Exploring Women’s Experience in a Hostel on Release from Custody

Aine Morris*

Abstract: This paper explores the experience of women offenders residing in the De Paul Hostel after release from custody. Recent studies in Ireland and Britain indicate that on leaving prison women face many challenges and difficulties. The De Paul Hostel offers supported transitional accommodation for women leaving prison. This paper discusses the women’s views on their time in the hostel and their opinions about interventions from the staff and the Probation Service. It reveals the importance of the key working system whereby each woman was assigned a staff member to work with, the consistent and flexible approach of staff and the value of education and training, peer support, family involvement and practical help.

Keywords: Women offenders, imprisonment, Dóchas Centre, gender-specific services, therapeutic relationship, resettlement, De Paul Hostel, homelessness.

Introduction

This paper is based on a study exploring the views and experiences of women offenders on release from prison staying at the De Paul Hostel since 2007. The De Paul Hostel is located on the North Side of Dublin near the Dóchas Centre (Mountjoy Female Prison). It offers supported accommodation to women leaving custody. It provides six bedsit apartments, and the length of tenancy is six months. The Probation Service is the sole referral agent.

The study, between August 2011 and March 2012, set out to capture the views and opinions of women who resided there. It was prompted by the fact that since it opened in 1999 the population of the Dóchas Centre

* Aine Morris is a Probation Officer working at the Dóchas Centre (Mountjoy Female Prison). Email: aemorris@probation.ie