondary desistance*, however, can be extended to incorporate an array of other ways in which arts-based programmes may indirectly contribute to desistance from crime. This includes motivating participants and equipping them with skills, to helping them improve their social skills and make amends with their families and communities. Ezell and Levy (2013, cited in Cheliotis and Jordanoska 2016) support this theory, stating "an important yet often overlooked caveat here is the effectiveness of arts-in-prisons programmes".

7. Department for Correctional Services Central Office & Borderline Personality Disorder Centre for Excellence

Department for Correctional Services Central Office, Adelaide

Day three of my visit was spent at the Department for Correctional Services Central Office and the Borderline Personality Disorder Centre for Excellence. I was given the opportunity to meet with Louise Jenkins, Team Leader within the Workforce Planning and Development (Operational). Louise introduced me to a new programme being developed for staff within prisons who work specifically with female offenders.

The programme will be linked to Department for Correctional Services competencies and each member of staff will obtain a record of attainment. They will be given ten out of workdays whereby they will be expected to attend classroom training and complete E-learning; E-learning is learning conducted via electronic media, typically on the internet. Staff will also be required to complete a journal containing information about their on the job practice. Those who complete the training can become trainers and support other members of staff to complete the programme. This commitment to equipping staff with the relevant skills to work with female offenders is an example of the Department for Correctional Services adopting a gendered approach. The Department for Correctional Services recognise that there needs to be a unique approach to working with women.

During my time at the central office I met with Shawn Sowerbutts; the Senior Programmes Officer, for the Offender Development Directorate within the Department for Correctional Services. He provided me with information about a new women's programme that is currently being developed. They are making changes to the previous programme, after receiving feedback that it was too similar to the male programme. Shawn is keen to adopt a therapeutic community approach, ensuring that the programme includes a trauma module focusing on the impact traumatic experiences can have; also incorporating adverse childhood experiences (ACE's).

Department for Correctional Services Central Office, Adelaide



I also met with Rachel Bell, the Procurement & Contract Coordinator within the Strategic Policy, Projects and Partnerships for Offender Development team. She introduced me to the *10by20 – Reducing re-offending Strategy*, whereby the Government has committed to reducing re-offending by 10% by 2020. The Government recognise that re-offending has substantial costs for communities and a reduction in re-offending means safer communities with fewer victims and less crime. The

Department for Correctional Services is committed to the target and is responsible for leading the delivery of the action plan and for monitoring progress on the strategy. A progress report from 2019 makes reference to their commitment to a continued partnership with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), who currently deliver off-centre employment at Cleland Wildlife Park for female prisoners. As part of the strategy the Department for Correctional Services will also continue to strengthen their partnerships with other organisations, including the prisons partnership with Mossop Construction and Total Space Design for the U-TURN project at the Women's Prison. The strategy is also committed to continuing to enable suitable female prisoners to be released earlier and serve the remainder of their sentence on Home Detention, enabling them to spend more time with their families and children, particularly in the case of primary care givers (Government of South Australia 2019).

Borderline Personality Disorder Centre for Excellence

I spent the afternoon at the Borderline Personality Disorder Centre for Excellence. The Centre had recently opened in Adelaide and its purpose is to treat individuals who have been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. The Centre provides high quality, accessible, timely, responsive and appropriate services, treatment and care for people with Borderline Personality Disorder and their families/carers. It also provides high quality and accessible education and support for families/carers of people with Borderline Personality Disorder. Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a disorder of mood and how a person interacts with others. Someone with a personality disorder will differ significantly from an average person in terms of how he or she thinks, perceives, feels or relates to others.

Borderline Personality Disorder Centre for Excellence



Although the service is not specifically for females, there has been a shift in approach following years of campaigning by advocates and findings from a coronial inquest into the deaths of two young women in South Australia (Opie 2019). After investigating their deaths, deputy state coroner Jayne Basheer found the high death rate of patients with severe Borderline Personality Disorder would continue unless changes were urgently made to address the state's lack of adequate services to treat the disorder.

8. Adelaide Women's Prison and Nuctech Conference

I spent my fourth day at Adelaide Women's Prison being introduced to the Greyhound Project. As part of their partnership with *Greyhound Racing SA*, up to eight greyhounds at a time are placed in an Adoption Programme. Prisoners complete the greyhound domestication training programme with the dogs prior to the greyhounds being adopted within the community. This rehabilitation programme has been deemed a success and may be expanded to other prisons. It has been deemed a success as it is a positive interaction for the females and provides a sense of pride and dignity. It is also great for their motivation and rehabilitation.

Adelaide Women's Prison Greyhound Project



During my second visit to the prison, I was introduced to one of the managers within the prison and I was involved in a conversation whereby Ms McFarland was suggesting that female prisoners should be able to access support via telephone from organisations within the community who offer services specifically for women. It was recommended that this number should be free for the women to use on their telephone pins and would demonstrate the Department for Correctional Services' ongoing commitment to having a gendered lens. Advice has been sought and a phone number can be specific to one prison site, therefore, more enquires will be made and this will be implemented in the near future, taking into to consideration confidentially for the women wanting to use this service.

My afternoon was spent at the Department for Correctional Services Central Office and I was invited to attend a conference with Nuctech. Nuctech is a company originating out of Beijing; it is a security inspection product manufacturer and security solutions supplier specialising in own-brand radiation imaging equipment. The Department for Correctional Services are keen to end the routine strip searching of women.

Within the UK strip searches are conducted, however, there are strict rules in place. These rules regulate the circumstances under which female prisoners can be strip searched and how they may be searched. This was one of the recommendations of the Corston Report. It is accepted that a huge proportion of women in prison have suffered abuse and that strip searches can have a 're-traumatising' effect. Strip searches are invasive, humiliating and in many cases, re-traumatising. They require women to strip naked in front of two prison officers. Strip searches are conducted on women who may have experienced disproportionately high rates of sexual abuse and family violence. The rationale given for the current routine use of strip searches is that they are necessary to maintain safety and security in prisons. However, evidence shows that routine strip searches are not a reasonable nor proportionate response to achieving this aim, particularly in light of the serious harm they cause women. Strip searches are often considered

to constitute inhuman or degrading treatment and violate the right to body integrity unless they are absolutely necessary and required for good reason, such as a serious suspicion that a person is hiding contraband (Human Rights Law Centre 2019).

Nuctech provide customised security inspection solutions including x-ray machines within prisons to determine if prisoners are concealing contraband inside their body, artificial limbs, beneath clothes and in shoes. Violent crimes and illegal acts often take place, whereby casualties have been caused. The introduction of x-ray machines will significantly reduce the need for strip-searches and will contribute to the humane treatment of females, by removing the need for strip-searches, however, also effectively managing the risks posed in relation to prisoners concealing contraband.

9. *Best Practice for Working with Women Training*

My final day in Adelaide was spent attending the *Best Practice for Working with Women* training delivered by Ms McFarland. This particular training was aimed specifically at correctional officers within the prison environment, working with female prisoners. It was explained that the Department for Correctional Services have current strategies in place that drive what they do. The nine operational principles were discussed and how they inform the operational practice and drive the culture and outcomes that the Department for Correctional Services strive for. The principles include:

1. Women are accommodated in the least restrictive environment and are managed in the least restrictive way, without compromising the safety of staff, other incarcerated women, nor the order of the institution. This is based on a holistic approach taking into consideration individual needs.
2. Women have timely movement through the system, according to their individual needs and behaviour. Consistent displays of respectful and responsible behaviour are rewarded through access to areas with greater freedom and opportunities.
3. All environments, practices and interactions are respectful of women's needs, to maintain their safety and dignity. Staff model pro-social behaviour and through effective communication, build rapport and assist women to problem solve and make informed and positive choices.
4. The trauma and victimisation histories of many women in custody are accounted for and form part of women's rehabilitation planning. Staff work in a way that is calm, predictable and responsive, to reduce the risk of further traumatising in custody.
5. Many women in custody are mothers of children and have a primary caregiver status. Irrespective of where a woman is located in the prison, she will be enabled to maintain contact with her children; unless such contact presents an immediate risk or is likely to cause distress and is not in the child's best interest.
6. Aboriginal women will have access to both mainstream and culturally specific staff, programmes and services. This caters for diversity in choice and equivalence in access to mainstream services as well as maintaining cultural connection.
7. Approaches are individualised and seek to respond to the diverse population of women. This is achieved through flexible practice, making links to relevant external supports and services and through targeted interventions. Flexible practice includes providing alternative reporting arrangements for women (i.e. supervision to be conducted at their home addresses or within women's centres). External supports include mental health services or education, training and employment providers.
8. Women are supported to be meaningfully engaged in a range of daily activities, programming and rehabilitation opportunities that are responsive to their needs. These include vocational training and employment, health and wellbeing activities, family centred opportunities and programming to address criminogenic need.

9. At the prison they will work together as a skilled multidisciplinary team that strives to improve outcomes for women.

The training was concluded by providing staff with a task to complete within their work environment, instructing staff to reflect on their learning from the day and to make notes about the interactions they have with women in custody. The training will be delivered in two sessions. During the second session staff will be required to provide feedback with regards to their interactions with the women.

Working with women: work place activity

Over the next month reflect on your learning today and observe the interactions you have with women in custody.

At our next session please bring two examples to share with the group:

- 1: An interaction that you had with a woman in custody which you felt was positive and resulted in a good outcome. What did you do? What did you communicate? What did you observe? What was the outcome?
- 2: An interaction that you had with a woman in custody which you felt didn't go so well and did not result in a good outcome. What did you do? What did you communicate? What did you observe? What was the outcome? What could you have done differently?
3. Feel free to bring any other thoughts or observations to share with the group reflecting on how we manage women, system processes (effective or ineffective) or rehabilitation strategies.

10. Learning and Findings

In recent years the Department for Correctional Services has significantly increased its focus on women offenders. Having met with the Principal Advisor for Women Offenders (Joanne McFarland) it has highlighted how the Department for Correctional Services are committed to improving responses to women offenders and prisoners involved in correctional settings.

The interest shown by stakeholders in this initiative demonstrated broad support and enthusiasm for the implementation of a gender and culturally informed approach to the management of women within the South Australian correctional service system. The plan has proved to be realistic in scope and has served to embed a gendered policy framework within the correctional service system as a standard operating consideration.

There is continuing evidence that services intersecting with the correctional system should be based on the principles of effective correctional programming whilst also being holistic and addressing a range of traditional and gender-specific risk factors. From observing practice within Adelaide, it is clear that women are particularly likely to respond to gender informed approaches if their backgrounds and pathways to offending are associated with gendered issues. Gender informed approaches are particular approaches and methods that focus on the specific needs of women, whereby the design and delivery for specific interventions and activities take into consideration gender.

The *Risk Need Responsivity* model can apply to women. However, female offenders often tend to be more complex and diverse in comparison to male offenders. This complexity does not appear to come from greater criminal risk or different criminogenic needs but rather is a reflection of needs and issues that may impact responsivity and the woman's ability to engage in the change process" (Department for Correctional Services (2019:13)

It is clear that the work placements available for women within Adelaide Women's prison and the pre-release centre have had a positive impact. Significant work has been undertaken on the development of a structured day within the prison. It was previously as low as 10% of women in education, training and work, whereas it increased to 80% of women being occupied in a constructive day. 100% of women at the Pre-Release Centre now also have access to education, training, employment or re-entry activities.

The Women's supervision unit within the women's health service is an excellent model and is producing effective engagement of women in the community. This way of tailoring service delivery practices to meet the needs of women in community corrections is clearly effective and the feedback received has been positive and the partnership has been agreed until 2020, this is likely to be extended further and other correctional centres are implementing this model and are even targeting non-government organisations.

There is a clear focus on improving assessment and case management across prisons and community corrections and the Department for Correctional Services are committed to maintaining and ensuring the timely transition of women through prisons, to the pre-release centre and into the community. I found that they are keen to ensure that case management practice has a holistic, individualised focus and they are demonstrating their commitment to this by delivering training for staff who work within the women's prison. The Department for Correctional Services are dedicated

to equipping staff with the relevant tools to undertake short and long-term goal setting with women and link this to relevant community services and supports. During the delivery of the training for staff it became apparent that there are many staff members who are keen to develop their skills and they are already demonstrating a gendered approach with their own practice. However, there are some members of staff who are somewhat reluctant to change and develop their practice in this way and cannot fully understand the difference it can make. These members of staff will benefit from the proposed staff training programme which is due to be introduced in the near future. This will hopefully eliminate any resistance and allow these individuals to improve their knowledge and understanding about the importance of adopting a gendered approach.

11. Reflections

Some key points that this research opportunity has highlighted are:

- The importance of providing females with alternative reporting arrangements (i.e. women's centres)
- Ensuring there is a continuity of child contact and maintaining this where possible
- The importance of education, training and employment opportunities, to assist with their reintegration into the community (i.e. work placements, references, vocational courses)
- Focused intervention for staff who work specifically with females. Providing competency-based training for staff within female prisons; to develop their skills in relation to best practice for working with women
- The importance of having a clear emphasis on multi-agency working
- The importance of setting out practical steps to allow women the opportunities to access the support and resources they need in order to sustain the necessary changes in their lives

12. Future Directions

My research in Adelaide focused on the *Strong Foundations and Clear Pathways: Women Offender Framework*, the initial framework from 2014-2019 established a policy direction and change agenda for the Department for Correctional Services in its work with women intersecting with prisons and community correctional centres. The development of a new action plan presents an opportunity for the Department to reflect on achievements and showcase activity undertaken to improve the responses for women. It also presents an opportunity to consult on their future direction and seek feedback; to further consolidate actions and initiatives. I will continue to follow the development of this framework and transfer any learning to my own organisation. I will also relay this learning to other organisations who work with female offenders.

The *Female Offender Strategy* within the UK is committed to improving the collective approach to female offenders and making society safer by tackling the underlying causes of offending and re-offending. Commitments include:

- Investment of £5 million of cross-Government funding over two years in community provision for women.
- Work with local and national partners to develop a pilot for 'residential women's centres' in at least five sites across England and Wales.
- Reducing the number of women serving short custodial sentences.

I have previously delivered probation services from within a Women's Centre and there was a positive relationship between the local centre and the probation service. It would therefore be beneficial for me to liaise with other local organisations in order to improve the services we provide. There is not currently a women's centre in the local area where I work, however, this is currently in the pipeline and once a premise has been established, I will endeavour to make enquiries about delivering supervision sessions and potentially group supervision sessions from this establishment.

The government within the UK recognise that the availability and sustainability of services, such as women's centres, is essential for ensuring that as a service we can deliver the vision that has been outlined within the *Female Offender Strategy*. It is outlined within the strategy that a sum of money will be invested to support the development of community-based provision for female offenders.

I have been in contact with Sarah Ward who is the North-West Women's Lead and the intention is to provide feedback about my findings at the North West Divisional Women's Senior Probation Officer's Meeting. The Divisional Senior Probation Officer for the North-West Women's Strategy (Rachel Reed) is also aware of the fact I have completed this trip and I intend to meet with Rachel to discuss my findings.

I am confident that with better knowledge and commitment, using a mixture of strategies and working together with other organisations, we can increase our capacity to deliver dedicated infrastructure, programmes and resources better tailored to females who offend.

Recommendation

Although women's centre provision is not currently available within the area where I work, in order to demonstrate how I am adopting a more holistic approach I will ensure that I provide female offenders with alternative reporting arrangements, including: home visits and supervision sessions being delivered at child contact centres. I have previously delivered one to one sessions in a child contact centre, when I worked elsewhere and this had a positive outcome. I was provided with a private room and there was no cost involved. This is something I will make enquiries about to determine if this would be possible in the local area where I am currently based. This would support the vision outlined within the *Female Offender Strategy* to see more options for supporting women in the community. This approach will also incorporate the development of whole systems approaches, which sets out the emerging evidence base for a holistic, multi-agency approach to addressing the needs of female offenders.

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