

Coercion, Trauma and Women in the Criminal Justice System



I Felt Trapped And I Couldn't See Another Option: Women Co-offenders' Pathways Into Crime And Experiences Of Coercion

Dr Charlotte Barlow (Lancaster University) will discuss the growing body of literature which supports the claim that women follow distinct and often gendered pathways into crime. (Daly, 1992; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006).

Women Offenders, Trauma and Community Based Interventions

Sara Swire, CEO (New Dawn New Day) will discuss the work of the charity New Dawn New Day, which has sought to improve the lives of women and girls particularly those who have complex needs for almost 30 years.



This seminar will focus on women in the criminal justice system, but it will also be of wider interest to colleagues in other fields of discipline and practice whose work relate to trauma and the use of coercion

This **seminar** is open to all staff, students, statutory and voluntary sector



I Felt Trapped And I Couldn't See Another Option: Women Co - Offenders' Pathways Into Crime And Experiences Of Coercion

Dr Charlotte Barlow will discuss the growing body of literature which supports the claim that women follow distinct and often gendered pathways into crime (Daly, 1992; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). Coercion has been increasingly acknowledged as a pathway into crime for female offenders, particularly those whose relationship with their partner/ co-offender is characterised by violence, abuse, control and/ or obsession (Barlow, 2016; Jones, 2008; Richie, 1996; Welle & Falkin, 2000). However, there is distinct lack of consideration of the ways in which co-offending with a partner may influence and impact upon women's criminality (Jones, 2008). With this in mind, this paper explores the findings of a feminist methodological study, which involved in-depth interviews with women who have co-offended with a partner. Various aspects of the women's experiences will be explored, such as how their relationship with their partner/ co-offender influenced their pathway into crime or their 'choice' to offend and the extent to which the concept of coercion encapsulates the women's reasons for offending. The paper will conclude by emphasising the importance of acknowledging women's choices in social context and within the nature of their co-offending relationship.



Women Offenders, Trauma and Community Based Interventions

Sara will discuss the work of the charity New Dawn New Day, which has sought to improve the lives of women and girls particularly those who have complex needs for almost 30 years. They work with women from across Leicestershire, and a key focus of their work is reducing women's offending behaviour through addressing the underlying causes of their offending. Making up just 12% to 15% of the offending population, women with offending behaviour require a different approach to mainstream criminal justice services, which have largely been developed in response to the needs of male offenders. New Dawn New Day's approach is holistic and gender-responsive, offering a range of interventions including outreach and engagement, one-to-one casework support, counselling and psychotherapy and psycho-educational group programmes in a safe, women-only environment.

The majority of criminal justice involved women have experienced some form of abuse and suffer from the associated trauma and mental health difficulties. A strong shared experience among the women that come to New Dawn New Day is surviving complex trauma, which is often a response to adverse childhood experiences including disrupted early attachment and childhood abuse. Such experiences of trauma often mean that their clients use behaviours and coping strategies that are interpreted as anti-social and they are often viewed as a person who is a problem rather than someone who has a problem.

These experiences often result in the women being vulnerable to further abuse in their adult relationships and many of the women they work with are victims and survivors of domestic abuse of which coercive control and criminal exploitation is a common feature. In a recent analysis of New Dawn New Day's caseload 76% of 132 women accessing their service had been a victim of domestic abuse and 22% had been a victim of sexual violence. 95% presented with mental health difficulties and 54% with substance misuse issues.

In this presentation Sara Swire will talk about the work of New Dawn New Day and the "Just Women" project, which has been reducing women's offending in Leicester and Leicestershire since 2010. In particular she will speak about addressing women's mental health needs through the development of trauma-informed systems of care and also their innovative partnership with Leicestershire Police to offer a Women Specific Conditional Caution which aims to divert women from the criminal justice system at an early stage of their offending.