

Re-Unite South London;



Meeting the Needs of Mothers
Leaving Prison



Housing for Women



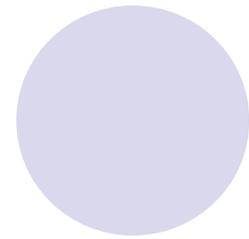
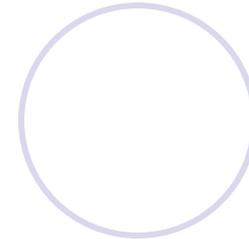
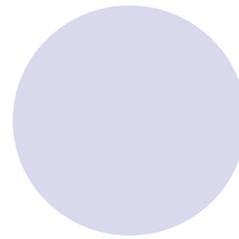
Re-Unit
SOUTH LONDON

Introductions and welcome

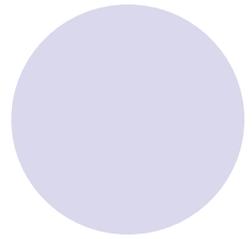
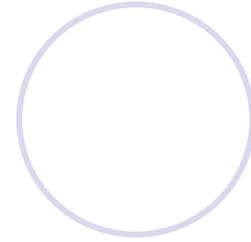
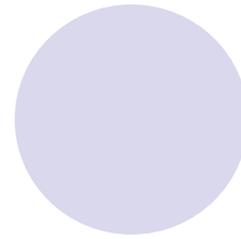
Fiona Mactaggart MP

Chair

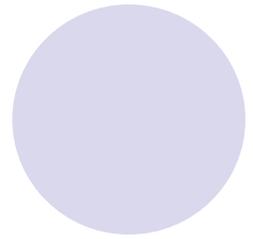
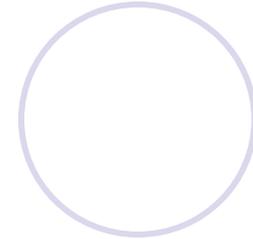
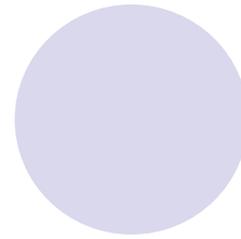
Commonweal Housing



- A registered charity – registered in 2006
- Creating housing and support projects for occupiers enduring social injustice in order to demonstrate how these social injustices can be resolved.
- We provide the housing – bespoke acquisitions.
- Since 2007, we have allocated around £3½million for such projects.



- We bring rigour and review
- We also commission independent external evaluation of projects to ensure we capture all relevant learning and to establish the role model principles to enable future campaigning for replication.
- Continuous challenge of the findings to really identify the key features of the model



- Re-Unite – our flagship project to date
- Positive initial evaluation
- Rigorous testing and review
- Promotion of the initial concept
- Replication of the approach
- Further testing to verify the outcomes
- This seminar is the start of that next stage
- Hearing the views of others, challenging what needs to happen next and identifying the future role a Re-Unite model can play



Housing for Women



Re-Unite
SOUTH LONDON

The context of women in the criminal justice system

Juliet Lyon CBE
Director

Prison Reform Trust



Evaluation of the Re-Unite project: The early development phase

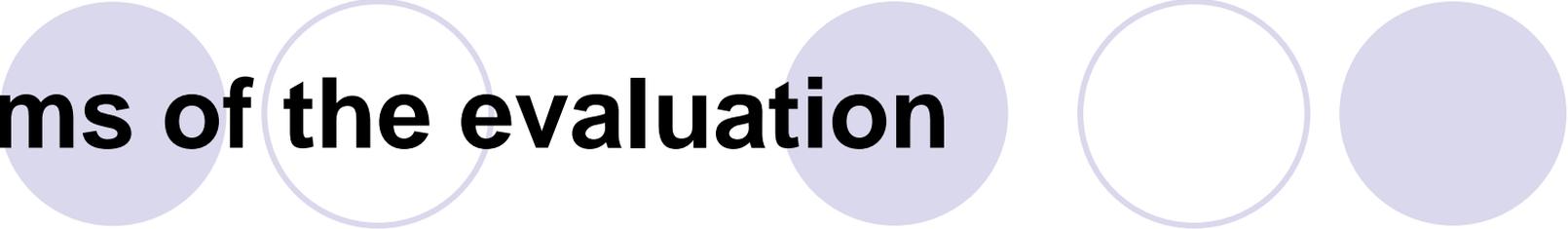


Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe, University of Cambridge
Dr Gilly Sharpe, University of Sheffield

20th September, 2010

Context of Re-Unite

- *Policy initiatives:*
 - Corston report
 - Aftercare?
 - Housing - 'Catch 22'
- *Resettlement needs of women prisoners:*
 - Multiple and complex needs, including housing, mental health, financial problems, DV victimisation, substance misuse, education/training/employment
 - Low risk but high need
- *Effects of maternal imprisonment on children:*
 - Domestic upheaval
 - Stigma of maternal imprisonment
 - Impaired health and development - increased risk of mental health problems, offending, substance misuse, school failure and unemployment



Aims of the evaluation

1. Longitudinal (2-year) evaluation of the benefit of the project for mothers;
2. Identify benefits for the child;
3. Measure any benefits to society (costs and savings);
4. Identify lessons for future housing providers;
5. Contribute information to support change in public policy;
6. Establish a 'blueprint' for the viable replication of the Re-Unite project.

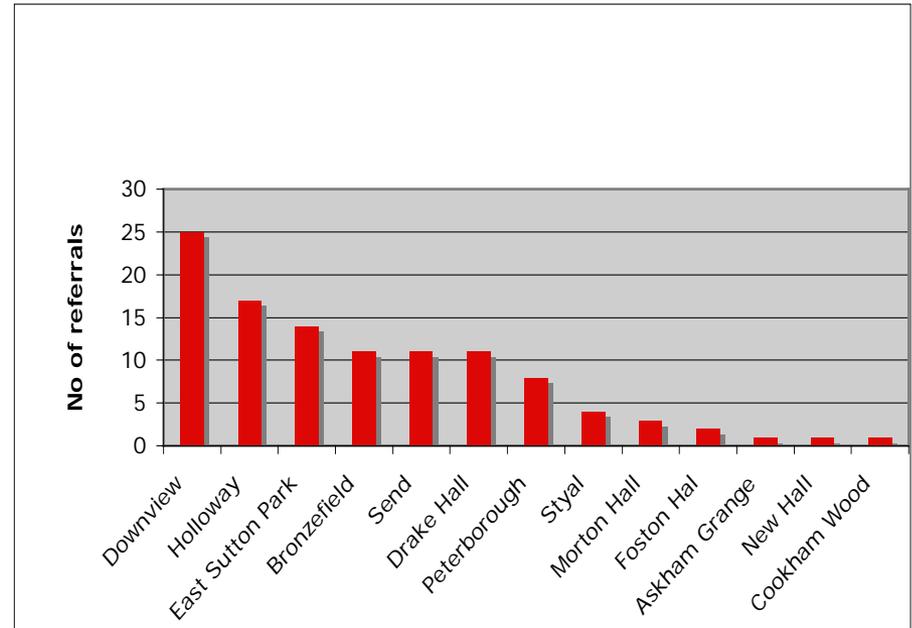
Evaluation process



1. Tracking service user mothers and children over 2 years and collecting data about them (from WIP case files);
2. Interviewing the women at regular (3-monthly) intervals;
3. Describing the lives of the women and their children, as well as different parties' (service users, children, Re-Unite key workers, probation officers) perceptions of the impact of the project;
4. Discussions with other interested parties and stakeholders;
5. Evaluation of different partners' activities with Re-Unite service users (levels of contact, external referrals, etc);
6. Comparisons with similar service providers and consideration of alternative models of provision.

Referrals to Re-Unite

- 109 referrals April 2007 - November 2008
- Referral sources:
 - Postcards (n=29)
 - Referrals by professionals (n=28)
 - Letters from prisoners (n=23)
 - Prison housing sources (n=11)
 - Other sources, inc. WIP (n=16)
 - Probation officers (n=2)



Referral sources (prisons), Apr 2007-Nov 2008

Service user demographics

- 11 mothers with 19 dependent children (+3 non-dependent children)
- Mean age = 30 yrs (ranged from 23-36 yrs);
- Ethnically diverse: 5 black British, 4 white British, one mixed British; 1 British/E. European
- Each woman had 1-3 dependent children, aged between 11 months and 14 years (mean age = 7.5 years)
- Children ethnically diverse ethnicity: 7 black, 7 white, 5 mixed heritage
- Majority (14/18) of dependent children lived with grandparents while mother in prison

Service users' backgrounds

- Mean time mothers spent in custody = 2 years
- 7 women serving first custodial sentence; 3 second sentence; one 3rd sentence.
- Criminal histories
 - Supplying/importing drugs - 5; Fraud/theft - 3; Manslaughter - 1
 - Possession of a firearm - 1; Robbery - 1 (remand only)
- Mental health
 - *All* service users had experienced DV
 - *Most* suffered from depression
 - Several abused as children
- Substance misuse
 - Two service users long-term crack/heroin users
 - No evidence of alcohol dependency

Service users' perspectives

- Positive views of - and relief and gratitude for - Re-Unite accommodation, size, furnishings and local amenities:
 - “If it weren't for them [Re-Unite]., think to myself, where would I be?”
 - “This [Re-Unite] is like a major breakthrough for me. It's one positive thing about coming out of prison.”
 - “The Re-Unite programme has given me my life back, really...helped me to get stable.”
 - “There ought to be more projects like this, to give women a lift. There is so much discrimination when you've got a record...So this project is good because it gives a bit of stability.”

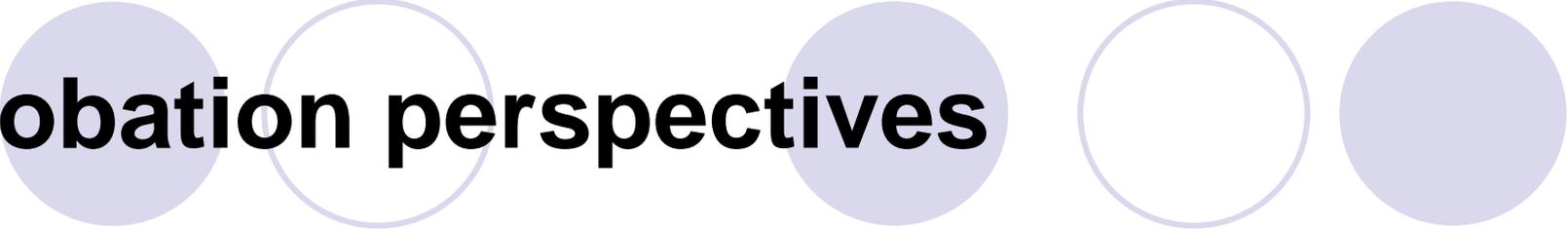
Service users' perspectives

- *Professional support:*
 - Appreciated both moral and practical support provided by Re-Unite key worker:
 - “I would contact them before any of my family.” (SU1)
 - “It’s not like it’s heavy duty.” (SU2)
 - Stark contrast with experiences of probation supervision.
 - Several women felt ‘let down’ by changes of key workers: “You have to begin again with each person.” (SU8)
- *Peer support:*
 - Coffee mornings - preferred local S. London location
 - ‘Clustering’ of Re-Unite properties beneficial for some families
- *Financial support:*
 - Grants from HfW and training courses/crèche funded by WIP
 - Assistance from key workers with applying for grants from other sources

The children's perspectives

- Six children interviewed - all very positive about size of new home, garden and Re-Unite outings during school holidays
- Younger children more positive about group activities
- Challenges of providing suitable activities for children aged 0-teenage
- Some children less positive about having to re-locate and move schools.
- Difficulty applying for a school place given uncertainty about where family will be living in near future

Probation perspectives

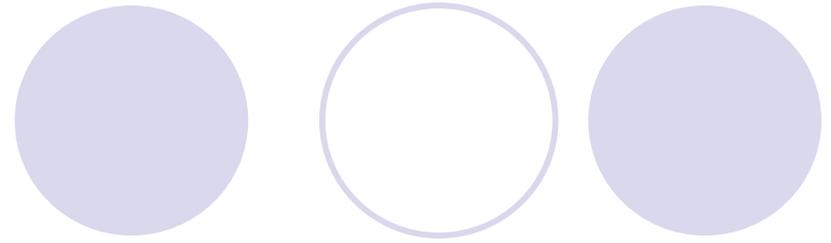


- Seven offender managers interviewed
- Variable/limited knowledge about Re-Unite despite WIP's attempts to convey information to probation staff
- However, very positive views of Re-Unite: provision of housing seen as important aid to resettlement; key work supporter deemed valuable
- Re-Unite support may have made offender managers' work 'easier' - e.g. by undertaking home visits, providing moral support and practical assistance
- NB. Very low number of referrals from Probation

Moving on

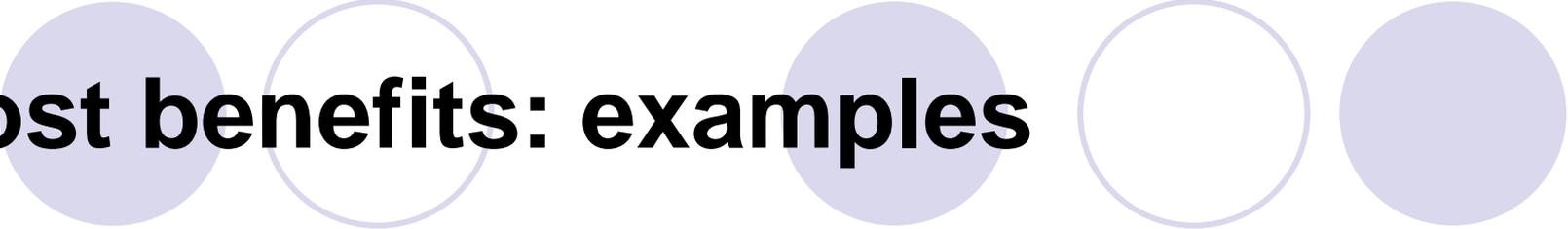
- Service users' initial relief and joy of being housed and supported later gave way (after approx. 1 yr) to anxiety re. moving on - increasing acknowledgement of impermanence of Re-Unite property:
 - “The more I stay in the house, the more it’s my home, and then I don’t wanna go.”
 - “I just want somewhere we can settle and decorate and make it into a home.”
 - “I feel like I’m in limbo. I feel like other women who I was in prison with...have got permanent accommodation now.”
- Fear that key work support would terminate on moving: “To take [the support] away will be like taking a lifeline away and I’ll probably just go and plummet.”
- Many women reported feeling ready to move on (but wanting to retain key work support) after one year.
- Importance of stability in domicile and professional support for school-aged children and women with a history of DV.

What worked well

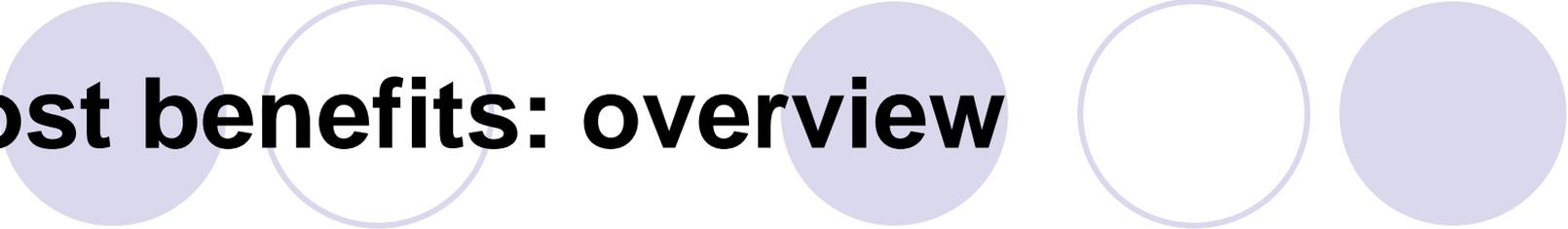


- The huge importance of the concept of housing and support combined
- The right type of housing
- Case studies - distance travelled by individual women
- Fostering empowerment
- Cost-benefit analysis: Running costs for 2 years personal support per service user - £14,825 (more expensive than some other projects - but for good reason)

Cost benefits: examples



- The estimated average financial saving per service user through a reduction in offending = £279,248 (but note the range of offences committed by the service users)
- The mean cost saving per user with respect to emergency housing estimated at £10,213
- The mean cost saving per user with respect to unemployment estimated at £5,208
- Estimated reduction in cost of mental health services required - over 10 years - £2,125
- Estimated cost saving per service user for treating substance abuse over a 10 year period - £1,810
- Estimated cost saving per service user for LA child care + support from SS - £6,899
- Estimated reduction in cost of children being 'NEET' at age 16 - £2,886



Cost benefits: overview

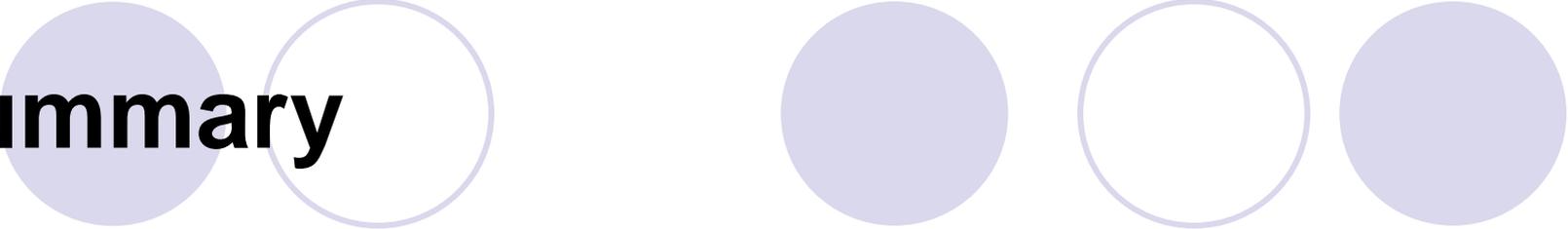
- Total savings per user (including any re-offending) over 10 years - £315,394
- Total savings per user (excluding any re-offending) over 10 years £36,146 (because of the nature of the original offending)
- **A more realistic approach:** taking a **third** of the net financial benefit as a result of being involved in Re-Unite - would be £84,084 per user over 2 years or £93,646 over 10 years
- Financial benefits alongside social benefits



What worked less well

- The flow of referrals (+ and -)
- Positive perspectives from Probation but low engagement (+ and -)
- Continuity of support & staff changes (+ and -)
- Shared vision but different lens? (+ and -)

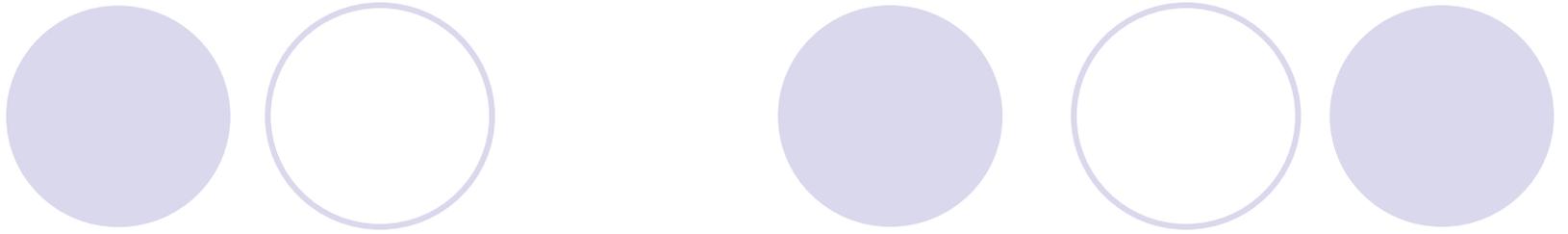
Summary



- Benefits to service users
- Benefits to children
- Benefits to society
- Cost savings in the long term

Recommendations/issues for discussion

- Referral routes - clarify & simplify (with external perspectives)
- 'Settling down': should the project be for two years or less?
- Support after moving on
- Involvement of Probation and other agencies
- Recognition of the children (older & younger children)
- Monitoring/recording templates
- Revisit cost benefit data in light of follow up after two years (re convictions etc)
- Clustering of houses?
- The relationship between service partners
- Linking housing and support
- Service users' forum



Re-Unite

An idea whose time has come...





Housing for Women



Re-Unite South London

Liz Clarson
Chief Executive
Housing for Women



Re-Unite
SOUTH LONDON

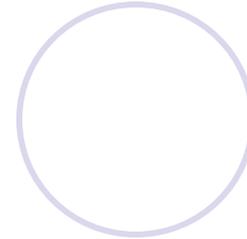
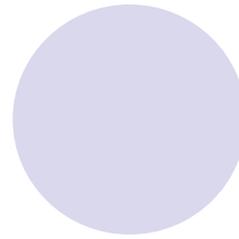
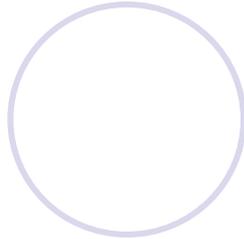
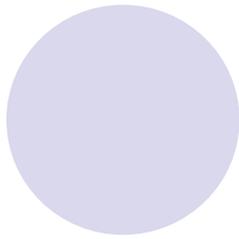


A fresh start for mothers and children

Objectives



- To provide stable accommodation as foundation for effective resettlement
- To overcome the 'catch 22' situation:
no children – no eligibility for family accommodation
no suitable accommodation – no re-uniting with children
- Individual, tailored support to help women and their families with resettlement



“If you don’t have a home, how do you get your children back?”

I wouldn’t have got residency for the children from the court if I didn’t have Re-Unite”

- Kathleen

The original project

- Commonwealth provided 11 family properties in South East London
- These were leased to Housing for Women, who provided housing management, maintenance services and helped women find permanent homes
- Women In Prison provided support services
- Women were in programme for up to two years



Developing the project



- Housing for Women now provides support services in-house
- Evaluation report on two first years has led to useful learning points
- Programme developed for mothers who needed longer lead-in before they could be reunited with their children

Criteria

- Serving or remand prisoners – homeless on release
- Dependent children and realistic change of being re-united
- Women willing to engage with the support programme
- Local connection to the local authorities where properties situated OR
- Have experienced domestic violence and want to re-locate to SE London



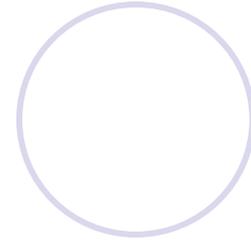
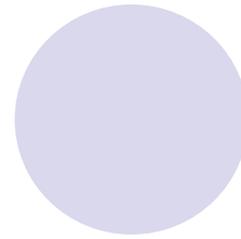
Key features



- Early in-reach contact with the women and pre-release liaison
- Through the gate service
- Individual, tailored support for women
- Family treated as an entity
- User involvement and feedback
- Help in finding permanent homes
- Move-on support but aim for independence

Preparation for independence

Addressing the issues



- Substance misuse
- Offending behaviour
- Tenancy sustainment
- Money management
- Education, training and employment
- Relationships
- Independence and self-esteem
- Physical and mental health
- Parenting skills
- Healthy family life



The challenges



- Finding permanent move-on accommodation for women and their families in London is tough
- Work on securing this needs to start as soon as they join Re-Unite
- Less disruptive to families to have a shorter programme but with continuing support in move-on accommodation
- Meeting the needs of the children to be further developed
- Prison in-reach more difficult now with cut backs
- Project needs to be even more cost effective in current economic climate

Is this a useful model?



- Replication being tested with a women's centre providing the support and a local housing association providing accommodation
- Hope to continue the evaluation to test the concept

Questions and discussion

