

Up-2-Us Time for Change Project 2010-2013



Introduction

This report outlines Time for Change Project's work between 2010 & 2013. The report summarises project activity and important milestones and themes arising from our contact with extremely vulnerable and high-risk girls and young women over 3 years taking us to the next stage of the project's development 2013-16.

Other more detailed reports are available,

- the Glasgow University Year 1 evaluation
- user consultation Year 2, and
- Year 3 issues arising when referrals peaked

Project development

The gender specific *Time for Change* Project (TfC) launched in March 2010, following 2 years preparation work with funders, academics and the Scottish Government.

Initially the Scottish Government fully funded TfC as part of the youth justice strategy aimed at reducing secure accommodation and prison numbers. At that time the team comprised two full-time and two part-time workers making 105 hours per week of support available to referred girls from West of Scotland. Over 3 years, the funding base of the project changed as we received small contributions from local authorities and grant giving trusts and by the end of March 2013, TfC support time was 140 hours per week, with the additional funding used to,

- bolster our response to young women on remand or short sentences
- improve social inclusion in areas such as employability

Funding from the Scottish Government tends to be seed money and awarded on a year-to-year basis with reasonable expectation on their part that organisations find other contributors. Currently local authorities, though growing in their commitment to TfC, are facing difficult times financially and Up-2-Us have had to look to other quarters such as Big Lottery and Charity Trusts to fill the gap. Since women offenders are a minority, they tend to be viewed as an amorphous group, therefore there are no obvious alternative routes to fund work with the younger age group. Finding year-to-year funding has taken up a large amount of the manager's time and due to the aforementioned issues the eventual package does not fully reflect the characteristics and status of our target group who include former care leavers, youth and criminal justice cases, borderline mental health and special needs cases, excluded young people and those finding it difficult to take advantage of universal opportunities.

In 2010, TfC's assigned remit was to engage with high risk and extremely vulnerable girls 15-17 years and service providers in order to,

- reduce time in custody or secure accommodation

- provide a community based alternative to custody or secure accommodation
- improve girls' long-term prospects by working intensively at transition points and beyond

With experience our target age group broadened to 13-20 years, largely due to,

- changing national and local policy priorities, which encouraged retention of girls in the child-care services
- the Glasgow University evaluation of TfC which called for inclusion of 18 year olds based on the girls views and the obvious gap at the child and adult care service interface
- the new under 21's set up in Cornton Vale which brought YOI's together and meant that there was a greater age range of potential referrals
- TfC accepted albeit reluctantly that very young girls were entering secure accommodation and needed alternative service provision

Consequently, TfC added new components to the service,

- brokering support for remand & short sentence girls in Cornton Vale YOI, irrespective of their age and area of origin
- enhanced employment support and desistance work with girls who despite reductions in offending often remain entrenched in their hostility to authority
- closer practical relationships with third sector and local authority projects to try to close service gaps and improve access to local opportunities in line with the project's inclusion and social capital goals
- long term involvement with some young girls whose prospect of family rehabilitation had been ruled out and were facing secure placement

Rationale for a gender specific initiative linked to action research

In 2008 Up-2-Us made a commitment to very high risk girls and young women because of,

- perceived inequalities in the system's response to challenges presented by girls and young women, their over representation on prison remand, the apparent harshness of the courts in sentencing, the girls difficulties in working within the Through Care and After Care framework
- girls' welfare history and early care and accommodation pathway that often preceded secure placement and prison
- the tendency to apply ill-fitting offender programmes to a small group of girls and young women with complex problems rooted in their early childhood experiences and rejection
- poor historical investment in developing gender specific services

When we embarked on the TfC initiative, Up-2-Us wanted to learn more about the reasons why these girls and young women already well known to agencies should gravitate towards prison and whether different decisions and methods could,

- change that path
- give girls the opportunity to fulfil more of their potential as young adults
- at the very least limit further harm to self and others during the lengthy transition to adulthood.

Given the limited evidence available on what works for the target group, Glasgow University's Dr Susan Bachelor, one of the few academics with interest in this field worked with Up-2-Us to develop an action research component to the evaluation of TfC's first year. Scottish Government funded this work which was undertaken by Prof Michele Burman and Nadine Imlah. In June 2011, they hosted a small stakeholder seminar attended by TfC partners, practitioners and senior managers, and policy makers from the range of statutory and voluntary services. As well as learning about TfC process and outcomes, this multi-agency group aired their own concerns about lack of gender informed support and the cost difficulties of establishing a localised response for the highest risk group.

The Year 1 evaluation report was published in February 2012 and recommendations from this, including closer planning with referrers, widening referral age, developing the relationship model have directly informed project planning for TfC's third year.

Building on the Glasgow University research model, we have used consultation with service users and referrers continuously to test our practice assumptions through,

- presentation opportunities and participation in network events
- standard feedback questionnaires from girls and stakeholders written up by independent researcher Nadine Imlah,
- interviews with girls who had long term contact with the project
- a masters student who explored girl's perceptions and the impact on them of institutions

Up-2-Us commitment to research continues through a collaborative research scholarship based at Glasgow University starting in September 2013 and our own appointment of an Information and Policy Officer funded for 3 years by the Lankellychase Trust as part of their Change Initiative.

The TfC model

TfC set out to offer person centred support within a holistic, relationship based support model with plans and timescales tailored to individual need and risk, backed up by a 24/7 on call availability for girls to use at crisis times. We devised materials to engage girls in their own assessments and reviews and used our links with secure units and Cornton Vale to establish relationships with girls before they moved on.

In 2010, most female secure placements from the West of Scotland were in the Good Shepherd campus and this helped us create complementary professional relationships which in turn filled knowledge gaps in the care history of those we met in YOI, providing girls with a greater sense of continuity of care. Now, the secure provision for girls is dispersed in various accommodations, and although day-to-day

relationships are still good, some of the benefits for the girls of pre discharge work with TfC have been lost.

After 6 months without a base, Time for Change acquired a room in Edinburgh House, East Kilbride next to the Up-2-Us main office. This suited contact with the Up-2-Us Manager who led the initiative from planning to current developments. Although one to one outreach is the preferred model, the limited office space proved useful for work sessions and reviews with girls. TfC has also made occasional use of other Up-2-Us premises such as our respite house for activities which provides a suitable learning environment. In ten cases, girls have stayed overnight at the respite. Initially Up-2-Us toyed with the idea of a drop in facility for activity and group-work, but when consulted, after a period of consideration, girls and workers expressed reservations believing that other aspects of the service were more important (such as accessibility, listening, having your own one to one key worker at the end of a phone). Some young women thought that an independent project base might encourage negative associations between girls at times when they are impressionable.

Time for Change continues to promote a person centred and gender informed approach with no formal endings and the capacity to continue work with girls through crisis, changes of status and location. The 24/7 on call managed by the team has become important as a prevention as well as a crisis tool. The project also makes use of some standard programmes including self-esteem, skills based and vulnerability measures, though workers tend to use Up-2-Us materials and adapt or make artistic creations for & with the girls. Our methods build strength at the individual's pace and range from counselling to activities such as going to the gym or finding jobs, attending court or appointments and encouragement to face up to day-to-day hurdles. We combine these approaches with more structured work such as

- insight giving & solution focussed (life story work, reflective discussion, connecting feelings and actions)
- goal setting & monitoring
- brokering access to formal and informal opportunities
- negotiating important relationships
- offense focussed motivational work
- skills based support, coaching and modelling

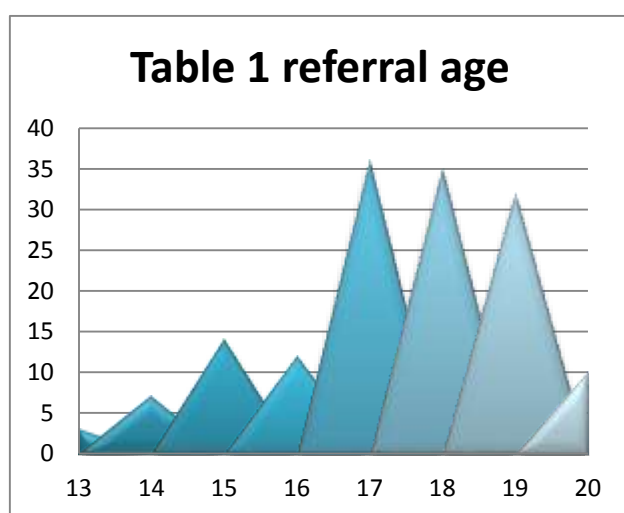
Since TfC's long term goal for individuals is to intervene in the spiral of negative thinking and work towards a more optimistic view of the future, the views of stakeholders and service users provide a useful indication of where and how this happens. They suggest that the essential building blocks of success are,

- linking young women to one worker who offers one to one support in a consistent and continual manner over flexible timescales
- varying levels of planned input in response to progress and encouraging move on plans whilst leaving the door open to return in the future

- worker availability for advice and practical support including night and weekends, when most other services are not accessible
- a balance of planned, unplanned and crisis input which attends to both immediate problems and longer term goals
- staying in touch with the young person through changes of mood, relationships, placement, geography, legal status and services

Project workload

Between June 2010 and March 2013, 150 individual girls were referred, 120 of whom came from our immediate catchment in West Central Scotland. 7 girls were referred to the project more than once. 10 spent time in respite accommodation as part of the plan; others had accommodation help using other resources such as weekends away and bed and breakfasts. Whilst Years 1 and 2 show a healthy number of referrals at 41 in each year, the massive jump in Year 3 to 75 is largely explained by changes within YOI and our improved profile with local authorities. Rates of referral continue to increase.



From 2010, TfC collected information to help our policy and service planning. This included care history, priorities at referral, input levels and response to our service. A small number of girls from 2010 are still in touch with the project (some intermittently to share good news, others to deal with crisis, and a smaller number who continue to receive a formal service) so there is potential for long-term case studies.

Table 1 Number of Girls by Age at Referral shows that referral age peaks at the traditional crossover between being a child and an adult when the organisation of statutory services changes dramatically. This may also reflect the impact of the national government's whole system policy from 2011 with more emphasis on sourcing local solutions and retaining young people within the children's systems. However, there is a need for caution as policy and service trends can alter very quickly— for example this year, there has been an increase in the number of 16 year olds in Cornton Vale. Additional trust funding which supported TfC's work in Cornton Vale in 2012 together with internal changes in unit arrangements and a developing partnership with Plan B, have also increased our identification and response to young women on remand.

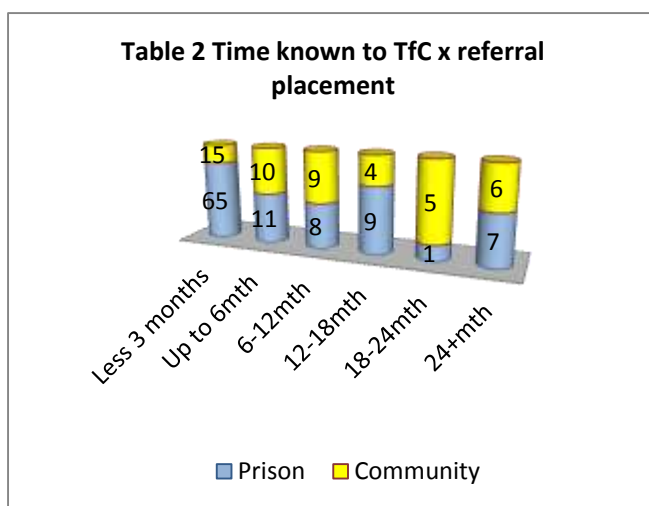


Table 2 illustrates Time Known By TfC by Placement Type at Referral and shows that two thirds of the girls we met were in YOI at first contact. This is a very high percentage and may indicate how difficult it is for professionals to predict the risk of future offending as well as the gaps in prevention and Through Care and After Care for care leavers.

In 2013, we continue to see disaffected girls having supervision orders terminated at 16 against TfC advice. In some areas, there is a reluctance to use the order as a protective measure against future offending. Reasons given are often spurious such as no order being a condition of access to supported living, the girl's rejection of Pathway Planning or their quest for more independence. Although most authorities now build in safeguards, these local systems have proved slow to pick up on changes such as previously known cases entering remand, domestic violence, and homelessness - especially out of hours.

Table 2 shows the number receiving short-term support as very high. However the figure includes,

- 30 from outwith the catchment for direct service in the community, therefore work was devised as short term within the YOI or on release day and
- referrals made in the last quarter of year 3

Of girls in the long-term support category, all except 3 spent a significant time in local authority accommodation frequently from a young age. Family rejection, parent and child drugs/alcohol use, mental health and abuse are also characteristics of these cases.

Whilst collecting information about case history was not TfC's primary task, with permission, workers recorded information offered within the constraints of the time available during remand, individuals being released mid contact or our priority being to resolve immediate concerns such as a solicitor, family or child care contact or organising professional's access.

From all information gathered, we note

- The majority of girls TfC met had prior or current social work involvement. Although some girls on remand were vague, only 5 said they had not been involved with social work at some time. Older girls in YOI had most difficulty identifying their current social worker and frequently gave names of previous workers. Those in prison tended to identify other workers from housing, drugs

or employment or voluntary projects as their main support. A number of girls on remand looked to the TfC worker to reconnect them with named workers whom they valued.

- Building reliable historical information can be difficult (data protection restrictions, information lost in case transfer) and for TfC only happens when girls get to know their worker over a long period. Of 101 girls offering good information about their history, 73 said they had been in Children's Units and / or Foster Care, 38 in Secure Accommodation (one girl had not been in any other form of care) and 3 said they were looked after by relatives.
- 86 girls reported significant alcohol or drugs problems which impacted on behaviour or lifestyle. Whilst older girls on remand spoke of long-standing heroin and cocaine addiction and were looking to go to rehabilitation services. Alcohol, cannabis and prescription drugs - mainly valium were the most commonly cited drugs by all age groups. Younger girls do not see this use as concerning, especially cannabis, and often mix them with over the counter remedies or legal highs as a daily pick me up or when trying to avoid what the girls regard as serious substances – mainly heroin. Many on remand identified parents' drugs or alcohol problems and seemed fatalistic about returning to drugs at some point in the future even when they were accessing drugs support services.
- Girls supported by us in the community went to prison more than once before TfC began work with them. This was constant over the 3 years. For example, one of our early referrals in 2010 had been in prison 5 times after leaving care, another released from secure sentence immediately offended and received a 4 year sentence and in the first quarter of 2013, of 34 girls over 18 years receiving community support from TfC, 28 had previous remand spells, 9 on numerous occasions. On first contact, local authority workers can be reluctant to refer YOI's to TfC, expressing confidence in their own local plan to work as an alternative. This tends to change after further remand periods because the TfC worker visiting prison on a weekly basis has by then build a better picture of need and consequently is better placed to influence the social workers decision.
- Time working with young women varies from 3 months to over 2 years for a small group who need a more open ended commitment
- The health dimension of our work in the community has undoubtedly been the most troubling. Sometimes but not always linked to a drugs/alcohol lifestyle young women have difficulty approaching health agencies or dealing with health matters. There can be many reasons for this – embarrassment about their past, unrealistic expectations leading to difficult encounters, fear of being judged, poor self-worth and communication problems. Mental health and conduct disorder labels frequently apply during adolescence though have less currency in the adult world. Whilst 13 young women were detained under the Mental Health Act, a much smaller number received adult health care support. Though transfer to health and community care support applied in 2 cases, this

was unsuccessful because of the inflexibility of the service to account for the lifestyles girls can lead.

TfC set out to provide an intensive and high frequency support service, but as identified over the 3 years we have added other elements. This is especially true of prison work where the same TfC worker now visits routinely and provides,

- a service to all remand girls irrespective of age or home area, making connections and activating local and prison support
- short-term transition work with older girls and where possible involving them in local support
- flexible and open-ended community support to individuals who have a history of resistance and struggle to engage consistently with local agencies

The level and frequency of contact TfC now has with individuals has varied considerably from once or twice daily in extreme cases to weekly once girls are established in their home area. Invariably project input for the first 6-8 weeks of contact is high and is the time when workers get a clearer assessment of current and historical issues when talking with or searching out individuals. The pattern of contact changes many times over their time with us and from the young woman's perspective, worker constancy and involvement in adjusting the plan to the right level for them, as one girls said, 'so there's always stuff to talk about', is extremely important.

Although Time for Change increased staff capacity between 2010 and 2013 through the use of short-term grants, the project has maintained an important measure of stability within the team. Early consultation with young women confirmed that they did not wish volunteer or sessional worker support and preferred our key worker system. 4 members of the team and the part time manager have been with the project from the beginning. We think team cohesion and stability is closely linked to good outcomes for girls because this brings consistency, flexible working practice, personalises the on call response and helps our local professional relationships. TfC employs male and female workers, though in line with girls' observations and practice experience all have access to female workers through our co-working arrangements.

Outcomes

1. Transition

Secure Accommodation

None of the girls leaving secure accommodation with intensive support from TfC have progressed to Cornton Vale. Where girls at or around 16 years moved on from Secure Accommodation with sustained support from the same small group of workers from TfC and committed social worker (or similar) input, it does seem that over a long period they grow strongly. Although there were major bumps on the way and mistakes to learn from, these girls gradually moved on to a more rewarding adult phase at or around 18.

Where TfC became involved with younger girls as an alternative to secure, results are mixed. In some cases, the girls went on to spend time in secure placement for shorter periods and received positive support from TfC over lengthy periods. In others, Up-2-Us respite was used as a stand-alone support or in conjunction with TfC. Where the girls moved to out of area placements, TfC input was immediately displaced because of distance and travelling.

Conclusion

- The key to positive outcomes for girls leaving secure accommodation appears to be relationship support, built within the secure unit and supported by small tightly managed group of professional committed to the goal of long term rehabilitation and willingness to stick with that task over a long period
- Multiple agencies, frequent changes of direction (or threat of change) and placement do not in our experience produce good outcomes

2. Custody

Over the 3 years, one TfC worker planned visits to Cornton Vale weekly to meet new remands or short stay cases with the intention of ensuring support was in place for release.

- The offer of post release support was turned down in a very small number of cases though some young women in the upper age group stressed that they wanted only practical support. For those within the project catchment for community support, as a minimum, provision took the form of meeting at the gate or ensuring someone else was there and presentation to services. Most girls emerged with outstanding court matters and contact with solicitors was a priority
- Where intensive support was followed, the early phase in the community was characterised by a mix of good intentions and continuation of risk taking behaviours, sometimes with friends they made in prison. TfC provided long-term intensive support to a smaller number of extremely high-risk girls
- In cases where TfC were already involved, the worker maintained contact at least fortnightly during the remand stay and over time this added an important quality to the work undertaken with the young women
- Despite weekly presence and strong links with Plan B and Prison Officers, we are aware that other young women missed out on the service or were released before plans were complete

Of girls receiving long term, intensive support for periods up to and for a small number over 2 years,

44% have not returned to prison during their time with TfC

26% returned for old offenses outstanding at release

30% returned for new offenses

The cases are highly individual and it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. Nevertheless, the figures for long-term support are better than cases where the TfC role was very short term or transitional.

Most offending involved shop-lifting or an accumulation of petty disorder offenses linked to alcohol / drugs use or defending a partner. Only one girl returned for serious violence and is serving a long sentence. Most girls were remanded only once or twice except in one mental health case where this happened 6 times.

From experience it seems,

- The risk point in terms of reoffending tends to be after the first 3 months and again at 15 months.
- Whilst there is no clear-cut reasons why some young women do better than others, our impression is that girls with long care and abuse histories and a high profile with professionals in their community accept the prison path as inevitable
- Just as in secure care, time spent with girls whilst in YOI impacts positively on release progress and gains are made over the distance by consistent relationship support. Over time, progress is linked to a maturation process and behaviour changes when young women begin to see themselves as more worthy and the pull of community links becomes stronger than the prison peer group

3. Prevention

During year one, we learnt that the term prevention was open to wide interpretation and essentially a function of local resources and commitment to a community based support strategy. The responsibility rested with the Up-2-Us manager to make sure that the TfC focus was clear and in line with the agreed remit. From year 2, many enquiries were relayed back to local services and on occasions TfC withdrew from cases when it was clear that local supports were sufficient even though others thought differently.

When Time for Change became operational in summer 2010, the project received many requests about a range of girls 'at risk'. To avoid up tariffing we have tried to stick to a narrow referral definition such as 'meeting statutory secure criteria or in secure placement, facing custody 'today' or 'on remand/short sentence'. Even so, there has been pressure on TfC in cases of rising levels of risk and protection concerns, which cannot be fully met by local provision. Unsettled girls in children's units frequently face or feel the threat of secure accommodation and older girls with special support needs sometimes do not meet disability or adult service criteria especially where there are behavioural issues.

Nevertheless,

- We have learned that simply adding TfC to the service mix can be unhelpful
- Where TfC do become involved in high tariff accommodation cases this has to be part of a multi-agency plan where the core support group is small and there is tight case ownership and daily communication

4. Crisis

TfC accepts that crises are inevitable during the early months and the 24/7 on call service is one part of the projects response. Most young people and their carers have used this at some point. The team also responds to day-to-day distress and dramas which range from homelessness, drugs related incidents & emergencies to friends and family problems. The TfC response has been critical to limiting further harm in many cases – sometimes by offering telephone counselling over a period of time and at other times providing practical help by call out. This has involved a wide range of activity - visits to hospital casualty, responding to police or carer requests, rescuing young women from risky relationships, and sourcing accommodation when services are closed. This work invests in girls at the most unsociable of times and is a service which the young women and those closest to them see as a vital part of the TfC service. Over time use of the on call changes as service users find more stability.

We have concluded that,

- Substituting crisis calls for more proactive use of the on call is a primary indicator of progress in individual cases
- The on call provides a direct route back into the service for young women who have moved on and a number have also used it to share good news or seek advice from people they are comfortable with
- During the early stages, TfC users rely heavily on emergency services, such as police, housing, benefits agencies and NHS24. This also changes as they find a more settled lifestyle and incidents of self-harm, through cutting or substance abuse, and homelessness reduce with a corresponding increase in girls ability to manage their own accommodation and the relationships that matter to them.

5. Inclusion

TfC wanted to help young women build interests and connections that would in time diminish the pressure on them to succumb to high risk or emotionally charged events. In particular, we have used small grants to encourage education and employment because of empowerment potential.

Irrespective of statutory status, 16 is still the threshold for new learning and challenges. Through local partnerships, advocacy, job searches and new opportunities, TfC works with individuals to meet these new expectations. Motivation and frustration tolerances are extremely low and it takes time to establish the kind of routines expected by agencies. Connecting girls with interesting employment or placement opportunities can be a slow and arduous process for those who lack routines and over many years have learnt to back away from personal challenge. Yet, it is essential to help the young women escape from their problem oriented bubbles to find people who may invest in their potential. Individual girls have shown that through this painstaking person centred approach, they discover talents they can use to build career ambitions which become an important route out of offending or drug taking. Other girls, having reached the point where they can reflect back on their journey, express interest in helping their peers or suddenly become motivated to pursue personal and social development courses. Up-

2-Us are keen to pursue this social capital building approach through sympathetic local agency partnerships.

Next stage 2013-2016

Up-2-Us have used the lessons of the first 3 years to inform the next phase of TfC's development and we are committed to:

1. Finding a more secure funding base for the next stage of TfC. Currently BL are committed to 60% funding until 2016.
2. Developing our partnership with referring authorities and the women's prison and sharing the results of our project monitoring with them through the Chair of the Young Women's Champions group and NYJ network.
3. Building on our partnership with Glasgow University SCCJR through a collaborative studentship beginning September 2013 which will focus on extremely vulnerable and high risk young women's services in Scotland.
4. Distil information and share the lessons of experience to help inform policy and services for the target group through the appointment of our Information and Policy Officer funded by Lankellychase Trust for 3 years until 2016.

Olive Arens
4th July 2013.