COMPASSIONATE JUSTICE

FINDINGS FROM A PARTICIPATORY ARTS TRAINING PROJECT WITH STAFF WORKING WITH WOMEN ACROSS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Developed and delivered by
CLEAN BREAK & WOMEN/THEATRE/JUSTICE



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Report by

Dr Deborah Dean, Industrial Relations Research Unit,
Warwick Business School, University of Warwick.

Prof Caoimhe McAvinchey, School of the Arts,
Queen Mary University of London.

Women/Theatre Justice

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Cover

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Grateful thanks to everyone who participated in, and shared reflections on, this new training devised specifically for people working in the criminal justice system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Clean Break is a women-only theatre company founded in 1979, which grew out of a prisoner-led drama workshop at HMP Askham Grange. It is now a renowned theatre, education and advocacy organisation. *Criminalised Women: Changing the Story* is a collaboration between Clean Break and an interdisciplinary research team of academics, Women/Theatre/Justice, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Warwick Business School.

In 2025 Clean Break delivered nine participatory arts workshops to 101 people working with criminalised women in England. Participants came from prisons, probation, policing, voluntary sector services, the magistracy and the judiciary. Each workshop was facilitated by a Clean Break staff member and a Clean Break Member artist with lived experience of the criminal justice system. The workshops centred on consideration of original artworks and a Clean Break film, engaging staff in reflective dialogue and applied theatre exercises, prompting open questions about the lives of criminalised women, the systems that process them, and the daily work of the people employed within those systems.

In 2026, the Women's Justice Board and the Prison Reform Trust produced reports with recommendations for reducing women's imprisonment and outlining reasons why, despite government commitment, progress has been limited. The reports call for a whole system approach which is responsive to the needs of women. Training is one of the key elements of this. The Clean Break workshop programme, *Criminalised Women: Changing the Story*, speaks to the ambition and pragmatic recommendations both reports outline: it is gender-specific, trauma-informed, co-delivered by women with lived experience and engages staff working across the criminal justice system.

The academic team observed the workshops, analysed pre- and post-session questionnaires, and carried out interviews with participants one-two months after the workshops. The result is a report that gives a reader access to the workshop and participants' reflections of their learning through it. It lets us hear the voices of those who make the criminal justice system work on a daily basis, providing evidence that Clean Break's unique approach of participatory arts training can contribute to policy aims through:

1. improved outcomes for individual women.
2. supporting workers and working practices across the criminal justice system.
3. contributing to strategic aims of reducing imprisonment for women and, in turn, the ripple effects on families and society.

FINDINGS

- **The criminal justice system is highly fragmented, with many staff unaware of what happens to women before and after their time with them**. Only women themselves experience the system as a whole. This training revealed and addressed gaps in staff knowledge that the structures and processes of the criminal justice system produce. What the workshop and artistic resources supplied was not only information but frames through which one person in one part of the system could better understand the processes in another. And, in turn, better understand the experiences of women who are being processed within it and how each person she is in contact with shapes these experiences.

- **Much of the work of justice happens in the informal spaces between formal structures.** The training brought to light different areas within the system where it has been possible to create environments and practices that respond to criminalised women's needs, fulfilling the ambition of government strategy and report recommendations. Participants described a system of formal roles, statutory duties, risk tools and workload allocations, and then described doing their jobs in the gaps 'between' them; **compassionate justice in action**.

- **Modes of training matter**. Participants recalled the workshop in specific detail weeks and months afterwards, describing it in terms distinguishing it from the majority of training provision they have experienced; often online, PowerPoint-driven and content-heavy. This training offered a different way of learning. Participants made the distinction between being told what to think and being invited to think. The form of this training is directly related to its effect. Key characteristics include: mixed practitioner cohorts, expert facilitation, a facilitator with lived experience, artistic material that invites multiple interpretations, face-to-face delivery, and the deliberate absence of prescribed conclusions.

- **Participatory arts practice facilitates peer learning and collaboration.** Sessions were hosted by regional partners in prison, probation, policing or sentencing, but each group varied across each session with a mix of occupational roles, levels and experience. In each training, post-session questionnaires and interviews, participants acknowledged and appreciated the opportunity to spend time with colleagues they wouldn't ordinarily work with and to learn from them. There was a shift in perspective about how the different elements of the system could work collaboratively.

- **Policy exists to design systems and processes. People have agency to make changes in practice.** In follow up interviews, participants spoke about shifts in their practice they attributed to or were informed by the workshop training. The report details these changes in practice, that facilitate policy and produce better outcomes for staff and criminalised women.

- **Cultural change in the criminal justice system is possible.** In addition to changes in practice, the training prompted shifts in people's attitudes towards their role and potential to 'do the right thing' in a system that often leaves workers feeling overworked and powerless to support women in the ways that they need. The training was a prompt to take what we have called, **a compassionate breath**, that improves outcomes for women and working life for criminal justice system practitioners.

In sum:

- The criminal justice system is highly fragmented, with only women themselves going through the system as a whole. This is a barrier to staff understanding of women's experiences.
- Much of the work of justice happens in the informal spaces between formal structures.
- Modes of training matter.
- Participatory arts practice facilitates peer learning and collaboration.
- Staff have agency to make changes in practice that facilitate policy.
- Despite challenging working conditions, cultural change through participatory arts practice is possible, enabling better outcomes for women and staff alike.

Centrally, the report evidences the impact of Clean Break's training on practitioners' understanding, attitudes and behaviour. In a system with many chronic problems, the training has revealed, enabled and enhanced the ability of staff to make a difference to the lives of women in the system.

Coda: perhaps the most persuasive point is that, subsequent to the 2025 workshops, Clean Break has been asked by participants and colleagues of participants to deliver further training in other parts of the criminal justice system.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

1. The training is complementary to core training and will encourage better practice and improved retention. **Invest in this training, and its variants developed subsequent to this project, for delivery across the criminal justice system. Incorporate it at the earliest stages of training for police, prison and probation staff and the judiciary.**

2. This report captures informal or unseen work by criminal justice system staff that improves the experiences of criminalised women. **Invest in further research to identify the work done in the spaces between formal activity. Ask staff what they do and what could be done in the system as it exists now.**

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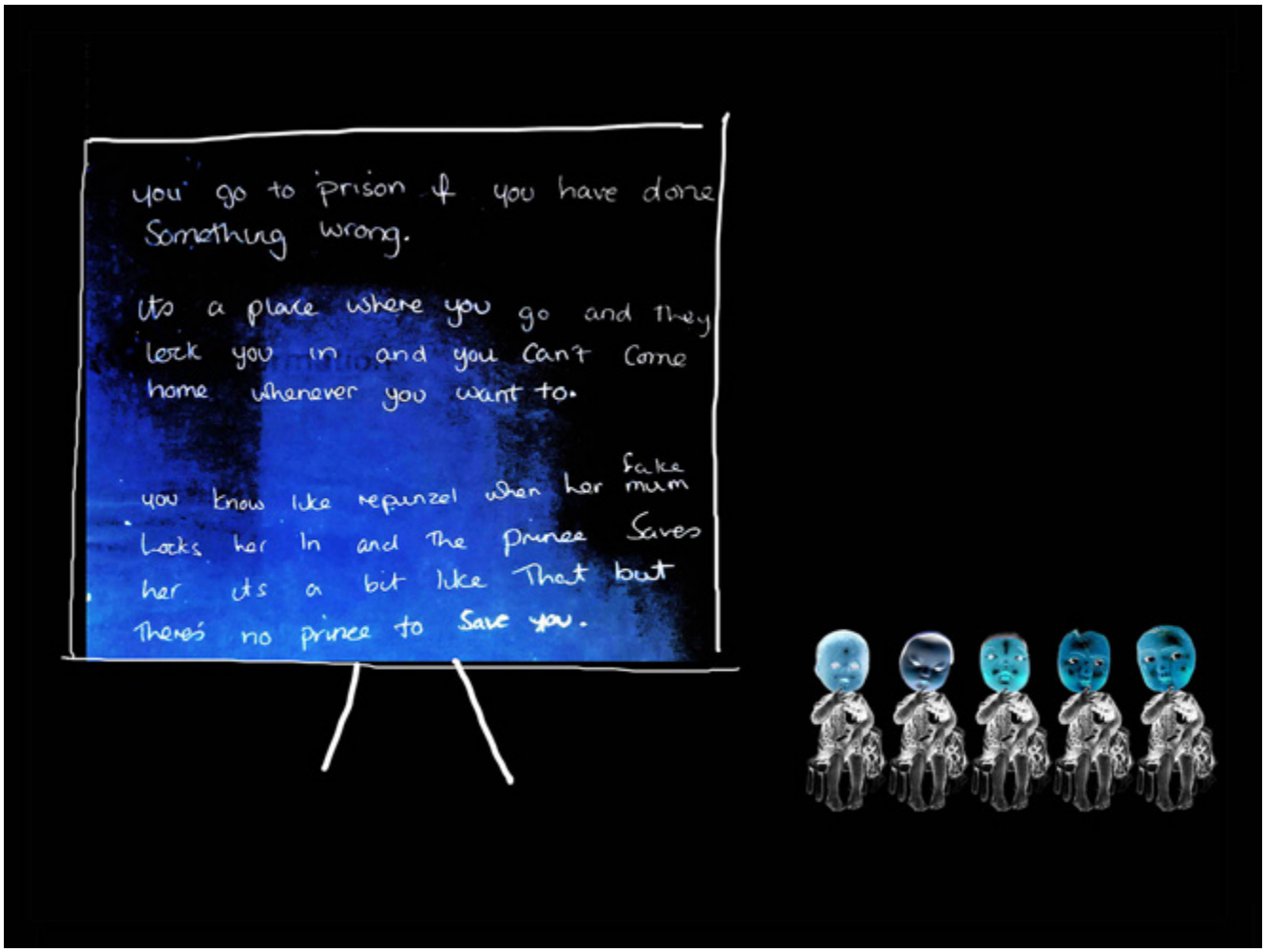


explain prison to a child © laura dean 2022. Mixed media canvas 36x48

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

This report presents and analyses the process and outcomes of a unique training project designed for practitioners working in the criminal justice system. The training was developed and delivered by **Clean Break**, a women-only theatre company based in London, working nationally. The mission of the company, explicitly articulated since its founding in the late 1970s, is to attend to the lives of criminalised women through theatre. There are two main strands to this work: the development and production of new plays about criminalised women's experiences that tour to audiences in a wide range of settings, including theatres, prisons and criminal justice training contexts; and direct engagement with women with lived experience of the criminal justice system in Clean Break's women-only centre, through support services, creative practice, training and professional development opportunities.

Context for Clean Break's Work

In England and Wales, women make up, typically, 4% of the overall prison population. This statistic reflects global trends (Penal Reform International, 2021). Research into the experience of women in the criminal justice system from law, feminist criminology and prison studies confirms that, as a direct consequence, women are marginalised because of their gender, because they have been criminalized and because they are the minority (McIvor, 2004; Sharpe, 2012; Agozino, 1997). This lack of consideration of women's specific needs is summarised by Ramsbotham during his tenure as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (1995–2001).

> It is not merely a question of women receiving equal treatment to men; in the prison system equality is everywhere conflated with uniformity; women are treated as if they are men. (1997: para. 3.46)

This failure to recognise the need for different approaches is evidenced in ideologies that inform the language of the law (Kennedy, 1993: 2019), the architectural design and material conditions of women's prisons (Moore and Scranton 2014) and the endemic political inertia that impedes penal reform attending to the needs of women, communities, and society (Corston, 2007; McCorkel, 2013; Women in Prison 2017; Penal Reform Trust 2026).

The feminisation of poverty (Bradshaw 2002) and the collapsing of welfare policy and penal policy (Wacquant 2011) ensure that women are especially vulnerable to political forces of social control and intersectional injustices. Poverty, racism, poor mental and physical health, abuse, addiction and homelessness shape the lives of many criminalised women (Agozino 1997; McCorkel 2013; McIvor, 2004; Moore and Scranton, 2014).

Most women serve short sentences for non-violent crimes. However, *any* prison sentence, no matter how short, will upend a woman's life - there is no proportional disruption which correlates with the number of weeks, months or years she is incarcerated for. All sentences carry the distinct possibility that a woman will lose her home, her children will be taken into care, and employment and social mobility opportunities will be adversely impacted due to the stigma and shame of a criminal record which continues long after a sentence has been served (Kennedy 1993, 2018).

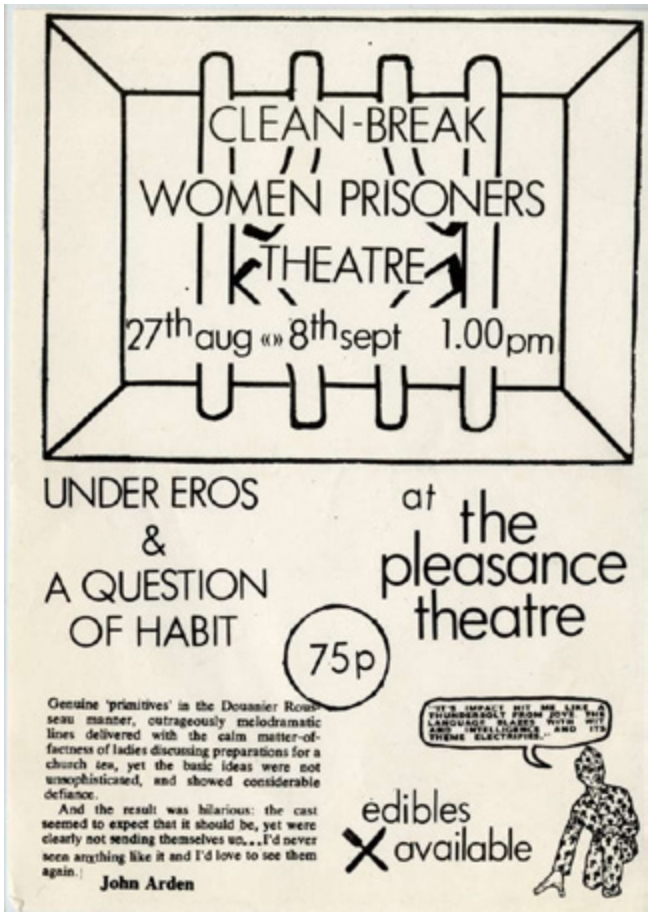
This is the material Clean Break has staged for four decades: not crime as spectacle, but the conditions that produce criminalisation and the further harms added by punishment.

In March 2026 the **Women's Justice Board's report** outlined recommendations for reducing women's imprisonment. Its judgement was explicit: while acknowledging some progress, the Board lamented that the radical change Baroness Corston identified as desperately needed in 2007 has still not come about. Despite government policy since the Female Offender Strategy 2018 to reduce women's imprisonment and increase the use of community solutions, implementation has been partial. In July 2026, the **Prison Reform Trust** published 'Resetting the approach to women's imprisonment – A Case for Change: Evidence, Barriers and Solutions' outlining the reasons why, despite government commitment to address the treatment of women within the criminal justice system, progress has been limited. Both reports call for an act of political imagination and bold leadership in strategic, sustained investment in women's services and a whole system approach to attend to the needs of criminalised women. They call for training which is gender-specific and trauma-informed. *Criminalised Women: Changing the Story* meets these criteria and, additionally, is co-delivered by women with lived experience of the criminal justice system and engages staff across this system.

CLEAN BREAK. APPROACHES TO THEATRE MAKING AND COMMITMENT TO TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Clean Break is an award-winning women-only theatre company founded in 1979, which grew out of a prisoner-led drama workshop at HMP Askham Grange. Now based in its own building in London, over the past five decades it has developed from a cooperative of women with experience of incarceration into a theatre, education and advocacy organisation that has commissioned and produced more than 100 original plays about women, crime and punishment. It has mentored and worked with playwrights including Bryony Lavery, Winsome Pinnock, Alice Birch, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, Lucy Kirkwood, and theatres including the Crucible, Donmar Warehouse, the National Theatre, the Royal Court and the Royal Exchange.

Clean Break's plays are unflinching in their exposition of the intersectional injustices which shape the lives of many of the women they work with and the explosive implications of their criminalisation: the experiences of sex-trafficked children and young women in *Dream Pill* (Rebecca Pritchard, 2010) and *Amongst the Reeds* (Chinonyerem Odimba, 2016); *Headrot Holiday* (Sarah Daniels, 1992), *Didn't Die* (Annie Caulfield, 2003) and *Sounds Like an Insult* (Vivienne Franzmann, 2013) engage with women's mental health and treatment in the criminal justice system; death in custody is explicitly and carefully addressed in *Fatal Light* (Chloë Moss, 2010); *Little on the Inside* (Alice Birch, 2014) offers an intimate portrayal of friendship between women in prison; and *Favour* (Ambreen Razia, 2022) gradually how social laws of gendered expectations can be more powerful than legal ones in shaping the lives of girls and women in a working-class Muslim family.



Flyer for *Under Eros* and *A Question of Habit*, Clean Break's first double bill at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1979.



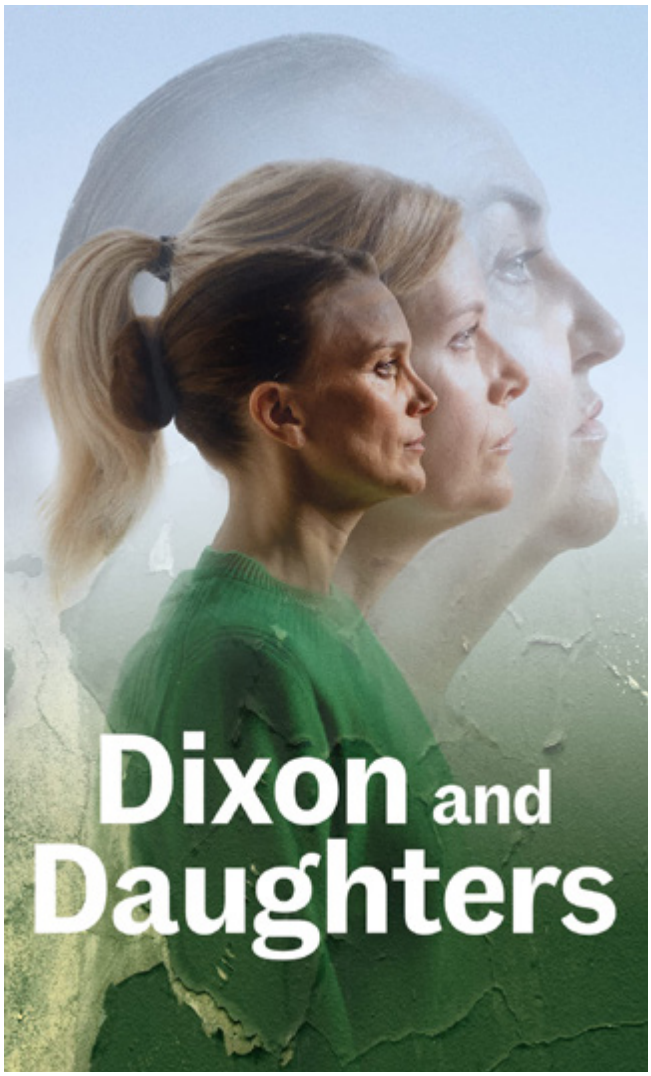
A Question of Habit. By Jacki Holborough. 1979.



Favour. By Ambreen Razia, Bush Theatre 2022. Photo: Helen Murray



Sweatbox. By Chloë Moss 2019. Photo: Deborah Dean



Dixon and Daughters. By Deborah Bruce. National Theatre 2023. Artwork by Jone Reed. Photo: Helen Murray.

In the company's women-only centre in Kentish Town, London, Clean Break Members, women with lived experience of the criminal justice system and those at risk of entering it, are offered training, personal and professional development, and opportunities to connect with a network of voluntary sector services, higher education, professional arts opportunities, and employment. Travel, food, and support with childcare ensure that everyday structural barriers to participation are acknowledged and addressed.

Underpinning all of Clean Break's practices – in rehearsal rooms, in training, in staff meetings, in collaborative project development with theatres, voluntary sector organisations and individuals – is a commitment to trauma-informed practice. Clean Break's *Leading with Kindness* and *Culture with Kindness* training has grown from the experience of sharing trauma-informed practices with collaborating partners and designed to support arts and cultural organisations embed trauma-informed practice in their cultures.

WOMEN/THEATRE/JUSTICE

Overview of projects

The Women/Theatre/Justice (WTJ) research project (2019-) was developed by a team of academics from Theatre and Performance Studies (Dr Sarah Bartley, Central School of Speech and Drama, Prof Caoimhe McAvinchey, Queen Mary University of London) and Work and Organisation Studies (Dr Deborah Dean, University of Warwick and Prof Anne-marie Greene, University of York). The project considered what Clean Break does, why it does it and, particularly, how it does it.

The first phase of work (2019-2023, 'Project 1') was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The current phase ('Project 2') started in 2025, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Warwick Business School and Queen Mary University of London.

In **Project 1** the team carried out

- 95 semi-structured interviews with Clean Break staff, Clean Break Members, freelance artists, external stakeholders in theatre and criminal justice sectors, current and previous company staff across levels and departments.
- 45 observations of organisational practices including weekly staff meetings; Board meetings; company and senior management meetings and training days.

Our research, published in books and journals and shared with audiences through exhibitions, public events and the project website, developed new understandings about Clean Break's unusual organisational practices, their broader implications for management, the impact of Clean Break Theatre Company's practice on contemporary British Theatre and the lives of the women it works with.

Centrally, the WTJ interdisciplinary research project has found robust evidence supporting Clean Break's assertion that its work changes hearts and minds: that it provides its audiences with a greater understanding of criminalised women; that it tells us things we didn't already know in ways that help us understand.

How do we know about things that are beyond our lived experience?

The lived experience of many women in prison is complex. Their stories don't have a simple beginning, middle and an end. They have tangents. They can be contradictory. They are often ignored or discredited, usually invisible to wider society. This leads to a focus on epistemology, the philosophical study of how we know things, and to what the feminist philosopher Miranda Fricker calls **epistemic injustice** (2007). This is in relation to:

- **Testimonial injustice** - when someone is not believed because of assumptions and prejudice about who they are.
- **Hermeneutical injustice** - when society does not know about, or have the language or frames of reference to talk about, something.
- **'the preservation of ignorance'** - when people, despite knowing something, refuse to acknowledge or act upon it.

If society's access to information about criminalised women is mediated through cultural representations which neglect the nuance of lived experience, the result is a gap in collective knowledge and understanding. Clean Break's work directly addresses this gap, or epistemic injustice.

- It listens to women, it believes them, it attends to their experience and expertise.
- It creates plays which details their lives in all their complexity, with compassion and care – these plays are resources for society, they offer shared points of reference.
- And it makes demands of audiences to know, to be aware, to not be wilfully ignorant, to recognise that the process of 'justice' on a legal level can, too often, create injustices on a personal one.

THE RATIONALE FOR THE TRAINING

Project 2

During Project 1, we staged events which included performances of *Sweatbox* inside the grounds of HMP New Hall (February 2020), screenings of the *Sweatbox* film and a series of original artworks made in response to the research by the project artist in residence. Many of these events included criminal justice system staff as audience members. In the conversations and written reflections after, we were struck by how people engaged with the issues through the artistic materials. The film and artworks bypassed the usual responses to information. Practitioners were explicit that, despite their specific areas of expertise and experience within the criminal justice system, there was much they didn't know and that Clean Break's work made them see things differently.

> It does make you look at it differently … I work in reception … you can hear the banging and the clattering …you see it as a disturbance, it's somebody kicking off … But there's always reasons behind that, isn't there? And [*Sweatbox*] just opens your eyes and makes you think about it a little bit more.
> (Staff member HMP New Hall, Feb 2020)

> I've never been inside one of those vans and I've worked in the discipline system for 20-odd years…that's the first time.
> (Staff member HMP New Hall, Feb 2020)

Therefore, epistemic injustice operates not only between the public and criminalised women, but within the criminal justice system itself. Clean Break's plays address a general public.

Project 2 asked what happens when the same materials and methods are put in front of the people whose professional decisions determine what happens to criminalised women.

PROJECT 2, DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TRAINING, specifically for those working in the criminal justice system.

In Project 2 Dean and McAvinchey observed this training in action. Between June and October 2025, Clean Break delivered nine participatory arts workshops to 101 people working with criminalised women in England. Participants came from prisons, probation, policing, voluntary sector women's services, the magistracy and the judiciary.

Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and in this report we refer to sector ('policing', 'probation' and so on) rather than role, and we do not attribute age, ethnicity or gender. Only the researchers have access to the original data, which are available for confidential scrutiny by the funding UKRI Councils, if required.

The workshops engaged staff in reflective dialogue through a consideration of the film *Sweatbox* (by Chloë Moss, commissioned by Clean Break), original artworks from Laura Dean's *un:mute* series, and applied theatre exercises. These prompted open questions about the lives of criminalised women, the systems that process them, and the daily work of the people employed within those systems. Each workshop was facilitated by a Clean Break staff member and a Clean Break Member artist with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

The academic team observed the workshops, analysed participants' pre- and post-session questionnaires and carried out 29 follow-up interviews one to two months after the workshops. The findings section details responses and outcomes. This report provides evidence demonstrating how Clean Break's unique approach of participatory arts training can:

1. Improve outcomes for individual women.
2. Support workers and working practices across the criminal justice system.
3. Contribute to strategic aims of reducing imprisonment for women and, in turn, the ripple effects on families and society.

Parts Two and Three describe and consider the training sessions and interviews. To engage and persuade the readers of this report of the basis for its claims, we try to give you a real sense of being in the room; you will hear the voices of participants rather than only our condensed summaries or analyses of what happened.

FINDINGS

PART TWO: THE PARTICIPATORY ARTS WORKSHOP

> The whole point was that we were responding to it ourselves as participants, rather than being told what was meant by everything. I really enjoyed that. I got a lot from that. (Magistracy)

Participants were drawn from across the system: junior and senior prison officers and prison-based staff including induction, reception, safety and drug strategy leads; junior and senior probation officers, including women's leads and staff with mixed caseloads; junior and senior police officers, criminal justice board members and independent custody visitors and leads; magistrates, district judges and judicial leads; workers from voluntary sector and NHS services. Some cohorts were single-sector although most did not know each other, several cohorts were deliberately mixed occupations. 101 people took part in the workshops. We found that people attended (more and less enthusiastically) for a variety of reasons: curiosity, a session away from the office or mandated by a manager. Only a handful of participants were aware of Clean Break before attending.

Partners for the training workshops were:

- Guildford Probation Office
- Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey
- Birmingham Probation Office
- HMP & YOI Styal
- HMP & YOI East Sutton Park
- St Albans Judiciary and Magistracy
- Kent, Surrey & Sussex Probation Service

Each workshop ran for three hours and was facilitated by a Clean Break staff member (Anna Herrmann, Artistic Director and CEO) and a Clean Break Member artist with lived experience of the criminal justice system (Sylvia Amanquah or TerriAnn Cousins).

The workshops were unlike other trainings offered to staff working across the criminal justice system:

They were in person and with no PowerPoint presentation;

> Mixed cohorts rather than one occupation, or level of occupation. So, frequently groups of participants not usually in the same training session or, often, interact with each other.
>
> The learning was *generated* through participation in, and reflection on, arts practices, not explicitly mapped in advance.
>
> The tone was both lively and reflective. The room was full of conversation, debate and, at times, silence as people wrote, stood before the artworks, or staged still images in small groups. It was, as participants said, 'surprising', 'inclusive and reflective' and 'excellent'.

In this section, we detail what the training comprised and observations of how people interacted with each other and the materials. Examples are drawn from across all workshops. This composite picture gives insight into the breadth and nuance of people's responses which also gives context for participants' reflections in their follow-up interviews. Participants were assured that their responses in the room, in questionnaires and in interview, would be completely confidential and all quotes are anonymised. Square brackets in quotes indicate where the words are ours, intended to clarify what the speaker was saying where context is needed.

2.1 INTERWEAVING STRANDS OF THE WORKSHOP

There were three interweaving strands of participatory arts practices across the workshops:

- **6 artworks** by Laura Dean from *un:mute*, a series of 26 images made during her time as artist in residence on the WTJ Project 1. Laura's work articulates and amplifies the personal and political implications of women's incarceration. She invites people to look - and look again – at images witnessing and reimagining the lives of criminalised women. Her artworks, and their titles, are invitations to develop and connect ideas in response to what we see and what we feel.

- ***Sweatbox*, a film**, written by Chloë Moss and directed by Anna Herrmann. Originally a short play commissioned by Clean Break in 2015, *Sweatbox* was staged in a decommissioned prison escort van, with audiences of 8-10 invited to climb inside the van and witness the lives of three women – Steph, Rachel and Nina - as they are transported from the courts where they have been sentenced, to prison. The 12-minute film offers glimpses into the circumstances of the three characters' lives, the families they have left behind and their specific worries about their futures.

- **Drama games and exercises** inviting participants to respond to themes by thinking through ideas on their feet. Each of the exercises was anchored in reflection on the artworks or film, giving participants a shared point of reference, supporting them to bring their own personal and professional experience into the room.

2.2 WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

The workshop had four phases:

1. Setting the scene for group work
2. Thinking through artworks
3. Thinking through *Sweatbox*
4. Reflections

2.3 SETTING THE SCENE FOR GROUP WORK

The training happened in a range of rooms including office spaces in probation centres, a deconsecrated chapel in a prison, and a Quaker community hall. Everyday furniture was moved to the side to make space for a circle of chairs and a series of six artworks on easels arranged around the space.



St Albans workshop. Photo: Ellie Kurttz

The facilitators and researchers introduced themselves, Clean Break, and the workshop programme. Participants were invited to introduce themselves by sharing their name, their job role, and a lie about themselves. Immediately, there was an element of playfulness and curiosity as people mixed the professional (e.g. Prison Officer Induction Wing), with something more outlandish (e.g. having been a world champion figure-skater). The sessions always started with laughter, as the lies were often wildly inventive.

This was followed by the game ***Anyone Who…***
In this game there is one less chair than there are participants so someone is always standing in the middle of the circle. The aim of the game is for this person to get people to move off their chairs so they can sit down. They do this by calling out, 'Anyone who….' adding something that people might share, e.g. 'Anyone who… is wearing trainers'. If anyone in the group is wearing trainers, they leave their seat and quickly try and find another in the circle. The person left in the middle then calls out, 'Anyone who…'

Examples from the game across all the workshops include:

Anyone who…
had eggs for breakfast
wears black shoes
is over thirty
works on a wing
can name the manager of a wing
changed career
got a cat
hates winter

There was a sense of purpose and playfulness as people darted - sometimes charged - across the circle to claim a seat. Within minutes, these games rearranged the dynamics and tone in the room. The facilitator invited the group to reflect on what the game does to the sense of group:

It's like a pre-match warm-up.
It lightens the mood.
It makes you more comfortable.
To bond and get to know each other.
It helps you learn about each other.
There's always something in common.

Rather than moving on, the facilitator invited further reflection:

How did you feel playing?
Was it challenging?
It's competitive
It's about decision-making.
I felt exposed in the middle. You are the centre of attention.
It's risky because you let people in.
It's uncomfortable. That's why I made sure I got a seat.

The facilitator then asked:

Does it make you think about anything in your work?
Hierarchies.
Sometimes you have to stand in the centre and take responsibility to make decisions.

The games took a few minutes to play and quickly established the grammar of everything that followed: an invitation to participate in an activity that recognises you are a person who plays a professional role, the group reflects on the activity, and is then invited to think about how this resonates with their work.

2.4 THINKING THROUGH ARTWORKS

Six artworks from Laura Dean's *un:mute* series, 2022, were placed around the room. There is an interplay between the artwork and its title.

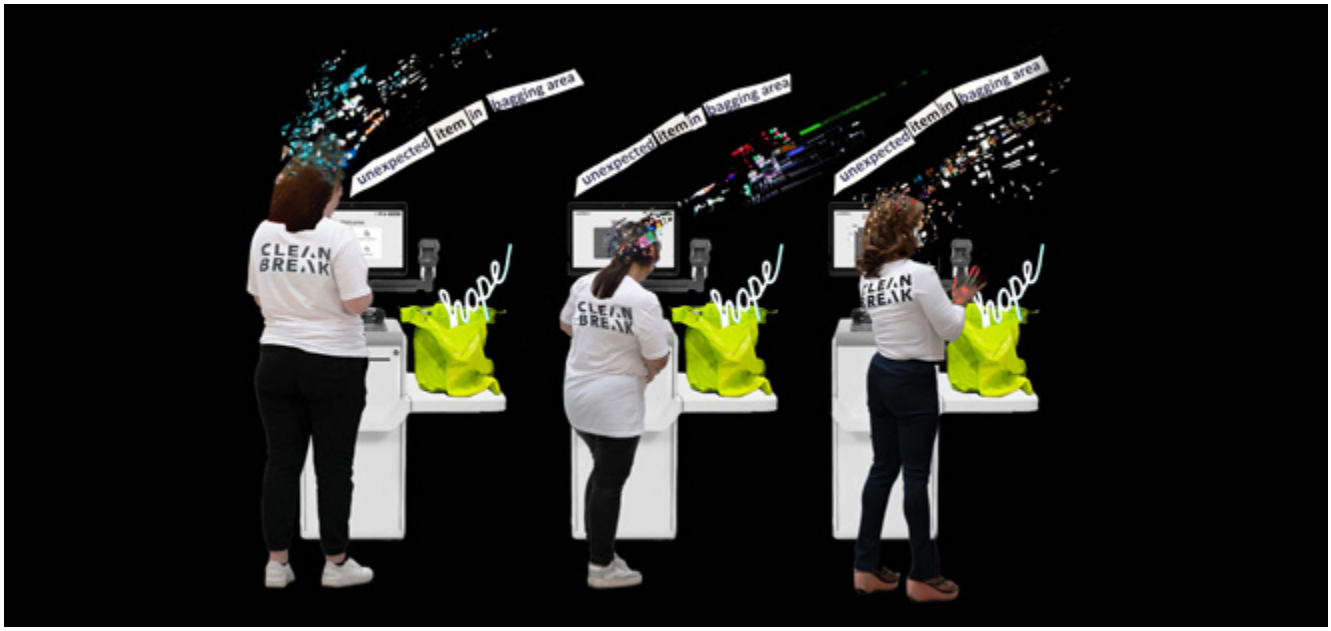
hope.
un:mute.
just like me.
discomfort eating.
like no home place.
transportation.

2.5 LOOKING, CHOOSING, WRITING

Participants were asked to choose an artwork that connected with them in some way. People moved around the space, pausing before the artworks. The facilitator then introduced a Free Writing exercise, inviting them to respond to three phrases:

When I look at this image, I see…
When I look at this image, I feel…
When I look at this image, I imagine…

The room had a hush of concentration as people looked at the images, paused to reflect, and write. People were invited to share with the person next to them: which image they chose, why they connected to it and how it connects to the women they work with? There was animated conversation as people spoke, referring and gesturing to an image as their partners looked at it, listening intently.



hope © laura dean 2022

Prison officers who chose this image reflected,

Most of the women here have lost hope.

Women here, you can always work on yourself when you are here.

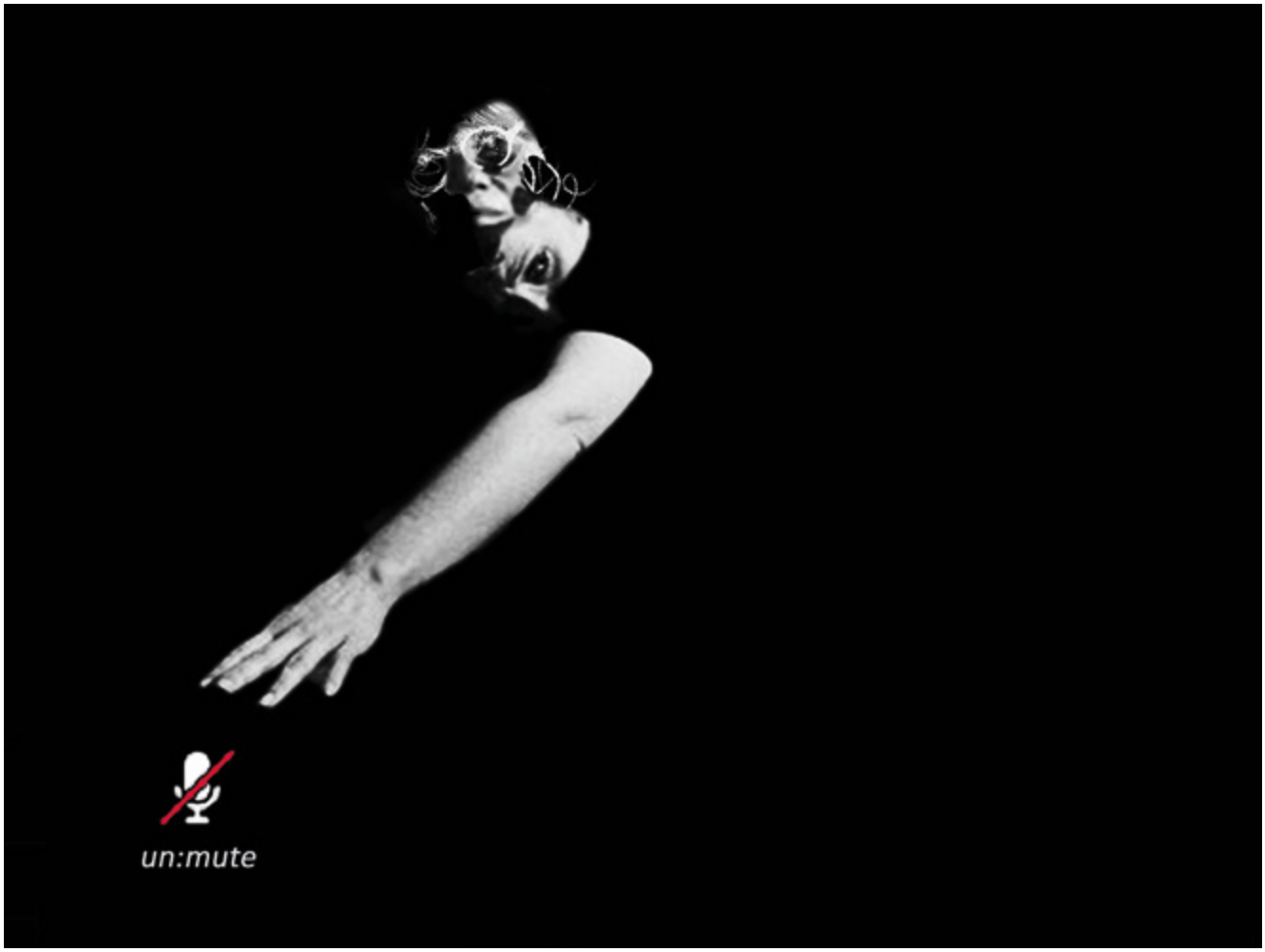
The unexpected item is hope. People leaving prison need hope rebuilding.

When people have a bad reputation, hope won't work with that.

In a session with probation officers, they said,

It's an accurate depiction of society. It looks like someone is trying to buy hope rather than hope coming from within.

Sometimes hope is the unexpected thing that turns up in your life.



un:mute © laura dean 2022

This image elicited considerable response across all groups.

A prison officer spoke about how women were often *'silenced by a past relationship'* and this image was about when they find a way to *'open up and speak'*. Another reflected on how some women are *'used for intelligence, county lines or prostitution'*. This image made them think about what it takes to *'get past the fear of violence or being judged'* to say something. Another said, *'It's like a mask that's coming off. Before prison, in prison, after prison – she doesn't have a voice.'*

In the session with probation officers one said that the figure in the image *'is desperately trying to get her voice heard. There is frustration, determination and injustice about being muted all the time. We see this in Liaison and Diversion. Women's voices are restricted by the system we put in place. The unmute button is too far out of reach.'* Another reiterated this, *'She's so close but can't quite reach the button.'*

A person working in a community-based charity with women after release said, *'The image demonstrates both reaching for something, reaching for help, but how difficult that is to actually activate. The hesitance about doing it.*
A person who's within the criminal justice system is often trying to reach towards something but is concerned and anxious about actually being able to access it.'

A magistrate said, *'I took it as a man reaching for the mute button and the woman behind. We see coercive control a lot as magistrates.'*



just like me © laura dean 2022

Probation staff in a workshop said,

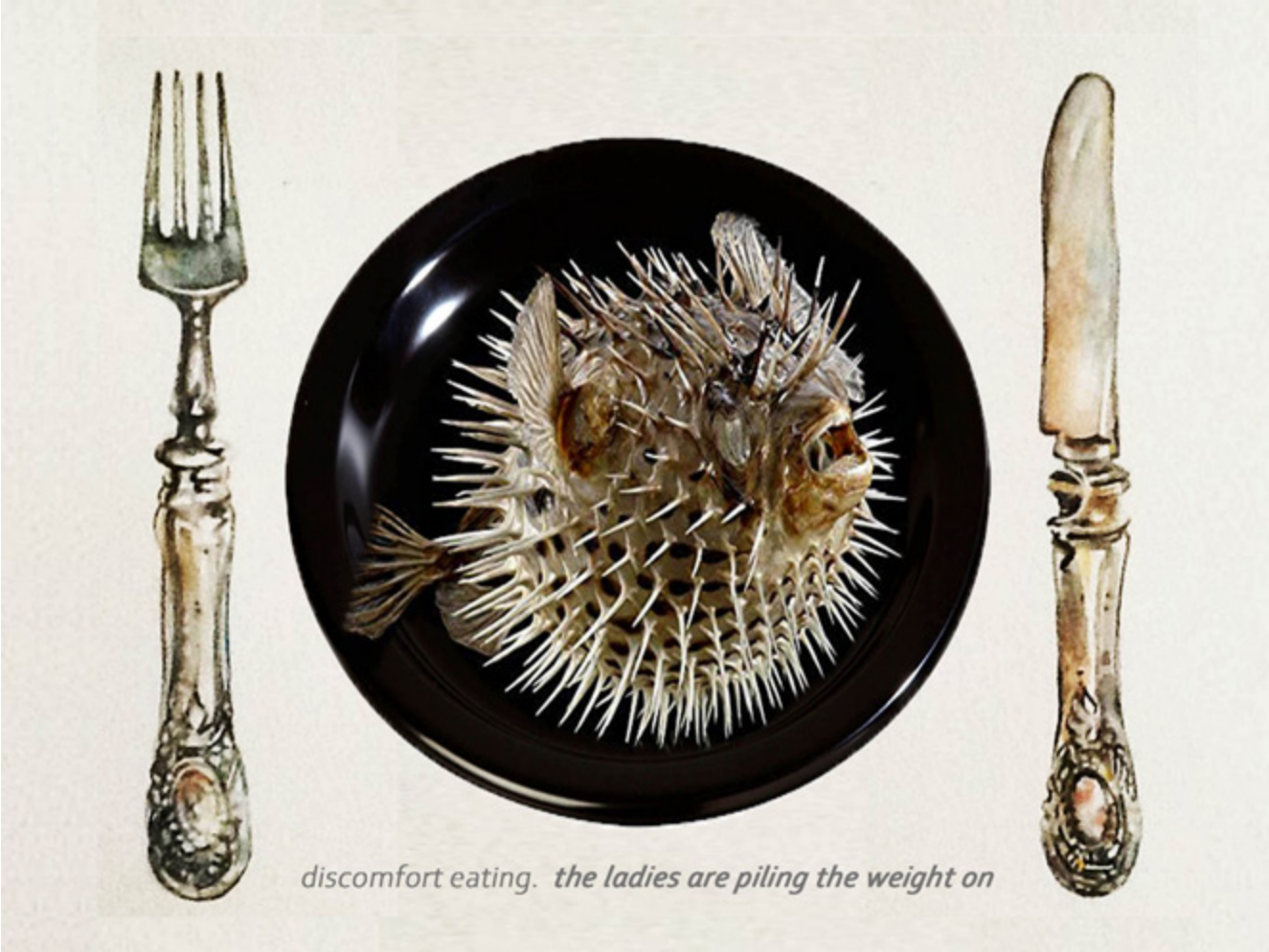
When you meet people, you get basic information, you get an initial picture but then you meet people and over 3-4 months you find out you have stuff in common.

We can't possibly know who is behind each of the people we see.

We all deserve to have the same love, trust, respect throughout.

*I picked **Just Like Me**. I feel quite sorry for the women I work with. Particularly the young women. I'm the youngest where I work. It could have been me. I live where I work. Somehow something has changed. A lot of these women, it's to do with their parents or upbringing.*

The image reminds me of women protesting. Freedom of speech - the right to speak up, the price might be worth it. For women, if they get involved, if they have an opinion, it can get them into trouble - there are consequences.



discomfort eating © laura dean 2022

Prison staff responded,

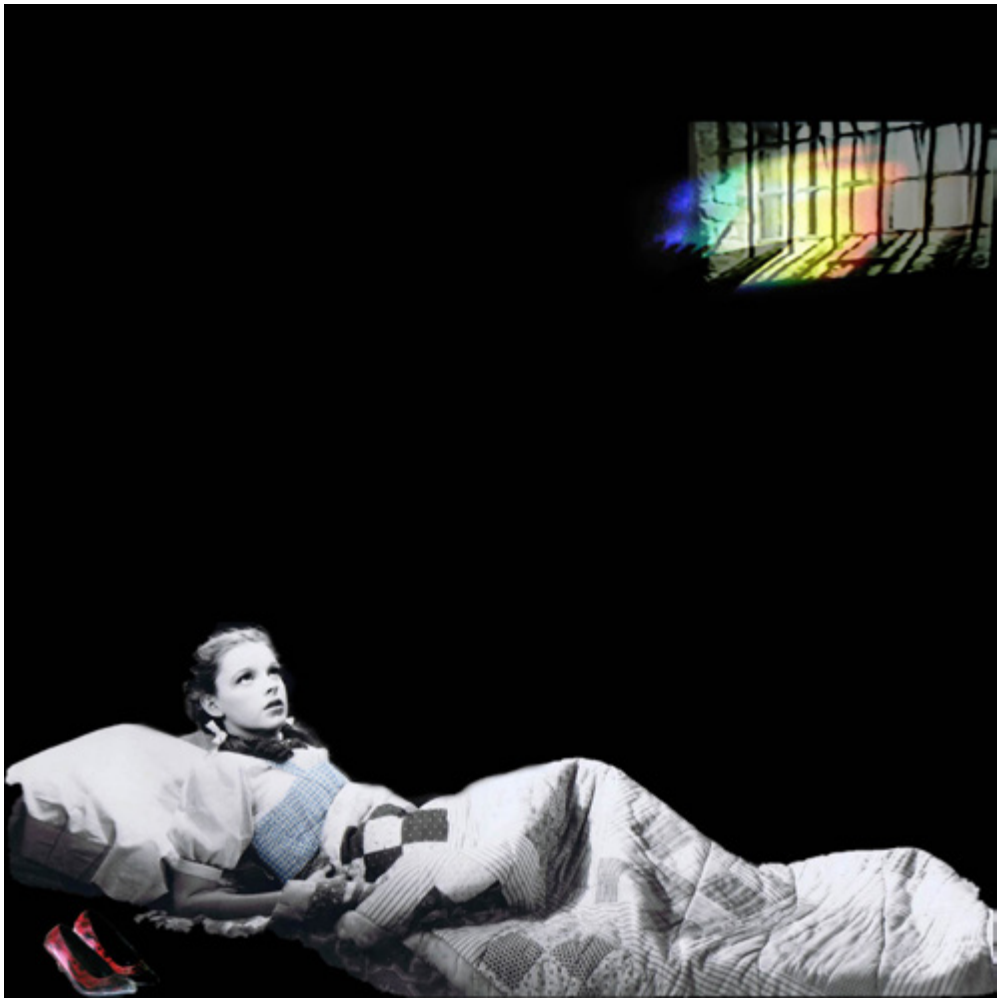
The cutlery is ironic, because you don't get that in prison.

People have lost emotional regulation. If you eat, it's like glass.

It's horror, unhappiness, the choice between comfort and choking.

A probation officer reflected on the ways that women, often serving longer-term sentences, put on weight because of the poor food offered within the prison system and lack of movement because of the amount of time spent in cells. They spoke about how prison makes what can be taken for granted about food different: 'the relationship with food changes when you lose your freedom.'

The image prompted thinking about shame in relation to the food, *'Women we work with are heavily criticised for who they are, how they are, how they should be. Not only about eating. If a woman isn't the perfect victim, if she's gobby, she should shut up. If a woman doesn't have her children, they're villainised, they're evil.'*



like no home place © laura dean 2022

This image – and its title - evoked considerable response across the groups but especially with prison staff.

Some people do view this place as home.

The cell is a dark place but there's light at the end of the tunnel. Their entire world has collapsed into this cubicle. When you walk in the dark room you have a choice to light your own candle.

It reflects a sudden clarification that you're surrounded by darkness, with little chinks of light. Do the women lie there and look out the window and reflect on what they've done, the path they've chosen?

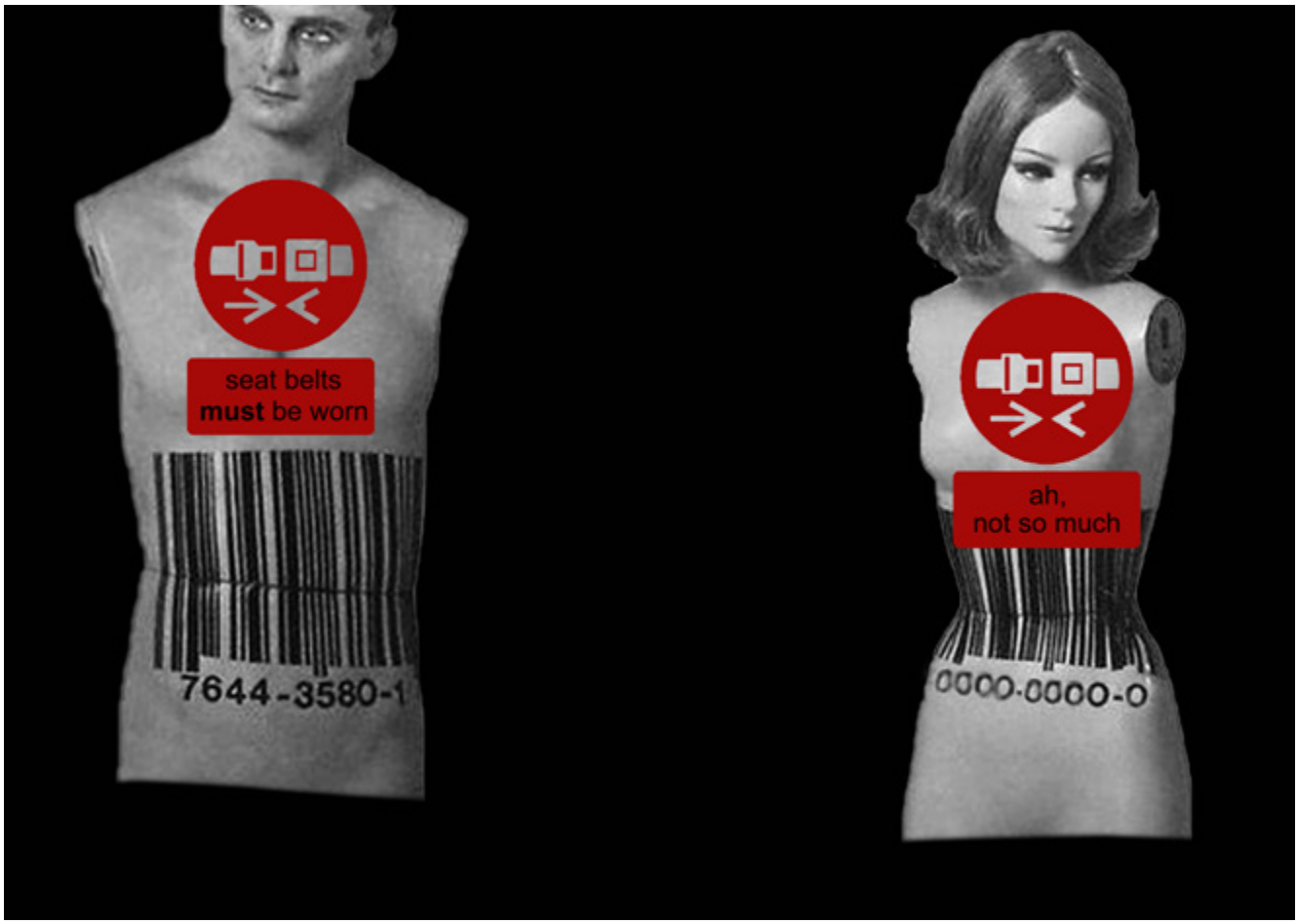
We have brilliant officers here. That light gives you hope, opportunity.

The rainbows reminded me of Mother and Baby Units. The slippers were about someone wishing they could rewind time and are now left sitting with massive remorse and regret that gets displaced.

In prison, it can be difficult to remember who you are and where you are from.

Dorothy [from The Wizard of Oz], she makes her own way home eventually.

In one of the workshops with probation staff, the group spoke about many women's experiences of homelessness and how some *'find comfort and homeliness in being in prison as sometimes their accommodation is not very safe [attacked by other residents, robbed].' Prison can be, for some, their 'home space, their safe space.' A place where someone can think, 'I need some here safe to live and then I can work on all the other stuff.'* Others agreed and added, *'There's a family of staff'*.



transportation © laura dean 2022

A magistrate reflected, of the woman in the image, *'she's all zeroes'*. Another agreed, she has *'no value. Her opinions are not counted.'* The conversation evolved into an acknowledgement that, *'The whole prison system is focused around men, designed for men. She doesn't have numbers. What does it say about her identity?'.* Others echoed this, *'He's specific, women are generic'* and spoke about how sentencing is related to a man's needs and how the same sentence can have a greater impact on women. Some probation officers spoke about how harshly women are treated by social services in comparison to men.

A prison officer reflected on how this image spoke to ideas of conforming and not conforming and the words, 'not so much' made them think about rules and nuance. For example, in the male estate, there's a full search of men but for women, 'not so much'. In some ways part of the discussion suggests that the 'not so much' in relation to women, in this group's experience, means that they are treated with less of a heavy hand.

2.6 REFLECTION

The artworks used in the workshop were not literal representations of criminalised women but composite articulations of circumstances, feelings and experiences. They are both specific and open. Different people connected with the images in different ways. Sometimes, the groups were thinking about the women in the image, at other times they were putting themselves into the images. One person might find an artwork deeply resonant, someone else might not see anything in it that connects with them. As the groups reflected on the artwork, they brought themselves and their professional experience into conversation and into the room. Across all the workshops, reflections telescoped from the individual image and a person's responses to it, to wider group conversation. One senior probation officer reflecting on the group's discussion about people's engagement with the artworks – what they saw, what they felt and how it connected with the women they worked with – was a reminder that people see things differently, and that we all benefit from moments of reminding ourselves of that.

The workshops were full of insights into people's experience of working in the criminal justice system; people's understandings of the complexity of criminalised women's lives (before, during and after sentencing); people's experience of working in a system with processes and procedures that are often not flexible enough to support them; and societal attitudes and structures that re-punish women and their families.

2.7 *SWEATBOX*





Sweatbox. Written by Chloë Moss. Directed by Anna Herrmann.

2.8 WATCHING THE *SWEATBOX* FILM

The group watched *Sweatbox*, which introduced them to three characters in a prison van - Steph, Rachel and Nina – on their way from court to prison. Steph, mid-twenties, is (as we find out at the end) heavily pregnant and desperate to get to a toilet. She's been in prison before and her father has been in prison while she was growing up. Nina, mid-forties, has been sentenced on a drugs-related crime. It's not the first time, but she says, *'this time I'm getting clean'*. Rachel, early thirties, is the most distressed. She's never been in prison before or separated from her three-year old son: *'My barrister said community service, nothing to worry about, first offence. I haven't anything with me. Didn't even bring a bag.'* We witness Steph, Nina and Rachel trapped in an enduring moment of consequence.

Steph, Rachel and Nina's lives are simultaneously specific characters and stand in for other, unidentified people who are both hidden and made a spectacle of as they are ferried in prison vans - *'Sweatboxes'* - through towns and cities, along motorways and country roads; moved from police station, to court, to prison, to secure unit.

2.9 *SWEATBOX* – REFLECTION

When the film ends, the group reconvenes, sombre. Standing in a circle, the facilitator asked:

Does this feel like the world you know?

A probation officer said, *I know it but the film made it feel very real.*

Another said, *We saw the impact not just on the women but for her family.*

The prison officers who receive women when they come off the prison vans said, *It's accurate. The waiting, the turmoil and stuff, women are outside waiting, not knowing. They don't know staff are doing something. They're not trying to get one over on them.*

You'd know if someone was pregnant. We would pick them up and arrange for a lunch cover - it's about decency.

People do pee on the buses.

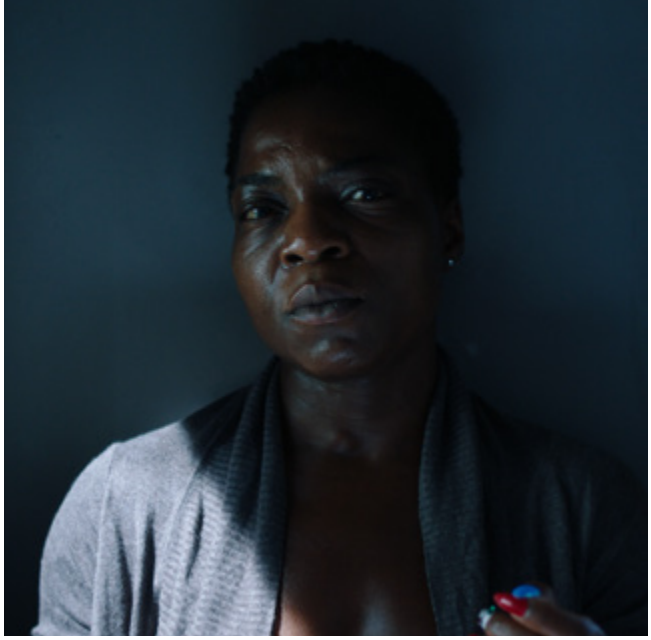
We get a lot of people who are shouting and screaming and looking confident but get them in interview and they break down in tears. They are vulnerable.

That thing about the woman leaving her kid, not knowing she was going to prison, that happens.

What could be done differently?

Prison officers replied,

Have a conversation with them. … Prisoners get irate so quickly, you can understand it. They don't know what's going on. The one with the arms covered with scars (Nina), no-one's even checking on her. We would put her straight on to observation.



Funke Adekele in *Sweatbox*. Written by Chloë Moss. Directed by Anna Herrmann.

Probation staff reflected,

Talk to them.

Communicate during the waiting time.

But this goes back to a bigger picture where there's a lack of staffing – it's a government issue.

It's also shocking to see how women in prison are not categorised - someone who's there for a first defence can also be transported to a prison with someone who has committed a violent crime.

It made me think about systems change.

Is there anything that you find surprising?

Prison officers said,

The regime has been interrupted, the communications team, the human needs, there's a process.

The film was about their [the women on the prison van's] perception. The flirting [the prisoners observe], that could have been officers handing over at the gate. If we actually are busy, it's their perception that we're not.

You've got to read the behaviour, to understand the situation, what's underneath the front.

What does the film make you think the women need?

The probation participants replied:

Child safety.

Dignity for the pregnant lady.

Checking in on the medications for the woman who is having drugs withdrawal.

Looking at women individually rather than as a group.

The trauma between getting from court to prison is something which is significant - we need to acknowledge what's going on before they get to us.

2.10 AGREE/DISAGREE – WALKING THE PROFESSIONAL LINE

In the next exercise, participants were invited to imagine there was a line across the middle of the room, with one end being **Agree** and the other end **Disagree**. The participants were asked to position themselves somewhere on the continuum of this line, in response to specific statements.

First statement: *'The women in the film have only got themselves to blame.'*

In the workshop with a mix of probation officers and magistrates, everybody stood at Disagree and spoke about how blaming, *'ignores lives, history, socialisation, education'* while acknowledging that there are also *'women from the same background who haven't offended, so there's an element of personal responsibility.'* A magistrate observed that, *'we've all made poor decisions at one point or another.'*

This nuanced thinking was echoed in a session with staff from probation where most moved to the Disagree end of the line and reflected, *'it's not for us to judge'*, *'we don't know the whole story'*, *'there's a difference between holding someone accountable for their behaviour and blaming a person'*. A senior probation officer stood in the middle saying, '*I think there's always judgement where you work. … People have done something, we shouldn't be too soft. I think it's a training issue, an unconscious bias issue, that's why I'm in the middle. Because everyone's human aren't they.*'

Another reflected, *'it's not fair and we don't have the resources we need to treat women fairly. Everyone treats their cases with great dignity or they'd be in the wrong job. But it's hard without resources.'*

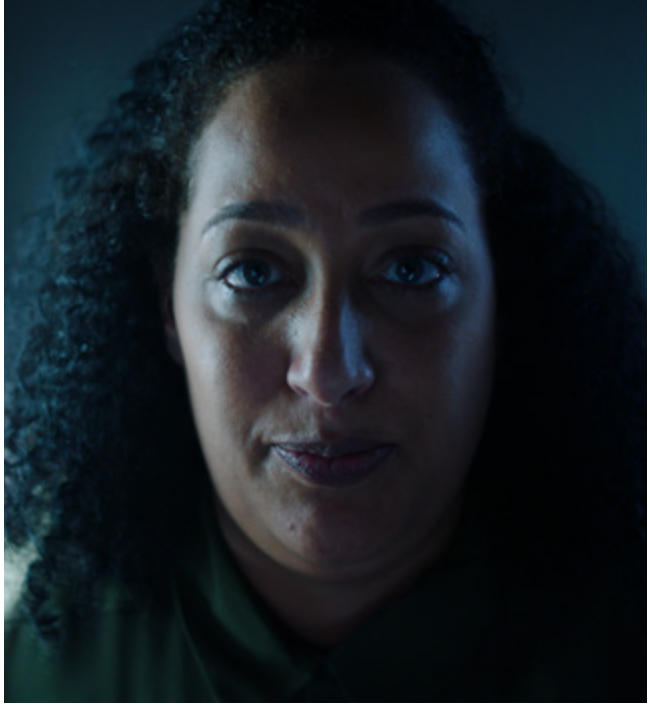
Second statement: *I have all the skills I need to support the women in the film*.

In a workshop with Prison staff, they stood in a range of positions between Agree and Disagree. One said, *'every day I'm learning there's stuff I do know and other stuff I don't.'* Another reflected, *'I'm more in the middle. We don't get any mental health training.'*

Some prison offers stood towards the Disagree end of the line explaining, *'I don't work specifically with women* [so would need training]*'*. Another said, *'I work with a mix. A few weeks ago, a lady who's in prison a lot, asked me to be her key worker. I don't know anything about eating disorders for example. But there are lots of people I can ask. Or I can learn. Knowledge share is very important.'*



Posy Sterling in *Sweatbox*. Written by Chloë Moss. Directed by Anna Herrmann.



Jade Small in *Sweatbox*. Written by Chloë Moss. Directed by Anna Herrmann.

In a workshop with probation staff, most of the group moved to the Agree part of the room and reflected on the character of the young mum, Rachel, and how there needed to be a child impact assessment as part of a pre-sentence report. They spoke about making sure that the child was safe and that there is clear communication between those caring for the child; they also spoke about detoxing support and its availability, which the character Nina would need.

Third statement: *Women in our care are treated with respect and dignity.*

In the prison workshops, most of the participants stood in the middle of the line:

I do all I can.

Some people, even when you try and respect them [they don't give that back. And if you don't respect me…].

Some good days, some bad days. Everyone's human.

It depends on the women's behaviour. They may have no respect for the prison officer who wants to assist them, who can make contact with their children but we are always there for them.

A judge sends people that shouldn't be here so they are off the streets, there's no mental health provision. If they arrive here around 7:30 or 8:00pm there's no reception staff to give them a proper induction. They'll get more support in a police cell than in prison. We get women arriving here on at 11.30pm on a Friday night. They take the men first because the man's prison will [only] take them at a particular time. The women's prison will take them no matter.

Fourth statement: *Staff are desensitised to women's trauma.*

In a workshop with prison staff there was much consideration as people positioned themselves along the line.

You deal with whatever is in front of you and so that's how I become desensitised.

You lose a bit of empathy.

You can be desensitised but still have empathy.

One more experienced officer who had worked for many years in the male estate spoke about how there is *'so much more' self-harm in women's prisons … you can't take it all home, you become desensitised to visual things.'* Others identified compassion fatigue. *'You see a lot all day, every day on a shift. As soon as you put your uniform on your emotions are gone. You've got to deal with it' while another countered this saying that 'in order to effectively do our job we can't be de-sensitised to trauma. If we were we wouldn't be doing our jobs.'*

In a workshop with probation staff, this statement led to people taking a range of positions along the line, sometimes moving in response to something they heard.

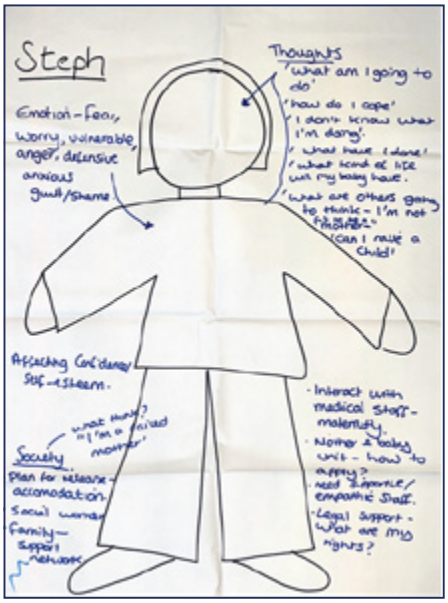
When you work in a residential setting you see self-harm every week. The de-sensitisation comes from being used to it, which is bad in itself. That's why we have a psychotherapist supervision in PIPE [Psychologically Informed Planned Environments] *and in Approved Premises.*

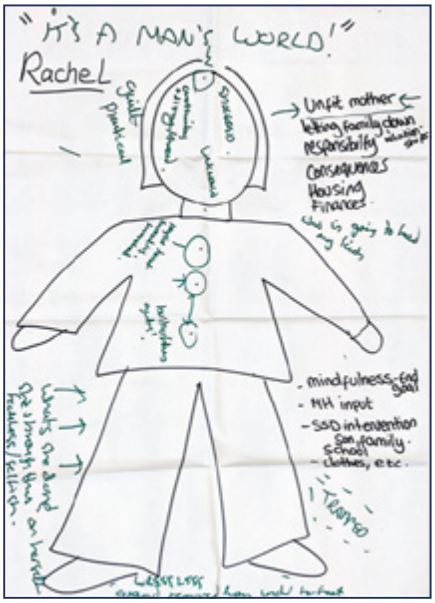
You are walking into crisis every other day and you need to have a work façade, a professional mode. There is reflective space in a PIPE. But prison officers, although it's a residence, they don't get supervision or structured reflection or psychological information.

Everyone will say, working with women is the most intense group you can work with.

This exercise produced searching conversations about working in a context that, at times, necessitates desensitisation while always requiring empathy.

2.11 THE HANDOVER – GROUP WORK REFLECTION ON CHARACTERS





Character outlines from group work exercise.

The group separated around 3 tables. On each, there was a large outline drawing of a figure with the name of one of the characters in *Sweatbox* - Steph, Rachel, Nina. The group was invited to think about the character and then map their reflections on the drawing.

In the head space, write her thoughts.

In the body, write her feelings.

In her legs, write her needs.

Outside the body, write how others perceive her.

The facilitator then invited the groups to imagine a scenario, *'if you were passing this character on to another colleague, what would they need to know to help improve her pathways and outcomes? You might think about: How does she present? What is her priority need?'*

For Steph (the pregnant character): they advise that she appears to present in one way, but that you need to get underneath the first impressions to understand who she is, what she's afraid of and what she needs.

Her feelings: Fear, anxious, overwhelmed, guilt/shame vulnerable, defensive.

Her thoughts: What am I going to do? How am I going to cope? What have I done? What kind of life will my baby have? Will the baby get to stay with me?

Her needs: To interact with medical and maternity staff, to know how to apply to the mother and baby unit, empathetic staff, legal support to know her rights.

External perceptions: she'll cope because she's been to prison before. Is she a 'fit' mother?

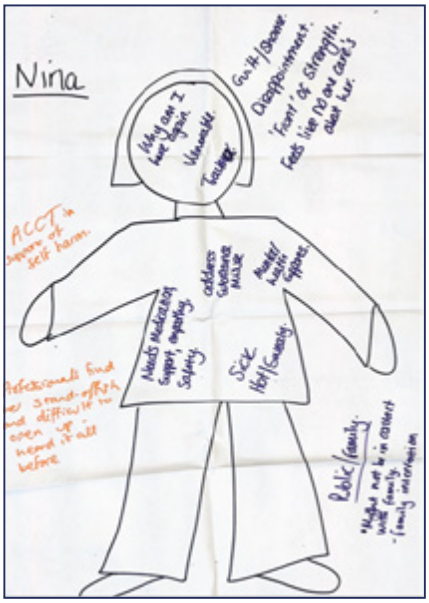
For Rachel (the character with a young child): They need to attend to the concern around her son before beginning to put anything else in place.

Her feelings: Guilty, claustrophobic, dizzy, worry, fear, trapped.

Her thoughts: Who do I trust? Who is going to feed my kids? This wasn't meant to happen.

Her needs: Reassurance about her son, communication with her son, mental health support, Social Services Department intervention.

External perceptions: Bad mum, how could she do this to herself and others? Letting the family down.



For Nina (the character withdrawing from drugs): Although she appears tough, she needs time, consistency and care, and that a colleague would need to hang on in there to build faith and trust.

Her feelings: Like no one cares about her. Might be a bit of relief? Potentially safety, if you've got a negative partner. Withdrawing, in agony - though pretending not to be. Hot, sweaty.

Her thoughts: Why am I here again? I can't cope any more. Where am I going to get my next fix? Is this an opportunity to get clean?

Her needs: Drug mis-use support. One-to-one support to build trust. Someone not to give up on her. Mental health support.

External perceptions: Very tough nut to crack. Heard it all before. Professionals might find her stand-off-ish and difficult to open up.

Reflecting on the characters in *Sweatbox* invited robust, collaborative reflection which was thoughtful, analytical, empathetic and imaginative in its professional engagement. It was an opportunity for the group's individual and collective experience and care to be shared. Each person brought their professional role and experience into the room alongside each other.

2.12 Thinking with your body – staging support systems for women in the criminal justice system

After consideration of the ways that each character presents and their needs, the workshop shifted gear from reflection into action, by inviting the groups to stage images with their bodies.

The facilitator prepared the group with some drama games:

1. Participants moved around the space and called-out-rules were reversed: stop means go, go means stop; jump means clap, clap means jump. The atmosphere was light and lively as people got confused working out what they were meant to be doing.
2. In pairs, the participants made a scene of going to the dentist. There was much laughter as people made tableaux of nervous patients, open mouthed, with dentists looming over them.
3. In trios, the participants were invited to make a washing machine. There was lots of laughter and chatting as the groups found ways to arrange themselves to make images with their bodies. Some of the machines were animated with moving parts and sounds. Some were broken. The atmosphere in the room was playful.

Now that the group knew how to make still images with their bodies, they were invited, in their original groups, to think about Steph, Rachel or Nina.

Think about an image that says something about an action that the character needs to do to improve the outcomes for herself.

Think about staff action, something that they would need to do to improve the outcomes for the character.

Think about the system – what is an action that would make better outcomes not just for the character but for all women in the criminal justice system.

Think with your body!

The facilitators gently encouraged the groups as they navigated this invitation, talking, listening, trying things out, making shapes, reflecting on it, adapting: there was a sense of what if-ness, how about this-ness in the room. Images were shared and the other groups, the audience, were invited to say what they saw, how the image spoke to them.

In a session with magistrates and probation staff the group made a series of images about Steph:

Image 1: 'Calm'. Person sits on chair, head bowed, others standing well back.

Thoughts from other groups: She's lonely, taking her time, space, reflection, isolated, guarded, self-soothing, protective of her child.

Image 2: 'Heard'. The person's face looked up. Others surrounding her, ears cupped.

Thoughts from others: she being listened to, supported, they are saying 'we're here.'

Image 3: 'All Together'. The person is in the middle of a circle of people around her, holding hands.

Thoughts from others - working together, holding her, encasing her, connected, different services communicating.

In workshops with prison staff, they created images and discussions that attended to:

The need for prison staff to have more mental health training and support.

The helpfulness of multi-disciplinary meetings as part of pre-release preparations. The need for better support for people with learning difficulties and awareness that many women don't disclose them or have a formal diagnosis.

The helpfulness of prisoners and advocates attending meetings with high level officers together. This would give a person an opportunity to speak for and represent themselves rather than have an 'on the page' representation from institutional notes.

Solidarity. Awareness that their challenging working conditions impact on staff recruitment and retention, which produces further detrimental impact on staff and their interactions with the women they work with.

Like the reflection on the artworks, embodied/staged images can have multiple stories and interpretations, because everybody brings a perspective informed by their position and experience. There's a responsibility not just with the people creating the image, but with the audience to make the images speak. Focusing the groups' attention on specific characters from *Sweatbox* allowed for a nuanced insight into systems, processes and experiences of people who both live and work in the criminal justice system.

2.13 Closing reflections

In the final part of the workshop, the facilitator invited the participants back to the circle of chairs to once again consider the artworks around the room. She asks if the image they originally chose - or a different image – resonates with them differently.

In workshops with probation staff, they reflected,

hope. *With us all collaborating, there can be hope. With attention, things can change. There is hope for us in our jobs. There is hope for them in their lives.*

un:mute. *It's about listening. In the film the women were silenced, in their box. It speaks to me more now.*

hope. *We know how the system works so which dots to connect.*

like no home place. *Thinking about release and challenge of things not being like they were before.*

just like me. *I don't only see protests, but solidarity.*

un:mute. *I think I'm not centring women's voices as much as I once did.*

transportation. *People have choices, not your choice, their choice. It's about listening and understanding what the person in front of you thinks and needs is not necessarily what you think.*

like no home place. *We assume people want to get out of prison but they might not have a safe space to go to.*

like no home place. *I never saw the shoes there before. She had an option to leave. Sometimes you have to unpick why people are staying where they are.*

Just like me. *We are all the same. What would I want in that situation. Taking time with someone. Instead of oh, I'm in a rush.*

In one of the workshops with prison staff they reflected,

like no home place. *Being trauma-informed, there's always a background story, help staff see that more.*

hope. *Putting myself in the image, changing my perspective. Sometimes you do have compassion fatigue. You do see the same people coming through and think, here we go again, but their circumstances haven't changed.*

like no home place. *Be more mindful. Don't automatically judge.*

hope. *Work on promoting and educating officers to work in a recovery-focused way.*

like no home place. *I want to make sure I'm providing reassurance as much as possible for when they're in that cell later that night.*

In some of the sessions when there was a little more time, the facilitator invited the group to develop these reflections further and think about things that they could or would like to do in their professional practice.

Magistrates and judges spoke about how the workshop was a reminder of *'humanity, the people behind the system'* and that while it may seem impossible *'to do anything significant about policy'*, the workshop offered *'insight'* into criminalised women's experiences and a reminder to *'stop and listen'*, to have more *'consideration of people.'*

In a workshop with probation staff, they offered what a facilitator referred to as *'a toolkit of wisdom'*:

Body language. *Keep it open. Be aware of height and how that might make somebody feel.*

Giving time. *It's difficult in our job, but we need that time to help them open up.*

Don't promise *what you can't deliver.*

Don't give up on this person. *Sometimes people need an advocate to be alongside them. And patience to allow them to take the time that they need as they work through different aspects of the system.*

Patience. *They might not believe they deserve help.*

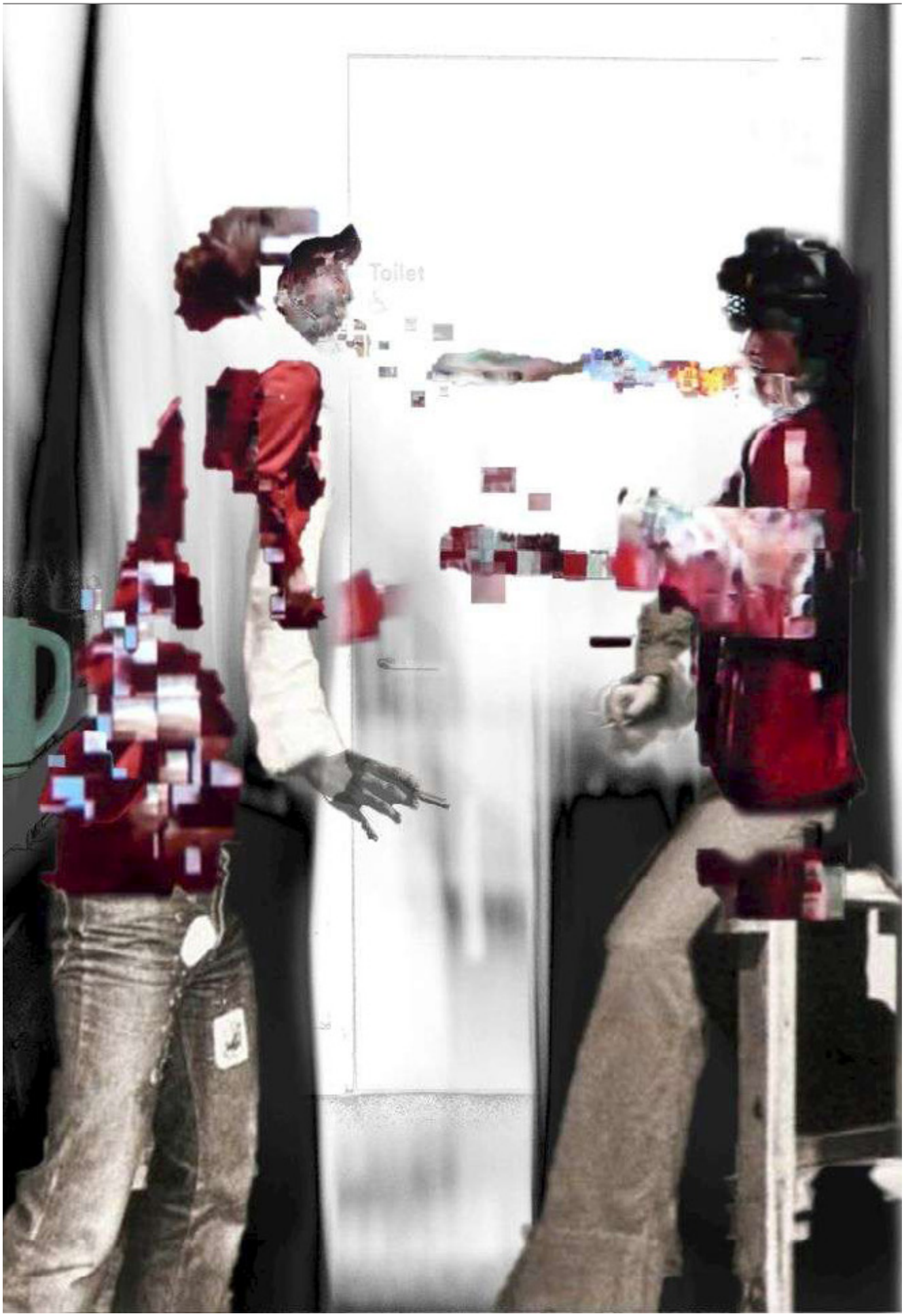
Think of your use of language. *Don't chuck in lots of acronyms or jargon.*

Sequencing. *Assessing all of the things that need to be done but being clear about what is the most important thing now and then what is the next thing after that. Being really clear that things can be done one at a time. This brings a level of confidence and reassurance that things can be done particularly when people are feeling very overwhelmed. Asking, what's most urgent for you?*

Positive praise. *Making sure small steps are recognised.*

At the end of each workshop, when participants reflected on their learning both verbally and in many of the questionnaires, they said that the session had been illuminating, galvanising, challenging, surprising and, for some, encouraged hope for what may be possible.

The post-session questionnaires asking participants to reflect on their experience also asked if they could be approached for an interview in 4-8 weeks' time. The next section of the report offers insight into these reflections.



heart #6 © laura dean 2022. Mixed media canvas 36x48

PART THREE: THEMES FROM INTERVIEW DATA

We wanted to understand if and how *Criminalised Women: Changing the Story* had affected participants' knowledge, understanding and professional practice.

A third of the workshop participants accepted invitations to interview 4-8 weeks later. The semi-structured interviews were online, 30-60 minutes, recorded and transcribed. The questions focused on: previous experiences of training; the aspects of the workshop the participants found most significant; if and how the training impacted the ways they work in terms of what they think or what they do; if they had shared the experience of the workshop with colleagues.

Theme 1: Uniqueness of the training

The workshop was unlike any kind of training or professional development that participants in any part of the criminal justice system had experienced.

> It was one of the best training events that I'd been on. And a lot of training events are very prescriptive. They're very information overload heavy. PowerPoint. Paperwork. I felt I was learning.
> (Probation Service)

> 95% of the training that I have done throughout my whole training has been on Teams, has been hours and hours long, where basically no one wants to participate and no one really wants to be there. So to be in a training where it was interactive, people getting up, moving around, everyone was engaging, everyone was talking, there were shared experiences. … Before I attended, I was a bit worried because in training, I'm not the kind of person that speaks out. And if you told me I had to move around and play games in a training, I would have been Oh no! But actually I really liked it. I went back instantly and was telling everyone if you get the opportunity to go I would go, because it's such a different style of training that we usually get. Different but in a good way.
> (Probation Service)

> I felt like that training with Clean Break was the opposite of everything [I'd done in training before]. It didn't feel like training. It felt like was team building exercises and a fresh new way of reflecting. …It was really positive. Everyone was really happy. … There wasn't a time where I was bored or where I wasn't focused. I wasn't distracted. …And it was fun.
> (Probation Service)

> I think more training needs to happen that way - the way in which you delivered it - right across the board.
> (NHS Community Service)

> It was a really good training. … Everyone enjoys the opportunity to get away from the office or to get away from the prison for a morning so when you have training like the training that we did and it's fun and it's light hearted, but it's also dealing with an important subject matter. It's one of those things where we're learning a lot and we're networking and building our professional relationships but also having a good time.
> (Voluntary Organisation)

> What was lovely about this training, it wasn't death by PowerPoint, everyone had a voice, and even where we were positioned, everyone was facing each other... Everyone's view was valued. Even though it was quite interactive, it felt safe. And I saw people doing stuff that I wouldn't normally think to see them do, which was really, really lovely to see. We would like more face to face training like that - it helps you think a little bit out-of-the-box and how we can apply the skills that we've got to working with the client groups that we've got.
> (Probation Service)

Theme 2: Mode of training and mixed groups

An appreciation of the approach and characteristics: in person, participatory arts, no learning objectives explicitly checked against, working with people across different roles, different levels, and different parts of the criminal justice system.

> [I appreciated] the way that it was set up, the interaction, the way that the facilitators included everyone, how everyone had a voice. … That doesn't mean I enjoy a role play - I will not ever admit to that! But it was a really friendly, inclusive environment. It was really well structured, but with enough flexibility to allow people to have their own thoughts and opinions. And I loved the inclusion of the artwork. I absolutely loved the film - I told everyone about that when I got home.
> (Post-Custody Community Care Service)

There were so many [significant things but] I'm going to pick up on the *Sweatbox* film because … it was the common thing we all spoke about … there was probation officers, there was prison-based staff, there was people there from Women in Prison, some people who had not worked in prison but just been made aware of the impact of just that short journey, which sometimes can get very easily forgotten about as a community officer. That resonated a lot with people and it and definitely generated conversation.
(Probation Service)

It was really interesting to hear how we all interpret things differently, which we know, but actually to be put through an exercise just reminds you, doesn't it? And you know, we all perceive things differently. And partly it depends on the state of mind we're in on a given day. … And I think for me, you are always aware of that when sentencing. The circumstances of the offence and the offender are important. Sometimes people just make bad choices on the day because of a pressure or whatever, and it may be out of character.
(Magistracy)

The people I was in the room with [weren't] people that I would normally see or usually interact with. I felt that actually some of those conversations I had bringing together that cohort of people were incredibly valuable, giving me an appreciation for things further down the line and made me reflect on stuff. … for me, that was one of the most valuable things, and to understand the whole process a bit more than I do.
(Voluntary Organisation, Police Service)

Theme 3: Experiential learning

Rather than information being banked for later retrieval, learning was developed through individual reflection, collaborative thinking, and articulating ideas with words and images made with their bodies.

You're not just looking at a PowerPoint - you're watching a video, you're looking at artwork, you're having a conversation. You're doing a bit of a game like an icebreaker. The last activity we did, where we were showing what we wanted to say through ourselves, making ourselves into a picture, it just gets you thinking where other training might do the total opposite.
(Probation Service)

[With] the artwork, you're putting your own perspectives and experience on the artwork and talking about what draws you in. So for me it was the ruby slippers piece of artwork *[like no home place]* … I was able to look at why I was drawn into it, which really made me think about how I view the people I work with in prison, or how I viewed my time in the prison.
(Post-Custody Community Care Service)

It wasn't come in here and listen to this, watch this PowerPoint and we're going to go through all these learning points that we need to come out with and understand this, this and this. It was all very inclusive and reflective. I liked the ice breakers and things like that because there was no pressure. … It was very quick and connected the body and the mind with the next task which was the images. You're relaxed then you're not thinking, oh, gosh, what's coming next? …Am I going to show myself up, whatever it is. You're very open and relaxed. And you wander about looking at the images. I was really quite amazed in that state how much came to mind. How much thought about each image and what it was saying to me. And I could have spoken in the end about all those images in many, many different ways as to what they were saying. … By picking one and then spending more time thinking about it, the connection to that one picture became stronger and the message that it was personally giving grew and evolved as well, even just in those few minutes away from the first thought.
(Police Service)

Theme 4: Facilitator with lived experience

The importance of the workshop being co-facilitated by someone with lived experience.

> The moment you've got a lived experience, then it's more interesting. It's better to have that conversation. You feel like you're actually learning more.
> (Probation Service)

> I was interested in the lived experience that we were told about, because that's something that plays into my personal beliefs. I was delighted to hear that there are ways out for people who get into trouble and people who turn their lives around and make a great success of their lives having started out not well… I knew that would come with Clean Break because I know what the constituency of the theatre company is.
> (Judiciary)

> Absolutely brilliant. I thought that was really powerful. It is very thought provoking for all of us because it's one thing to look at theoretical people and the video but to actually hear from the mouth of someone who's been through the system, it's hugely significant. … Her testimony speaks volumes and it was really brave of her to be so open, so honest because it's not easy when you've gone through that experience to be willing to share it with strangers, some of whom you might feel were the people who put you there in the first place. Not only was her testimony powerful because it's real life, but actually, we need to hear from people who are on the receiving end - that's really important, isn't it.
> (Magistracy)

Theme 5: Reduced silos

The workshop supported participants to know more about different parts of women's experiences within and across the criminal justice system.

> It's good to get people engaged and talking, especially if they don't agree. I just wish we had more of this type of thing. … it's all about education and engaging with people in different and imaginative ways. And having a disparate, diverse group from all areas of the judicial system, I think it is always beneficial rather than just looking at it from our narrow stance.
> (Magistracy)

> Some ladies didn't know about the sweat box. They didn't realise. My colleague [is] an ex PCSO (Police Community Support Officer). She didn't realise that the van with the little windows are tiny little cubicles that people go in.
> (Police Service)

> I work in the community so it was an insight to see what some of these women go through when they're in prison and not only their struggles, but also see a little bit of the process of how they get there, how things are done when they're in prison…It was eye opening because I've never had a prison visit or anything like that.
> (Probation Service)

> [The *Sweatbox* film] made me realise that people's needs aren't met when they're in those [vans]. What if they're claustrophobic, or if they're if they suffer from anxiety? And I think one lady was anxious. One lady was pregnant, and it makes you think, what would the alternative be? How are these people transported? It made me more aware.
> (Police Service)

> I couldn't get over the transporting of people. I don't know why, it was never even on my radar. And you've got somebody sitting on that van for probably six hours and they can't get out. I had no concept of that at all. So that happens quite a lot. And I kept saying afterwards, well they've now got to get to Peterborough, which is from here probably 2 1/2 hours and they said yeah, but we have to go around this way, so it might be three, I said, Oh my God, can they get out to go to the loo? That was the number one thing that really shook me.
> (Magistracy)

The main learning or new information was from the *Sweatbox* film. I've not been in a prison van and done that journey myself so it was useful to see what that experience is like. We hope that we have progressed beyond that since the film will have been made, having an understanding of how you treat women especially and with Mother and Baby Units and specific policies for pregnant women. It was upsetting but important. It's a great visual way of getting a message across about the importance of a person-centred practice, being informed about trauma and how the system itself could create more trauma. I thought it was a brilliant video.
(Probation Service)

It is awful to send women to custody, but actually when they [magistrates and judges are] presented with 15 cases in the day and this lady's been really difficult, they think, oh, let's just resolve the problem and get her out here. And she goes through that door and that door is just a big blank space to them. And they [the magistrates] don't see anything else. Seeing that journey of what [the women] go through, especially that prison van video which shows immediately after their decision, what happens to that female, it's really important.
(Probation Service)

Theme 6: The learning stayed

The learning percolated and shaped ways of thinking. People talked about how, in training, information is often related to processes, systems and the law. That information has a clear trajectory of application. The workshop offered a different kind of learning, inviting people to think about their own practice, their role within the criminal justice system, and women's experience within it.

It really got you thinking, it's not just about that surface level stuff, but …deeper, what is someone going through? If you were experiencing X,Y and Z how would you be feeling?
(Post-Custody Community Care Service)

The most significant thing was the differing views that people had dependent upon what they did, where they were coming from, their level of involvement and some of their biases that then come out. You will approach it from a certain way and then to see others and to hear them explain I always find fascinating because you know it's not right or wrong, it's just different. The more you take that on board, it improves you and your ability to make decisions. It's constant learning.
(Magistracy)

Most of the people invited to do the training are specialists in working with women, but some of them have a generic case load, so they work with men and women, or they might just work with a few women. They haven't necessarily had the time to reflect on some of those [issues]. They will all have had a lot of training around it, but they might not have had such thinking time about the impact of this or why we really need to have a different approach when we work with women.
(Probation Service)

It made me really think we've got to step up a bit more. If you've been on the bench for years and years, you could get, 'well, there's nothing we can do.' But there is always something you could do. You know you have to, you have to move up that little notch and ask, what else can we do? Just ask that simple question. It doesn't cost anything. What else can we do to stop this person coming in? Because there are other things that you can do. … There is hope. There is positivity … Little tiny changes make bigger changes up the road. ... It's not always about money. It's about help and assistance, someone to talk to, a role model. There are things that can be done to improve that person's confidence and move them on. [The workshop] questioned myself of how I'm doing things. Not in a bad way, in a good way, and then it made me galvanised to say, come on, come on. So there's more we can do. There's always more we can do - I'm talking about our attitude. Our attitude to what we see and what we hear can make a massive difference for that person for the rest of their life.
(Magistracy)

One of the most poignant things for me was the *Sweatbox* video. It helps you to realise that it's very easy to paint a picture of someone based off the referral. We see written down - they need help with this, this is the crime they've committed, this is their risk level. It's very easy to paint a picture based on that. But realistically, that is a very small section of who the person is as a whole. …You get what they want you to see and what you're able to work out. But I think for me that highlighted how important it is not to make your initial assessment or your initial opinion based off the information you're given, which is very easy to do. It's human

nature. … The video helped me to remember that you have to, yes, look at the risks, yes, look at the crime, but don't allow that to form an opinion until you've met the person and spoken to them.
(NHS Community Service)

I think the problem … especially post COVID, so much training is online and not face to face…. Whereas this being face to face in the room, it was so interactive. You're not just sat in a chair in front of someone, but you're getting up. You're moving around. You're doing things. You're looking at stuff. You're talking to people. I think it made it so much more engaging, therefore, so much more memorable. With other training it's either e-learning, clicking through slides or on a Teams call, looking at someone else talking through slides, I don't think it's as memorable, I don't think it engages the brain as much … I think a lot of the other training you know they ask you at the end what will you take away from this and you just write an answer in a box whereas with this training I wrote an answer in a box and it was true.
(NHS Community Service)

Theme 7: Important reminder

Even people who had considerable experience working with criminalised women, who said that they hadn't learnt any new information about the contexts of their lives, were explicit that the training was beneficial because it reminded them of why they did the job.

The training was 'a reminder to keep doing what I'm doing in terms of trauma-informed [practice] and listening to their voices, it's a reminder that that is the most powerful way to work with these women. You are often told that you don't really have capacity to do that, various different things pulling you in different directions and I always try to stick to my guns and go, 'No, I want to work this way.'
(Probation Service)

But what was nice about your training was it verified that what we were doing was right … but also it also verified that there's even a bigger picture. You can look at the situation in a different way, approach it in a different way which is quite refreshing.
(NHS Peer Support)

Even things that you sort of already know deep down, to have it there in front of you and so obvious just brings it instead of being subconscious, it's conscious, right? So you're a lot more aware of the way you're thinking and the way you interact with people. I think I honestly, I think anyone who works in criminal justice, especially with women, should do it.
(NHS Community Service)

Theme 8: Working in-between

Work is carried out in the spaces between role, departments and areas of the criminal justice system. Some people spoke about feeling siloed, immersed in the volume of their own work in one part of the system, with assumptions or expectations about others working in different areas. The in-person workshops invited collaboration and reflection between other people working in different parts of the system. They welcomed the solidarity of sharing a commitment to supporting criminalised women.

I loved the conversations that it brought out in people. And I love the different perspectives that we got from people. We obviously had quite a wide range of people from different experiences there, which was great. And what I really loved was that we had a prison officer there as well. I was dying to know how she was going to take to some of the things being brought out and I think it opened her eyes as well to some of the more complex things, away from the risk and more to the holistic. Whereas I think sometimes we're very holistic and maybe sometimes a little bit wishy washy on the risk it was nice to have that kind of middle ground.
(Post-Custody Community Care Service)

I found it interesting how many of my colleagues in the Probation Service and the Prison Service shared a lot of my values. Because I don't always expect them to practise in the same way that I do because we're a voluntary organisation. … I found it quite reassuring that they seem to have the same … reasons for why they were doing the job. … They'll send over referrals for specific clients to me, and then I'll contact them in regards to a client, but we don't really get that opportunity to sit around and talk about what our values are and that kind of thing. … definitely have a bit more trust in in them. It builds that relationship so that's a positive thing.
(Voluntary Organisation, Police Service)

The thing that I took away most from the training was it was really nice to be in a room full of people that were a bit hopeful. I know that sounds silly, but this job, you can get very bogged down. You can feel, is there room for movement or am I just going to have to keep doing what I'm being told I have to do? And then when you have a room of people all advocating in a very similar way, I came out of it quite positive, which you don't often from training. It gave me a bit of a renewed [sense of] OK, I'm working in the right place, there's other people who are positive.
(Probation Service)

The *Sweatbox* video really opened my eyes … We're very largely thinking about dealing with the sentence they've been given and managing their risk. But actually, let's look at the person as a whole, rather than what they've been sentenced to, and think about those experiences that we're fortunate enough not to have had. I think it was just really helpful to be in a room with other like-minded women and hear about other people's experiences. Someone said it in the session, about knowing that there's other women out there wanting the same as you want in a service, that maybe that doesn't always seem like it's so important. But actually, we are all wanting the same thing.
(Probation Service)

Everyone's enthusiasm and passion and shared goal of actually wanting to make things better, knowing that this isn't just a Probation drive. There's lots of other agencies and charities out there who are really trying to tailor services. … I think training like that does give you those contacts and also gives you different ideas how to work with women and to get them talking.
(Probation Service)

I found it weirdly uplifting. You feel purposeful again. Because you can get so bogged down in the policy, the procedure, the law, the process … and the day-to-day grind of all the challenges and issues. And you can get so focused on your part of the system as well. It does feel really purposeful that you remember that you're there for the human aspect.
(Police Service)

Doing the session with a mixed group of people [was good]. If I'd done [the workshop] with my guys, yes, I would have got stuff out of it. But there would have been less talk, less valuable insight. You had a really good range of people, from the prison officer to drug and alcohol people working the police, that was really eye opening as well. When they said, we work for X Police, I thought oh God, here we go. … It's that punitive versus rehabilitation [thing]. I think they see us as being flaky and everyone's OK and lovely and then they think we see them as being too on that punitive side. Whereas actually it was lovely to really hear people talk about how they want the best outcomes for people. So I did have to check my own bias and it was interesting. I spoke to one of the police ladies after and she said the same about what I was saying, but on the reverse - that she thought that it might be a little bit wishy washy and that she didn't know what she was going to get out of it. Whereas she got loads out of it.
(Post-Custody Community Care Service)

Theme 9: Understanding and appreciation of other areas

The workshops were also a welcome opportunity for people to learn about good practices in different parts of the system and an increased understanding that it may be possible to do things differently and responsively.

In police custody, the compassion and care that is shown to detainees is, on the whole, exceptional. And the officers, there are some absolutely amazing people whose objective is to get people out of the other side of it. Now, whether that's through sentencing or being released in a better place than what they came in. I have seen that time and time again. I genuinely don't think the public see that. The officers see it as a teachable moment, a chance to get that healthcare, that liaison and diversion, whatever it is. It's not shouted out about enough because the guys and girls that are doing it, their hearts are absolutely brilliant. I'm not saying everything runs smoothly all the time. But the overarching feeling is it is a good place. It is a chance to intervene with somebody's life in a positive way. And that's really encouraging because it's not what you see on television.
(Voluntary Organisation, Police Service)

We developed a Women's Breakfast Club which was run at a local church. And the beauty of that is … different charities come in and offer different services … The beauty of doing it away from the probation is that there's not that barrier of coming into an office - having to buzz to get in, being asked for your details, knowing that the CCTV is everywhere, maybe it being triggering and reliving the offence. [Instead women are] able to speak to women in the church hall where they were providing teas, coffees, a little bit of breakfast. They'd see that we're sitting there having a coffee with them. It brings down barriers and see that we're human. There are other agencies there that we invite. Maybe someone from Inspired to help you with your mental health, the Job Centre. Sometimes there's a lot of fear about being referred to whereas, if they've met them before … they're not worried about who they're meeting because they've already met her and they know what she's like. And so, in regards to compliance and getting support, it's far more likely they're going to engage with those services. And not having to send someone to a different building another day, it's all there on the same day, they could get the support a lot quicker. … They can bring their children.
(Probation Service)

When I came in [to this role], the one thing that I wanted to put in place was that if somebody comes to court that they are still able to get the support that we would give somebody if they were sentenced. And we've been able to do that.

And so out in the community we visit prisons, … we get referrals from probation officers on pre-releases, we work with the courts and we support holistically outside for up to six months. However, that does sometimes get elongated due to complex needs. We have worked with people for over a year before because their needs were more complex and they needed that extra support until somebody feels that they're established in the community and they've got all of their needs met by CMHRS [Community Mental Health Recovery Services] - they're housed, they've got their benefits sorted out. They feel settled and then we obviously will take be able to take a step back.
(Post-Custody Community Care Service)

POST-WORKSHOP CHANGES IN PRACTICE

We also learnt that following the workshop people had made small changes in their practice – what they did and felt they could do, working with individual women.

Two probation service staff said that after the training session they had changed how they wrote the pre-sentence reports they had to send to the trial judge:

> That may be the first significant offence that someone has committed. …that training is in the forefront of my mind … What would the impact be of on that person of being sent to an immediate custodial sentence and trying to reflect that in what I write in terms of like, persuade the judge… To just make that more clear about how that would impact the person and how they're feeling about that…[I] dwell on that more than I would have done previously.
> (Probation Service)

> Part of my job nearly every day is deciding whether you propose a woman goes to custody or whether she stays in the community. But I think it sometimes you can get in that repetitive nature of just thinking custody is traumatic, we don't really want to send women to custody, but [this] actually reminds you of why we're saying that. Yesterday there was a case where I thought I really need to recommend custody, I don't know what else, and I was thinking of that video and it did just make me think - what else? Is there another avenue? Is there something else we can do? So yeah, I think it has just reignited how relevant it is.
> (Probation Service)

A Voluntary Organisation (Police Service) lead had changed a protocol:

> I have now mandated that whenever custody visitors go into custody, there has to be a female. She will always lead the questioning around anything dignity related. And if it is not appropriate to ask, i.e. that female seems volatile or anything like that they will check the custody records … that the questions have been asked by an officer, as opposed to by the volunteer. Now that has created a little bit of backlash and some of my volunteers feel that's a step back, they feel it's sexist. But in relation to…some of those feelings that we saw in that video, I don't think it is. I think it's more of an awareness of how people process things.
> (Voluntary Organisation, Police Service)

Two Probation Service staff members adjusted their usual practice:

> I started paying more attention than I would usually to the women on my caseload. I've tried to have joint appointments. When they come on probation, you can refer them to CGL (Change Grow Live) and help with their accommodation [and] help with their rehabilitation. Instead of just sending them there I've been trying to have this meeting together. So we have a two-way meeting and it's helpful. For some [women], we've been able to help them push sorting out their finances and for some their accommodation. [I'm not] just saying "go there", I'm also going on that journey with them. And that's directly because of shifts in understanding from training.
> (Probation Service)

> Something I have used a couple times is bringing pen and paper into sessions with me and have the women drawing … A lot of my ladies are in art therapy and they quite like showing the artwork that they have done. [The training] reminded me more to dig into it a bit more and actually figure out what they're showing me, why they did that rather than oh, that's a nice drawing. It reminded me the artwork can actually show more than their words sometimes.
> (Probation Service)

Shifts in thinking and approach:

> Last night I had somebody in…and I did think, maybe before I would have said, oh, maybe she's being a bit difficult and she's complaining. Even reading previous notes that had been written about her, I could tell that that was the vibe and that is what I prepared myself to get. But actually, when I sat down in front of her…I've got a completely different perception of her because I just listened to what she was telling me. …Some of the materials we covered in the training just opened my eyes to what else goes on in the system and the journey people have before they get to sitting in front of us. … That's definitely stuck at the forefront of my mind – to be more open with my cases. …. I felt the whole methodology of a lot of open discussion activities opened up my mind a bit more, it just made me think about how I am with people that I'm sitting in front of, rather than being incredibly prescriptive like - here's a worksheet. It just made me think, OK, there's different ways to work, especially with women. Looking at their past history, their trauma. There are different ways for them to open up about it, like the visual exercises. I suppose that's a kind of wayward answer to a very big question because I took quite a lot from it.
> (Probation Service)

> The *Sweatbox* video was quite powerful. I say that because I had a lady that has just moved prisons and actually it was one of the first things I asked her, how was the journey? I'd never considered it. … I had quite an in-depth conversation with her about how it feels to move prisons and what it's like being in that van.
> (Probation Service)

> But we feel quite powerless about a lot of other things, so we can't help the big delays at the moment or the administrative issues, or the problem with prison places, or the fact that there's not enough probation officers, that they're not paid enough. The fact there's a lot of the things we send women on to, or anyone on to, like mental health treatment or drug and alcohol treatment could take months till they actually kick in, where you need it to be immediate. So there's a lot that we can feel quite powerless about and the thing with the film was for us, I think, as magistrates and judges, there are maybe a few small things that we might be able to do to make the situation better for women in that situation.
> (Magistracy)

> Even if it just prompts people to go back and think about the equal treatment bench book, and you know about how you ought to deal with women in the criminal justice system, I think it makes all the difference.
> (Judiciary)

Sharing and using workshop resources

Alongside some people's explicit shifts in practice, participants were keen to share information and the resources from the workshop either in their own local trainings, e.g. screening *Sweatbox* with a group reflection, or in their professional practice, e.g. using images when working with women.

> Some of my volunteers have already watched it. We have a training day at the beginning of November. I am showing it in its entirety so that everybody has seen it and we have a bit of a reflection time on it afterwards.
> (Voluntary Organisation, Police Service)

> I emailed out to the all the people that had attended [the training], also…that weren't able to attend, to give an overview and included the *Sweatbox* link. … I did put a caveat there, that if you are going to use that in your team, please ensure that you have a reflective session after… it's not something to go - here you go, watch this link and leave people with it.
> (Probation Service)

> I think the images are really powerful. [Could we] use them?
> (Probation Service)

> I think that film should be compulsory. Is it distributed?
> (Probation Service)

A Compassionate Breath

Ultimately, the workshop was about creating a compassionate breath of space that is important, both for the participants working within the system and for the women they work with.

> I really understand now why people used to be so upset and aggravated and angry when they first got into prison. Because you've literally done this whole long stint, you've not been given your medication, you've been shoved into this box. I don't know if you've ever been into one of those boxes, they're awful. Like you can't even imagine being stuck there for like 3-4 hours.
> (Practitioner from a Post-Custody Community Care Service)

> [When working with the images] it was just so interesting how the one that I picked didn't resonate with [my partner]. … That was for me really, really useful. Just seeing what people see. Because I was looking at [the image she chose and] I thought, I don't see anything in that one. Whereas the one that I was looking at to me was very powerful. So what was really, really good was having that opportunity to sit next to somebody and have that conversation, to see again. It reminds staff people see things differently…we all benefit from having moments of just reminding ourselves of that.
> (Probation Service)

> That's definitely made me think more about the experience that people are having when they come out of custody to us, actually saying to them, are you OK? How was it? Some of them were sitting opposite them and just going on with all this paperwork and they've been in prison for years and you're the first person that they're seeing and it definitely made me think, you need to slow down a bit and think about what they might have just experienced.
> (Probation Service)

> What happens after the Court, what happens beyond and people's experiences of that? … A lot of the judges were quite defensive about that, saying we treat everyone well and with respect. But I felt the workshop was very good at making us all think about beyond - literally beyond, what happens in the van and what happens at prison and people's experiences of that…Which again, once you have that awareness, feeds back into how you then judge in court. It's just having some sort of awareness of what happens afterwards, whether that's the probation officer programme, prison, the van, it just then can feed back into making you more aware and human in court. It's really important.
> (Magistracy)

> These sessions are empowering. [It's been] really good to share and hear other people's experiences. I'm alone in the office on my laptop usually. … The more people have the attitude of the people in this room [the more likely] things will improve.
> (Probation Service)

PART FOUR: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. *The experiences of women moving through the criminal justice system are only partially known by its staff*, as the system comprises highly separate components. The training offers greater understanding about criminalised women's experience at points before and after a particular practitioner's role and therefore more awareness of how to support them in their journey.
2. The criminal justice system is made of people and the *informal spaces between formal structures* are where much of the work of justice actually happens.
3. *Modes* of training matter. Participatory arts practice can enhance professional understanding and practice in ways that other modes of information sharing do not.
4. Participatory arts practice can facilitate *peer learning and collaboration* across the criminal justice system.
5. Policy establishes processes designed to achieve particular aims. People with experiential knowledge of these processes have agency to make changes in practice. *The training prompted practical changes and shifts in approach*.
6. *Cultural change in the criminal justice system is possible*, with positive benefits for staff, for criminalised women and their families, for wider society.

Almost twenty years after Corston, the Women's Justice Board reported that the radical change she sought has not come about, noting that while it has been government policy since 2018 to reduce women's imprisonment, implementation has been patchy, without statutory underpinning and with limited central support (Women's Justice Board, 2026). The Prison Reform Trust reached the same conclusion: there is no shortage of policy, research and evidence about what needs to be done, and what is lacking is leadership, coordination and follow-through (Prison Reform Trust, 2026).

Both the Women's Justice Board and the Prison Reform Trust identify training as part of the answer. While neither is explicit about what such training should look like, *Criminalised Women: Changing the Story* offers a model that works: it is gender-specific and trauma-informed, shared across agencies, and involves women with lived experience.

The report evidences the impact of Clean Break's training on practitioners' understanding, attitudes and behaviour. In a system with many chronic problems, the training offered staff a voice and an opportunity to reflect with others. The training has revealed, enabled and enhanced the ability of staff to make a difference to the lives of women in the system: **for everyone, a compassionate breath.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The training is complementary to core training and will encourage better practice and improved retention. In enabling a professionally-structured space for reflection and expression, the training enables workplaces to be more compassionate in relation to its own staff.

   Invest in this training, and its variants developed subsequent to this project, for delivery across the criminal justice system. In particular, incorporate it at the earliest stages of training for police, prison and probation staff and the judiciary.

2. This report has captured the informal or unseen work by criminal justice system staff. This needs recognition and investment to ensure that staff are supported to continue to provide responsive, collaborative support to the women they work with.

   Invest in further research to identify the work done in the spaces between formal activity. Ask staff what they do and what could be done in the system as it exists now.



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discomfort eating mixed media canvas, 36x48

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transportation mixed media canvas, 36x48

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