

Locking up women: Women, Drug Use and Alternatives to Prison

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Resumen

En los 80 y 90, las cárceles de Escocia, Gales e Inglaterra fueron seriamente afectadas por el creciente uso de drogas ilegales. Hoy, el consumo es particularmente grave en las cárceles de mujeres. Este estudio destaca los problemas de salud, violencia y seguridad que crea el uso de drogas en la cárcel, y examina recientes iniciativas adoptadas en Gran Bretaña. Las instituciones comunitarias se están adentrando en el sistema penitenciario para proporcionar programas de prevención. La introducción de estos servicios ha ido pareja con amplias medidas de seguridad que persiguen detener el flujo de drogas hacia los penales. Esta investigación examina críticamente los dilemas que enfrenta el sistema al intentar *cuidar* a los reclusos y mantener un estricto control. Mediante la experiencia de prisioneras y personal, se muestran las consecuencias de tales políticas. Las conclusiones incluyen las perspectivas de personas que atacan el problema en las cárceles y la comunidad.

Palabras claves: drogas, cárcel, mujeres en la cárcel, programas de tratamiento, comunidad.

Abstract

Throughout the 1980s the 1990s, the Prison Services of Scotland, England and Wales have been significantly affected by the problems presented by the increasing use of illegal drugs. The number of prisoners who are problematic drug users is particularly noticeable in women's prisons. This paper which is based on extensive primary research, will highlight the difficulties presented by drug use in prison (health care, violence, security) and will examine recent developments and initiatives which have been introduced in Scotland, England and Wales. Community-based drug agencies are now becoming increasingly drawn into the penal system to provide treatment programmes. The introduction of services for drug users in prison has been paralleled by extensive security measures aimed at halting the flow of drug into prisons. This research will critically examine the dilemmas

faced by the Prison Services in attempting to *care* for prisoners, while ensuring *control* remains prominent. By presenting accounts based on the experiences of women prisoners and prison staff, the paper will outline the consequences of such policies. It will conclude by examining the perspective which are brought to the analysis by drug workers based in prisons and the community.

Keywords: drugs, prison, prisoner women, treatment programs, community.

In 1998, women accounted for only 4.4% of the total prison population of England and Wales (White & Woodbridge, 1998:1). However, this figure represents a significant increase over previous years. In 1992 there were 1577 women in prison in England and Wales (White, Park and Butler, 1999). In February 2000, the number had risen to 3341 (Home Office, 2000). In Scotland, with a much smaller prison population, the average daily female prison population increased from 143 in 1991 to 193 in 1998 (Scottish Executive, 1999a). This increase has resulted in calls for a closer examination of sentencing patterns for women and some recognition of the need to consider alternative ways of dealing with women, in particular, women who commit frequent but minor offences often associated with illegal drug use.

As White and Woodbridge (1998) illustrate, between 1996 and 1997, there was a 21% increase in the number of women serving sentences for drug offences. The increased number of women in prison has frequently been associated with the number of women drug users in society. As a result, number of women drug users in prisons has risen dramatically, with estimates suggesting that between 80-90% of women prisoners were regular drug users prior to imprisonment (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 1994; HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland, 1996). This causes a number of problems within penal establishments as the use and supply of drugs continues 'inside' (Malloch, 1994 & 2000).

This paper will direct attention towards the attempts which have been made to reduce the female prison population with particular emphasis given to the initiatives being developed for women drug users. It will examine the need for legislative changes and initiatives to be contextualised by broader policies and practices that focus on the issues surrounding illegal drug use. Using contemporary, primary research, the paper will consider the availability and

accessibility of drug support services for women drug users and the development of custodial alternatives.¹

The differential effect of the law is a crucial factor in determining women's experiences of 'justice' (Allen, 1987; Smart, 1989; Taylor, 1993; Howe, 1994; Lloyd, 1995; Heidensohn, 1996). The criminal justice system and legal processes, despite claims for neutrality and equality, affect men and women differently and unequally, reflecting and reinforcing elements of male dominance rooted in patriarchal norms. As Heidensohn (1996: 291) notes, to understand the operation of procedural justice, it is necessary to recognise the structural contexts which operate and which locate women in an unequal position to men "even before they encounter the law".

Women's experiences of the criminal justice system need to be understood within the broader determining contexts which surround them. It is necessary to examine the interaction of class, race and gender as they affect individual and collective experiences (Scruton, 1987; Hudson, 1993). In England and Wales, the difficulties experienced by women prisoners are exacerbated for black women and foreign nationals, both of whom are disproportionately represented throughout the penal estate. Many foreign nationals are held for long periods of time in British prisons for drug trafficking offences (see Green, 1991) while black women account for up to one quarter of the population of some prisons in England.

Broader structural contexts influence the ways in which certain 'types' of women are judged as suitable candidates for punishment by professionals such as social workers, psychiatrists and the judiciary, often despite the relatively minor nature of their offending behaviour (Carlen, 1983, 1990, 1998; Kennedy, 1992; Worrall, 1995; Darwin, 1998). Issues such as non-conformity to stereotyped images of appropriate femininity, result in women being categorised in this way (Malloch, 1999 & 2000). As this paper will illustrate, this is particularly the case for women drug users.

Women in Prison – An Unsafe Environment?

Concerns about the safety of women in prison have been brought to public attention in recent years. The Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales

¹ The research on which this paper is based is derived from two research projects. One project focused on the experiences of women in prison and the other draws on the experiences of drug users and service providers in the community. Interviews were carried out with women drug users, prison staff (officers, medical staff, drugs workers) and drugs workers, outreach workers, probation and social services staff based in the community.

has made frequent criticism of many of the conditions in women's prisons and in 1995, the Inspectorate team walked out of HMP Holloway in protest at the rat and cockroach infested conditions they found there. Subsequent criticisms have been made of other prisons for women. In 1994 the Medical Officer of the Inspectorate of Prisons was called to examine conditions at HMP and YOI Styal following allegations that drug use was rampant in the prison. Such concerns have been particularly noticeable in Scotland following the deaths by suicide of eight young women in HM Institution Cornton Vale. Five of these deaths took place over a 15 month period and three of the women who died were under the age of 20.

In May 1998 the Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland produced their report Women Offenders – A Safer Way. This Report was commissioned by Henry McLeish MP, the Scottish Office Minister for Home Affairs, and was intended to “review, and make recommendations about, community disposals and the use of custody for women offenders in Scotland” (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland, 1998: iii).

The title of the Report is itself indicative of the recognition that for many women prisoners, custody is an “unsafe” environment. Like HM Inspectorate's Report (1997) for England and Wales, Women in Prison, which provided a thematic review of the imprisonment of women, both Reports conclude that many women are imprisoned for relatively minor offences. A significant number of women who come to the attention of the courts have experienced a range of social, economic and emotional problems that contribute to their ‘vulnerability’. As many official reports have illustrated, a significant number of women prisoners have been the victims/survivors of violence (HM Inspector of Prisons, 1997; Loucks, 1998; Prison Reform Trust, 2000). In recognition of this, the Social Work Services Group and Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (1998: 33.149) note that while few women engage in crime which involves violence, many women prisoners have been the victims of violent crime.

The offenders will have been infrequently reported, caught or prosecuted and it is possible that female victims may view criminal justice agencies as offering them little protection whilst sentencing them harshly for their own offences.²

² This echoes concerns expressed by a number of feminist theorists who have challenged the male domination of the criminal justice system and the resulting failure to deal effectively with crimes, particularly of violence, against women (Edwards, 1989; Smart, 1989; Kennedy, 1992; Heidensohn, 1996).

Issues such as drug use; emotional, physical and sexual abuse; and poverty have been identified as key factors which affect many women prisoners and which form the basis for much of the women's offending behaviour (HM Inspector of Prison, 1997; Loucks, 1998). This is reflected in the often minor and property related nature of female crime. A substantial number of women are imprisoned for offences such as theft (shoplifting) and fraud, or for the non-payment of fines, which they accrue from such offences. In a similar vein, many women are fined for soliciting for prostitution, which again may ultimately lead to a custodial sentence.³ In 1997, over 33% of women given an immediate custodial sentence were convicted of drugs offences (White and Woodbridge, 1998; Table 6).

The nature of offences committed by women differs significantly from male offending patterns and is indicative of the relatively minor risk which the majority of women offenders pose to the broader community. Indeed, the Summary Report noted: "Almost all women offenders could be *safely* punished in the community without any major risk of harm to the general population" (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland, 1998: Summary Report, *our emphasis*).

The 'safety' offered by the prison system is, however, an important issue. Deaths in custody are not uncommon. Both the male and female penal systems have been faced with the death of prisoners, and the recurrent incidences of attempted suicide and self-harm. However, the high incidence of deaths at HM Institution Cornton Vale over a three year period caused the Scottish authorities to examine the operation of this prison and the broader issues surrounding the imprisonment of women.⁴ Public pressure was soon brought to bear on the authorities to take action, particularly given the ages of the young women who died, and the fact that many of the women had not been convicted of any offence.

The concerns raised by the deaths in Cornton Vale prison generated broader questions concerning the custody of women. Many women prisoners had committed relatively minor offences and a significant number of women were

³ Up to 52% of female prison sentenced admissions in Scotland are for fine default. This reflects the high incidence of fines as a disposal for women offenders. In 1995, 70% of women appearing in Court in Scotland were fined (Social Work Services Group and Prisons Inspectorate, 1998: 17.73).

⁴ The recent 'spate' of deaths in prisons in Scotland has caused increased public concern. Following several deaths in HMPs Barlinnie and Greenock, a major inquiry was launched to focus specifically on the three institutions (Sunday Mail, 5 July 1998; The Scotsman, 8 July 1998; The Herald, 10 July 1998; Scotland on Sunday, 12 July 1998; The Observer, 19 July 1998).

identified as regular drug users (Loucks, 1998). Women had experienced high levels of abuse and attempts at suicide or actual self-harm were not uncommon. It was clear that prison should provide some level of 'care' for women prisoners who formed a relatively 'vulnerable' group, particularly given the physical and emotional effects of drug withdrawal.

The government and prison authorities in Scotland, England and Wales have attempted to respond to the problems presented by drugs and drug users in custody through the development of internal regimes and resources intended to support drug users through the duration of their sentence (Scottish Prison Service, 1994; HM Prison Service, 1991, 1995 & 1998). Attempts have been made to tackle both the supply and demand features of drug use in custody and the problems that are manifested as a direct result of the presence of illegal substances in prison. This includes health care issues, particularly those surrounding the shared use of injecting equipment, bullying and 'taxing'. As the Prison Service has recognised, these are problems which will have repercussions beyond the prison walls. They are manifested through infections such as Hepatitis and HIV which can be transmitted to communities, and are evident in the pressures put on the families of prisoners to transport drugs into prisons or to pay off drug debts incurred therein.

While resources have been developed to provide counselling and 'treatment' packages in many institutions, this has been underlined by stringent measures intended to enhance security and control within the prison environment (Trace, 1990; ISDD, 1995). This has led to the increased use of closed visits, more developed perimeter security, restrictions on home leave and community placements for prisoners. The introduction of policies which resulted in women being shackled to beds and/or prison officers while receiving medical treatment or giving birth resulted in serious criticisms of the impact of security measures and assessment of 'risks' applied to women prisoners. In particular, the introduction of Mandatory Drugs Testing (MDT) –at a significant cost to the Prison Services (Home Office, 1995a)– is indicative of the prioritisation and allocation of resources towards enhanced deterrence and punitive measures (although with relatively limited success).⁵

⁵ Edgar and O'Donnell (1998) indicate that 48% of prisoners in their study who reported using drugs in custody at some time stated that MDT had not led to any change in their drug use in custody. Furthermore, they suggested that MDT had led to a rise in tension between staff and prisoners. 57% of prisoners interviewed believed that MDT was likely to encourage prisoners to change from cannabis use to heroin which is less easily detected by tests. Despite the questionable efficacy of MDT, the costs involved are considerable. In 1997, 159,000 days were added to prisoners sentences as a direct result of MDT. The estimated additional running costs which this is likely to accrue is approximately 7 million pounds (Edgar & O'Donnell, 1998: 4).

The disruption caused by imprisonment can have wide-ranging consequences. Many women have sole responsibility for dependent children who may end up in the 'care' of the local authorities. Furthermore, women may lose their accommodation while in prison⁶ (see Carlen, 1990). Nevertheless, women continue to be sent to prison in increasing numbers and at a substantial cost to the state. Despite the introduction of resources into the prison environment, there has been some degree of recognition among the authorities that a broader perspective has to be developed in relation to the imprisonment of women.

Developing Alternatives

A variety of directions need to be considered in the development of services which provide alternatives to custody. Sir Clive Fairweather, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, has highlighted the need for bail hostels for women to reduce the high numbers of women being held in custody on remand. He stated:

We suspect that the less dangerous nature of the majority of offences committed by women could offer an opportunity to reduce the number of those being held in inappropriate and expensive prison conditions. (The Scotsman, 4 Sep 1996)

A range of official reports aimed at examining ways of reducing the extent of drug use in society have also recommended that alternatives to custody are developed and their use expanded for drug users/drug using offenders (ACMD, 1998, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1996; Ministerial Drugs Task Force, 1994; Scottish Affairs Committee, 1994). Such reports also recognised the need to provide specific services for women drug users which were 'sensitive' to the needs of women. While these recommendations have never been fully implemented, their significance has been upheld in subsequent Reports (Home Office, 1995b; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 1997; Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland, 1998; Scottish Executive, 1999b; Prison Reform Trust, 2000).

This concern reflects the recognition that imprisonment may be avoidable for a significant number of women, particularly those held on remand for trial or background reports, who may not even go on to receive a custodial sentence.

⁶ Many women who subsequently receive prison sentences have no or inadequate accommodation. In some localities, individuals convicted of drug offences will not be considered for local authority housing as part of ongoing attempts to deal with 'anti-social' tenants. This can impact on women in a variety of ways.

The White Paper Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain (Home Office, 1998) praises the work of Bail Support Schemes in diverting drug using offenders from custodial sentences. The failure to provide non-custodial facilities for women held on remand is particularly problematic, however. In 1997, the number of women remanded in custody increased by 12% (White and Woodbridge, 1998: 4). While such schemes are being advocated in official documents, agencies report a significant under-representation of women being referred from courts and local remand centres.

The need to develop increased services for drug users in the community has been an ongoing concern for many involved both in the criminal justice and welfare services. It is a crucial factor in the development of services aimed at providing sentencers with appropriate alternatives to or diversions from custody. However, with the changing political climate and continued moves to strengthen and maintain 'law and order', greater emphasis is now being given to the need to 'tighten-up' non-custodial disposals and their requirements.

Issues around community safety and the emphasis given to assessing the 'dangerousness' of particular individuals and possible 'risks' they may present to others has become an inherent part of the assessment procedures of various state agencies (Castel, 1991; Walker, 1996; Pratt, 1997). This has become of particular relevance in the development of measures designed to respond to drug users. Attempts to develop services for drug users have generally oscillated between 'treatment' programmes and law enforcement measures, the so-called 'British system' of policing and prescribing (McGregor & Ettore, 1987; McGregor, 1989; Whyne & Bean, 1991).

However, throughout the 1980s there was evidence of a bifurcation of policies which effectively streamed drug users who had come into contact with the criminal justice system into categories of 'seriousness' and/or 'risk' (Collison, 1993 & 1994). This was interlinked with growing public concerns around the increased use of drugs in local communities. Images of the culpable 'dealer' were offset against the victimised 'addict', despite the reality that the two frequently overlap. Such concepts have continued to influence the development of drug policies. Indeed, the growing presentation of the 'dangers' of drugs has led to increased attention being given to drug use and drug users. Such concerns have generally resulted in the prioritisation of law-enforcement policies (Dorn & South, 1990 & 1991; Dorn, South & Murji, 1992; Home Office, 1995b, 1998). However, as the Prison Reform Trust have stated: "The number of women prisoners who actually pose a grave danger to the general public can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand" (Social Work Services Group and Prisons Inspectorate for Scotland, 1998: Summary Report).

The problematic association of drug use and crime, where the two are presented as inevitably correlated, and calls for more punitive approaches to offenders, will undoubtedly impact on attempts to utilise custodial alternatives to reduce the prison population. Assessments of 'dangerousness' and 'risk' are significantly influenced by perceptions of drug users when community disposals are being considered. Until recently, male and female offenders who were regular drug users were excluded from disposals such as Community Service or the availability of alternative disposals were not considered in their entirety. This situation was often exacerbated for women. However, with the extension of community disposals to include drug using offenders, a number of additional concerns around 'safety' have been voiced. A worker for Offender Services (Lothian Region) noted during an interview that the issue of 'risk' can significantly affect the supervision of individuals on community disposals, such as Community Service, in various ways:

Our Community Service schemes have probably for 10 years now, had to accommodate people who we would previously have been less prepared to take and supervise on orders. This raises the issue of risk assessment and risk management to ourselves as supervisors and to members of the public. And people who are on a methadone prescription a couple of time a week can be very, very difficult to manage.⁷

Despite the increased use of probation and community service, although the latter remains under-resourced and under-utilised for women offenders (Mclvor, 1998), this has had a negligible effect on the numbers of women being sent to prison.⁸ It could be argued that this is largely due to the 'net-widening' effect of community tariffs, resulting in women being placed on probation or community service in situations where a lower tariff disposal may have been appropriate. Heddermand and Dowds (1997) suggest that this shift to higher tariff disposals in England and Wales is a result of the reluctance of sentencers to fine women.

While community service is intended to operate as a direct alternative to custody, this is not always the case in practice and it is a disposal which is frequently omitted from sentencing recommendations for women. This can sometimes be due to the perceived child-care responsibilities of the women, or due to a lack of appropriate workplaces (Mclvor, 1998). An examination of

⁷ Personal interview, July 1996

⁸ In Scotland, fewer than 2% of women offenders are sentenced to Community Service (Social Work Services Group and Prisons Inspectorate, 1998; 19.84). This compares with 4% who receive a custodial sentence (ibid, Annex 2).

sentencing reports leads Dickie (1995) to conclude that women are at greater risk of custody if community service is not recommended. However, the high incidence of drug use among women offenders may be an additional factor which influences sentencers decisions, leading to the assumption that community disposals are inappropriate or unworkable.

A women's use of drugs may also affect the recommendations made by other agencies such as social workers and probation officers. Practitioners often focus on the individual characteristics of women (ability to 'cope', child-care issues) rather than on broader contexts such as economic provisions (Brophy & Smart, 1985; Buchanan et al., 1991; Worrall, 1995). A study carried out in Merseyside (quoted in Social Work Service Group and Prisons Inspectorate for Scotland, 1998: 29.131) indicated that women with drug problems were more likely to have their cases adjourned for court reports (Social Inquiry/Pre-Sentence Reports). This process often resulted in women being 'up-tariffed'. A worker located in Offender Services (Lothian Region) pointed out:

*Women in the main tend to get bumped up the tariff system much quicker. It seems the attitude is that if women commit crime, they really should know better, because they are more **responsible** people. The attitude is that if they are prosecuted they really deserve it, they are more scheming etc.*

This is still all there although women make up a very small proportion of recorded crime.⁹

Without the availability of credible community based treatments for drug using offenders the courts will have little alternative but to continue the trend of increased custodial sentencing particularly for women who have less community based options than men. While the majority of offences committed by women may not warrant any significant level of threat to public safety, they continue to be assessed on the same basis as male offenders and will almost certainly have to fit into schemes designed to cater for men. Few identifiably distinct resources exist for women, despite attempts by workers in the field and women's organisations to highlight the needs for such services. The lack of woman-oriented resources has been particularly noticeable in the statutory sector.

The Social Work Services Group and Prisons Inspectorate for Scotland Report (1998: 34.156) found that none of the local authorities which participated in their research had a defined strategy for women offenders, nor were there any crimi-

⁹ Personal interview, July 1996

nal justice hostels specifically for women. The allocation of funding resources in this field clearly impacts significantly on women. This is also true of residential rehabilitation services which may/may not operate as custodial alternatives. Restrictions in funding will doubtless affect the availability of services being offered to the courts. Women are often restricted from these resources for more general reasons: few residential rehabilitation services exist specifically for women; few will take women with dependent children; local authorities are sometimes reluctant to provide the financial resources for such services. The availability of appropriate services can be crucial when sentencing decisions are taken. A drug worker noted: *"If a woman is in rehab or intends going into rehab, the Sheriff will tend to be sympathetic to this"*. However, as another worker noted of their locality:

There is a need for single sex rehabs for women. In Glasgow, access to detox/prescribing services is severely limited and women are seldom given priority. There is much room for improvement. Other services which could be greatly improved would be accomodation for homeless women drug users, counselling services (not directly drug-related) which are confidential and accessible.¹⁰

A representative from Scottish Drugs Forum pointed out:

There is much difficulty in developing time and space to develop services for women. This is definitely not something that is coming from above. It is social workers on the ground who are saying 'we're not meeting the needs of these women.' We need a flexible and responsive service, which takes account of the fact that women have children and have difficulty in keeping appointments in the office.¹¹

These omissions in resource allocation are regularly attributed to a lack of need for services, as so few offenders are women, or due simply to restricted resource allocation. This, however, can have profound consequences for women offenders in general, and women drug users in particular. Attempting to treat men and women in the same way within the criminal justice system means that in reality, fewer choices and opportunities are made available to women.

There is little attempt to examine the experiences of women drug users as set against the every day reality of women's lives. Sexism remains prevalent

¹⁰ Questionnaire responses, August 1997

¹¹ Personal Interview, July 1996

throughout society and characterises many personal relationships. The abuse perpetrated against women drug users and those involved in the drugs economy, occurs much more frequently than that experienced by their male counterparts. It is also far more wide-ranging than policy documents allow for.

Women's exposure to a low income often enforces economic dependence on men. This can itself lead women into conflict with the law. Beth, respondent in this study, was a 22 year old black woman serving a six year prison sentence having been convicted of drug importation, though not a drug user herself. Beth was carrying the drugs on behalf of her boyfriend, the father of her children and a known drug dealer. Her lengthy sentence has resulted in separation from her daughter, and meant that she gave birth to her second child whilst in custody. Her baby will also be separated from her at the age of eighteen months. Within the present climate, the law is expected to 'come down hard' on those profiting from illegal drugs.¹²

Jackie, a 34 year old, black mother of three, has recently been sentenced to six years for assault. Jackie had a heavy crack cocaine addiction at the time of the assaults, which were perpetrated on potential male customers while she was working as a prostitute. Her children had been placed in the care of her mother by Social Services and her expectant baby was placed on the Child Protection Register prior to her appearance in court. Despite the recommendations by drug professional that Jackie be given a non-custodial sentence whilst resident at a hotel for women drug users and their children, she received a six year custodial sentence. Her baby, currently with her, will be sent to live with a relative at the age of 18 months. Jackie's violence and previous offending behaviour are clearly related to her drug use but despite her stated desire to become drug free and work towards getting her children back and her past requests for help, she feels that she has been denied the opportunity to address her problems in any kind of supportive environment: "*I never ever had a chance, just jail, jail all the time.*"¹³

Given the racism of the courts (Hood, 1992) and the gender-based stereotypes that they often deal in (Carlen, 1990; Worrall, 1990), Jackie, being black, a 'bad mother' and occasional prostitute is very likely to be placed in the 'undeserving' category before her offence is even considered.

¹² Beth has also lost her Local Authority housing as a result of her drugs conviction.

¹³ Personal interview with Tara 9/7/98

As one drugs worker noted:

Many male judges do not have any understanding of the emotional and practical issues women have to deal with. Society expects women to be passive, caring, mothering. If women are found to be using drugs, sex working or shoplifting, it is seen to be horrific because it doesn't fit expectations.¹⁴

A worker from Scottish Drugs Forum noted the significance of relationships in influencing sentencers decisions:

It's much more likely to be the case that if a woman appears as a drug user the sentencer will be looking for the man behind her, to see who has corrupted her, been supplying her, led her down the offending path. She may sometimes be told to stay away from a particular man. Even if she reduces her drug use but has a reconciliation, she will receive a harsher sentence. This doesn't apply to men. They (sentencers) see men as being masters of their own destiny, and women aren't.¹⁵

Concluding points

Academics, policy-makers and politicians have, to varying extents, conceded that prison does not address the problems experienced by women drug users. Current rhetoric advocates the need to look beyond notions of punishment and control to deal with women who come into contact with the criminal justice system. Financial support is required to develop community services which are effective and workable, but the political will to implement change is paramount. At present, alternatives are not working as such but instead are expanding the network of supervision and control by drawing in women whose offending behaviour doesn't warrant a custodial sentence. The development of resources needs to address the exclusionary nature of many initiatives and to take account of the practical realities of women's lives. The present political climate gives little hope for a halt to the increasing numbers of citizens who are being sent to prison. It is of paramount importance that meaningful steps are taken to prevent the growing number of women being imprisoned.

¹⁴ Personal interview, July 1996

¹⁵ Personal interview, July 1996

