

Working with women in the CJS



A YSS Practitioner's View.....

Who are we..



YSS is a local charity providing community based support services for children, young people, adults and families who are vulnerable, have complex needs and who face difficult life challenges.

One of our specialist areas is working with women in the Criminal Justice System

What experience do YSS have working with women?

- Since 2003, YSS has provided one to one practical support and assistance to women in the CJS across Worcestershire, Shropshire, Telford, Herefordshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire through a variety of different funding streams.
- We are currently funded through the WWMM CRC to provide an Enhanced Support Service (ESS) to women referred in by their Offender Managers

Practically.....how do we do this?

One to one community based appointments

Home Visits – sometimes

Telephone Contact

Text contact

Transport

Accompanying to meetings and appointments

Specialist female keyworkers

Specialist volunteer mentors

Emotionally....how do we do this?

- Emotional Intelligence – women often need a more empathetic and sensitive approach.
- When they begin to trust you, they open up and a more effective professional relationship starts to develop
- Don't take the first problem they mention as being the only/main problem

Non-Judgemental Approach

- Feedback from women we have worked with is that they often feel “judged” by agencies, which leads them to be less honest about the reality of their situation.
- With YSS they feel unconditionally listened to and supported – we give them “time”.

What's Unique about working with Women?

- Women often emotionally 'bring' their families to their sessions. They see their problems are related to their families and they do not separate the two. Men are different in this and seem to be able to compartmentalise the different areas of their lives. Women have a lot of guilt associated with their Parenting skills or perceived lack of them
- Control issues from males in their lives, including physical, emotional and mental DV. There are often deep rooted emotional problems from previous relationships with either family members or partners.

The Reality is.....

- One female with severe anxiety YSS supported her to attend the CRC women's group; she now attends alone and is a valued member of the group.
- YSS also supported her to go shopping after one of the women's groups; this was the first time she had been to a shop in town for 6 months due to her anxiety.

The Reality is.....

- YSS often support women referred to them with issues related to their interaction with social services. YSS are there to support them through this difficult process; explaining the processes, how it works and what happens next. Unfortunately our experience has shown that such processes are not clearly explained to the women and causes them great anxiety and concern.
- The women perceive that the other agencies are just 'reporting' on them.

Never forget we are working with real people.....

- “I remember one young woman who had been in prison who we helped gain supervised access to her son. She had had him in prison and he was taken from her immediately. When she was allowed more access, she became so much more confident and worked hard to get the other things she needed like accommodation and more education. She said our support at that time, including telephone contacts, really helped her get through the darker days. We were the one stable service that was there (who listened and always kept in touch) to see the process through from start to finish.” Yss keyworker

And finally.....

- Thank you for everything I really appreciate it. I've felt you're someone I have always been able to open up to and I'm not like that with many people. Hope to see you again in future. Thank you 😊' (We did say we hoped in the nicest way we dint see her again!)
- J said: "They've given me so much support, providing me with contacts that have helped me to start volunteering. If I didn't have YSS I would just be sitting at home, getting into trouble."

A said: "The staff and volunteers are very supportive, encouraging, non-judgemental, referring me to appropriate services. I get on with the other service users and my experience has been very enjoyable. I'm now working in their café!"





**For more information about the
work YSS do, please contact**

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