

ISIS
womens
centres



Community Support for Women

the
nelson
trust



Gloucestershire



the Howard League for Penal Reform

2013 Community Programmes Award Winner – Services for Women

ISIS Women's Centre

The ISIS Women's Centre is a safe, women-only space where a wide range of problems related to offending, substance misuse, abuse and wellbeing can be addressed in a warm and supportive environment.

Run by a dedicated team of female staff and volunteers, ISIS provides a trauma-informed service with an emphasis on outreach, engagement and a holistic approach.

The Nelson Trust

Established in 1985, The Nelson Trust is a registered charity with a national reputation for excellence and innovation. It combats severe and multiple disadvantage by providing treatment, care and support for people with drug and alcohol problems, those with complex psychological and social needs and those at risk of offending.

Building on the success of our specialist treatment services for women, the Trust established ISIS in 2010. ISIS works closely with our addiction recovery team and our Family Focus therapists to address women's needs.



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ISIS

Who is the service for?

ISIS works with women who have a range of vulnerabilities and complex needs which may include involvement with the criminal justice system, mental health services, homelessness and social services.



Who can access this service?

ISIS is a referral-only service. We currently accept referrals from Gloucestershire Probation Trust, women's prisons and other designated agencies. Spot-funding and block purchasing of our services is also possible. All service-users must be women (18+) living in Gloucestershire.

"I feel every time I come to ISIS I have achieved something, I feel motivated and I feel like I have support and I'm not alone."

How does the service work?

ISIS has developed a relational, trauma-informed approach to working with vulnerable women and draws upon evidence, research and professional networks in designing our services. ISIS is also informed by the Nelson Trust's experience of treating addiction since 1985.

Every new client is offered a detailed individual assessment of their needs across nine "pathways": these are housing and homelessness; physical and mental health; drugs and alcohol; finance and benefits; family and relationships; domestic abuse; sex working; education and training; attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

Each client has a named Key Worker who develops with them a support plan to address the most urgent needs first (such as having a safe place to stay) and then addresses ongoing difficulties through regular sessions over a period of weeks or months.

"It just felt so comfortable and so friendly... a safe place to come with people I could trust."

What is ISIS like for clients?

Every ISIS client has her own personal support plan relating to her needs, circumstances, goals and priorities.

No two women are the same, and that is why an ISIS Key Worker offers each new client a very thorough personal assessment, to understand what she wants to achieve in life, and what problems or obstacles might be blocking her progress.



Some needs may be very urgent, such as getting away from a violent partner, having a safe place to stay and food to eat.

Then there may be pressing problems such as an outstanding court case, a complicated money issue or drug and alcohol problems to overcome.

When the most urgent and pressing needs are addressed, attention can turn to ongoing needs, for example education and training, emotional wellbeing and social integration.

Key Worker and client work together to develop a support plan which is really a route map for finding a way through present difficulties and moving forward with her life.

and the plan is adapted as needs and circumstances change. Once those needs have been addressed, or become manageable for a client, plans can be made for an exit from the service.

However, every ex-client is able to continue accessing a range of group activities at ISIS, and if a new crisis emerges she can access a Key Worker through our regular drop-in sessions.

“My confidence has really grown and I’m starting to make plans for going back to work and, although the thought is daunting, I have a bit more belief in myself now. What’s more, my kids are really proud of me!”

Once a plan has been agreed, each client has regular contact with their Key Worker. She may also be invited to take part in a programme of group activities, workshops and classes.

Support may continue for a number of months. Progress is reviewed regularly

Working with offenders

FOSAR

The Female Offender Specified Activity Requirement (FOSAR) is an individual programme offered by ISIS for women facing sentencing by the courts. It includes therapeutic groups, courses and 1:1 support to address a range of problems and needs which are connected to offending behaviour.

FOSARs of 8, 14 or 20 day duration can be attached to a Community Order, Suspended Sentence or as a license condition. FOSARs are a valuable and constructive alternative to a custodial sentence and often a last opportunity for a woman to get her life back on track and avoid prison.

All women on a FOSAR are expected to complete a course on 'Crime and Its Impact'. They are also encouraged to access a range of other courses delivered by ISIS to improve their wellbeing and reduce their risk of offending, including: Drug and Alcohol Awareness; Self Esteem; Emotional Wellbeing; Relapse Prevention; Anger Management and Assertiveness; Anxiety and Mindfulness. Women who undertake a FOSAR are also able to access the full range of other support services provided at ISIS.



In-reach to HMP Eastwood Park

For many women in prison, their day of release only brings a set of further problems.

Many have no home to return to and nowhere safe to stay.

Others may have been inside for too little time to qualify for a discharge grant, and find themselves outside the prison gates with no money and only the clothes they are wearing.

Little wonder then that women are at the highest risk of re-offending during the first week of release from prison.

ISIS works closely with HMP Eastwood Park (the local women's prison for Gloucestershire) and provides 'through the gate' support to all women returning to the county.

Our in-reach worker offers at-the-gate pick-up on release.

Support is there on the day helping women with urgent issues such as probation, drug and alcohol services, health, housing and benefits.

In an emergency we can also help clients access food, clothing and resettlement grants from local charities.

This is intensive support at a crucial time.

Continuing support is provided in order to help women resettle back into the community, essential in reducing the risk of reoffending.



Promoting Change



“I thought my criminal record meant I had no hope of getting a decent job. After a few ETE sessions at ISIS I realised that by taking little steps I could get closer and closer to where I wanted to be.”

Education, Training & Employment

For many women, education, training and employment (ETE) issues are a priority. At ISIS they can access support which helps them to:

- Identify goals and education needs – from basic skills to vocational qualifications
- Take part in a range of different courses at ISIS
- Access courses at local colleges and other providers
- Get advice about job-searching
- Find out about volunteering opportunities in the community
- Write CVs, job applications and manage the disclosure of any criminal convictions.

ISIS has close links with Gloucestershire Adult Education, GPT and Tribal New Futures which makes it easy for our women to access specialist support such as help with reading, writing and numeracy. ISIS provides a range of in-house courses from cookery and art-and-craft skills to more structured courses that can lead to a recognised qualification.

Re-Unite Gloucestershire

When women in prison are separated from young children they face great difficulties on their release.

Women can often need support to access housing where the family can be re-united, and help to re-form healthy family relationships.

This is essential for resettlement, re-integration into the community and for achieving desistance from further



offending. Working with women due for release from HMP Eastwood Park, and in close collaboration with our Family Focus therapists, ISIS helps mothers coming out of prison to access housing, practical support and appropriate therapeutic support to establish stable family homes. We then provide continuing support to the family for as long as it is needed.

Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP)

ISIS has a dedicated outreach worker, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, who provides outreach and support for women who are street sex working.

Regular street outreach sessions in Gloucester provide information and support on issues such as safety, mental and physical health needs, accommodation and substance misuse.

We work with other local agencies to provide joined-up case management and comprehensive services.

Our goal is to integrate practical and therapeutic approaches to substance misuse, trauma, family issues and reducing reoffending by offering holistic person-centred services aimed at addressing the whole spectrum of needs that women working on the streets are often facing.

Promoting Change

Women's Safety Work

A dedicated Women's Safety Worker at ISIS works with women who are in relationships or recently separated from partners who have been sentenced via a court to attend the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme.

The Women's Safety Worker builds a trusting relationship with clients, supporting and advising them to reduce any risk factors posed by current or former partners.



"My experience of ISIS is that I find it really helpful as it gives me the opportunity to talk about certain issues that I have found hard in the past. I've been addicted to alcohol for the past 10 years. I've been sober now for 6 weeks."

Circle of Security

In partnership with Families Inc, a social enterprise founded by child and adolescent psychiatrists, and with funding from The Peter Lang Children's Trust, ISIS is working with mothers where their bonding and attachment with their children has been disrupted through substance misuse, offending behaviour, mental health problems and domestic abuse.

Circle of Security is a relationship-based early intervention that helps mothers become more attuned to their child's emotional needs enabling them to develop closer and more secure relationships with their children. Secure children exhibit increased empathy, greater self-esteem and better relationships with parent and peers.

Circle of Security includes peer mentoring opportunities for those who have completed the course to share their experiences and help other vulnerable women, both at ISIS and in the wider community via the county's Children's Centres.

The Promoting Change Network

With funding and support from the Lankelly Chase Foundation, ISIS also provides help and support for women who are not involved in the criminal justice system but who face other complex difficulties.

With our funders we are working to bring about change that will transform the quality of life of those who face severe and multiple disadvantage, focusing on the persistent clustering of social harms such as homelessness, substance misuse,



mental and physical illness, extreme poverty, violence and abuse.

The Promoting Change Network is formed of organisations from across the country using different approaches but also working collectively to advance the mission.

What else do we do?

In House Facilities

ISIS clients can come in at certain times to make use of the centre's shower and washing machine. A phone is available to make essential calls e.g. to benefits agencies or housing providers. Clients can also access a computer room for the internet. A café provides free coffee, and the opportunity to browse information displays, and in good weather there is a beautiful garden tended by clients in which to relax.

Crèche

A free crèche is available for children up to 8 years old. This enables clients to concentrate on their own needs and support goals while at ISIS knowing their children are in very safe hands.

Emergency Support

Sometimes clients find themselves in a crisis, especially if there are benefit claim problems or they have just come out of prison. ISIS keeps a small stock of donated food, clothing and toiletries for emergencies; we can issue food bank vouchers and can help clients apply for resettlement grants, many of which are generously provided by the Fluck Convalescent Fund.

Outcomes

Natasha's Story

Natasha was referred to ISIS under a suspended sentence order with an Alcohol Treatment Requirement. She had a history of alcohol misuse and had been in an abusive relationship. She retaliated, stabbing her partner.

At ISIS Natasha completed OCN qualifications in Crime and its Impact and Drug and Alcohol Awareness. She also attended groups on relapse prevention, self



esteem, anxiety management, emotional wellbeing and anger management.

Natasha also worked hard to address her domestic abuse experiences, attending our Freedom Programme which helped her understand the dynamics of her abusive relationship and its effects upon herself and her children.

Natasha has three sons; the youngest boy was fathered by her abusive

Outcomes

ex-partner. Social Services placed him with his paternal grandparents and Natasha was desperate to increase contact. Given her significant progress and restored abstinence from drinking, we supported her in applying for a contact order. She now has unsupervised contact and her older boys often come to stay. Our Family Focus team supported this whole process.

Natasha was keen to find work, so we referred her to Action for Employment. She started volunteering at a cancer charity which she really enjoyed and was offered paid employment. She also enrolled on our Mentoring course, successfully completing an OCN, Level 3 in Mentoring Skills. The course facilitators were so impressed they secured funding for her to undertake Level 4.

After two years, Natasha realised she was ready to leave ISIS and go out and gain experience working towards her goal of helping others. Natasha is an inspirational woman who, with support from ISIS, found the strength to turn her life around. She is a role model of determination and strength, who can share her experience, giving hope to other women starting on their journey of recovery.



Impact

Each year we expect to work with over 200 women. From our experience we know that most have many and complex problems, and we can measure significant positive progress against the vast majority of those needs over a period of months.

We see women who are attaining safe and suitable housing; reducing their offending; addressing their substance misuse; reducing the risk of experiencing violence and abuse; achieving an increased feeling of safety, confidence and self-esteem; moving on to education, employment and independence.

Our work has a wider impact. We are helping children and adults achieve healthy family lives, we contribute to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in the community, and we reduce the expensive burden placed on all public services by women leading chaotic, unmanageable lives. Importantly, we see our clients achieving independence, taking responsibility and playing a positive role in their communities. To hear our clients speak for themselves, please visit www.nelsontrust.com



Funders Partners Contact

Funders

We are enormously grateful to our funders.

Capital funders:

Clothworkers' Foundation
CHK Charities Ltd
Henry Smith Charity
Leigh Trust
Mercer's Charitable Foundation
HSBC Holdings plc
Rowland Trust

Core funders:

Corston Coalition of Independent Funders
Gloucestershire Probation Trust
Ministry of Justice
National Offender Management Service

Special project funders:

Adult Education Equalities Department
Barnwood Trust
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust
Glos Police and Crime Commissioner
Glos County Council
Albert Hunt Trust
Lankelly Chase Foundation
Peter Lang Children's Trust
Pilgrim Trust
Florence Shute Millennium Trust
Summerfield Trust
David Thomas Charitable Trust
Zurich Community Trust (UK) Ltd

Partners

Key to our success is the support and participation of many statutory and voluntary sector partners, including:

Adult Education
Commonweal Housing
Families Inc
Gloucestershire Constabulary
Gloucestershire County Council
Gloucestershire Domestic Violence Support
Advocacy Project (GDVSAP)
Gloucestershire Probation Trust
Gloucestershire University
Green Square
HM Prison Eastwood Park
Independence Trust
Integrated Offender Management
Knightstone Housing
NHS Substance Misuse Teams
2gether Trust
Tribal New Futures
Turning Point
Witness Care Unit

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