

THE WIRE

(Women's Information and Resettlement for Ex-offenders)

EVALUATION REPORT

November 2012

'A burden shared is a burden halved'

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How to use this document

The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) are pleased to introduce this evaluation of the Women’s Information and Resettlement for Ex-offenders (WIRE). TSIP is an advisory social business that combines academic research and rigour with strategy and delivery support to solve some of the most intractable problems in society.

The Diagram

This is a diagrammatic outline of this report. This contributes to navigating this document easily, as the evaluation is comprised of a number of sections that run separately but complement each other.

Summary

The **green** section provide a high level overview of this report’s findings.

Project Context and Complicating Factors

The **orange** sections provide some background on women offending, the broader context in which the WIRE operates and the inherent challenges of serving the WIRE’s target client group in a holistic manner.

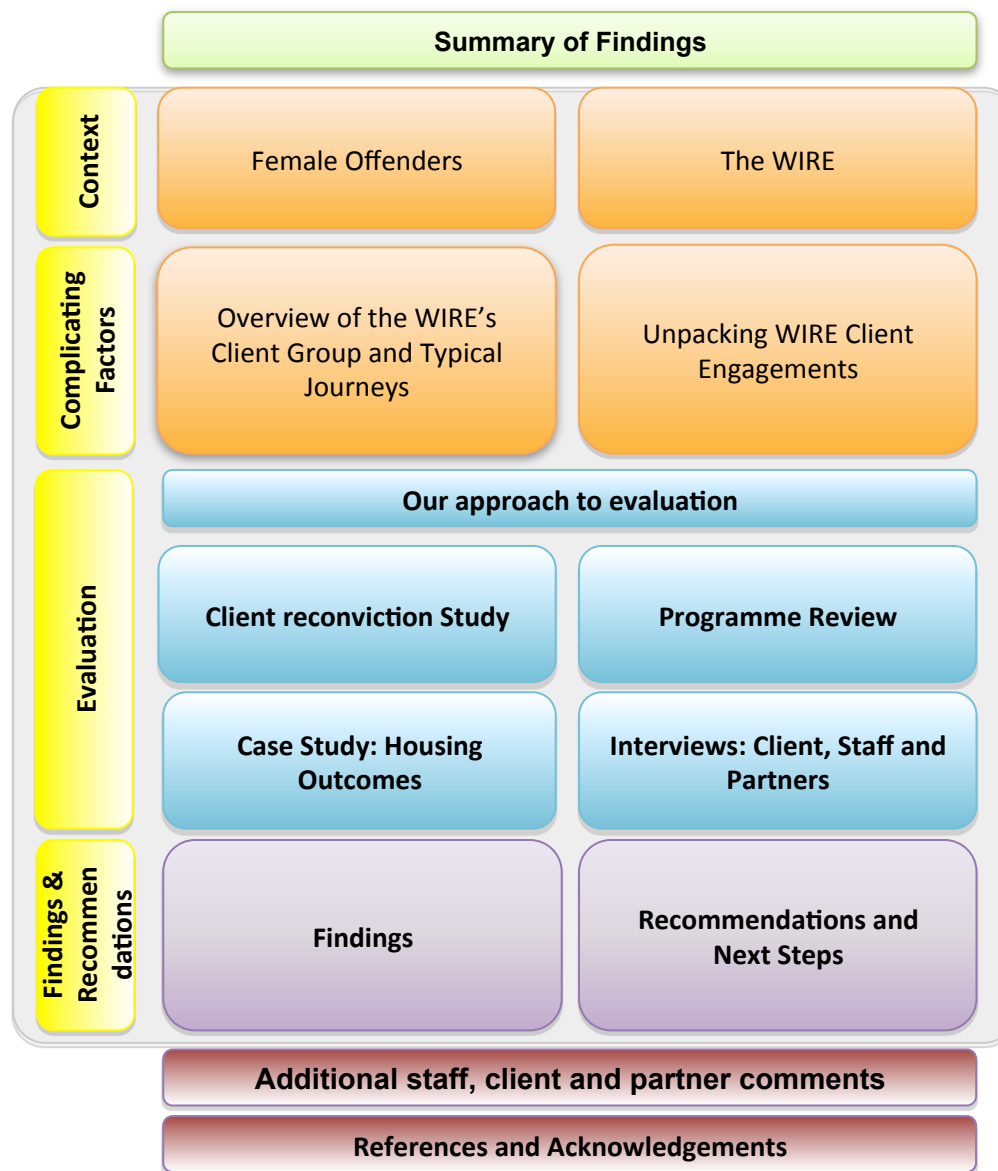
TSIP’s Evaluation, Findings and Recommendations

The **blue** sections contain TSIP’s evaluation, made up of the programme assessment, interviews and a summary of the client reconviction study. The **purple** sections contain a summary of TSIP’s findings and recommendations for future and on-going service improvements.

Appendix

The **red** sections contain additional details of data gathered as part of TSIP’s interviews, and references and acknowledgements to documents used in this evaluation and for people who assisted with the evaluation respectively.

This report is supplemented by a separate Technical Report prepared by the evaluation team, which is referenced where relevant in this document.



Glossary

Advocacy is representation (carried out by WIRE workers) to assist clients in accessing services that could help meet their needs. Advocacy in this contexts includes various informal types of representation, e.g. attending a Homeless Persons Unit with a client.

Assessment a form that is filled out about every client on the programme that assesses their needs vulnerabilities and risks.

Case is representative of a period of work done for a women over a period of time after they have been released from prison. In the event that a woman works with the programme more than once (e.g. on release from a subsequent period of imprisonment) they will be represented by more than one case.

Case work is work devoted to the needs of individual clients or their Cases.

Client a women who engages with the WIRE case worker and receives the services offered by the programme.

Criminal Justice System (CJS) covers agencies such as the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts, prisons and probation, who work together to deliver criminal justice.

Did not engage describes women who were referred to the programme and agreed to participate but did not show up at the arranged meeting point or declined the service at the gates.

Engaged when a client agrees to work with WIRE workers and go on to receive some form of service (e.g. housing, drug support).

ETE stands for means Employment, Education and Training.

HPU stands for Homeless Persons Unit.

Meet at the gates a service provided by WIRE workers where a client is met at the prison gates and escorted to various housing or benefits appointments.

Monthly Reporting statistic is a standard form completed on a monthly basis by each worker on programmes run by St Giles. It is based primarily on client outcomes.

Referred Only means a client is referred onto the programme but does not engage with workers and therefore does not receive any form of service.

Referred means a client that is sent to the programme by another organisation to receive a service that will meet their needs. This can come be from prisons, probation, community organisations or themselves.

Signposting is assistance provided by WIRE workers to help clients identify available resources (without providing direct assistance to help access the service).

The Two-Stage Process The two stages of the WIRE programme. Stage 1 covers the early stage, pre and for up to a week post release, to meet a client's immediate needs. Stage 2 covers the longer term, and is targeted principally at clients more complex needs.

The WIRE log is the internal spread sheet system that the WIRE team use to log referrals. The evaluation team developed this log to try and understand data and trends about clients. After working together (the Evaluation and WIRE team) the log has been developed to better track the project's progress.

1. Summary of findings

Findings*

- **Reconviction rates:** The reconviction rate for the eligible 104 engaged WIRE participants (out of a total of 342 referred women) was **42%**, against 51% for the national average for women offenders and 88% for prolific offenders. Whilst there are issues around how this is evidenced, our additional qualitative analysis broadly supports that the WIRE is a valued service (please refer to Sutherland Report for more detail).
- **Desistance:** The average number of offences per participant **halved** for the 12 months at liberty after the programme as compared to the 12 months before (at 2 offences as compared to 4 previously). Again, there are similar evidencing issues, although we seek to address these through our additional analysis (e.g. interviews).
- **OASys:** Using OGRS3 categories, roughly half of WIRE participants in “high” and “very high” risk of reoffending categories had not reoffended after 12 months (which is half the standard OGRS3 period), which appears to be an encouraging result. However, these results will need to be confirmed after two years post-conviction.
- **Continuing success:** Resourcing issues could affect the ongoing success of the WIRE programme, limiting staff’s ability to (i) give dedicated personal support and (ii) perform a sufficient amount of ongoing reporting to improve performance as measured by both Stage 1 and Stage 2 indicators, and also to evidence successes and support fundraising.
- **Programme Strategy:** Evidence suggests that WIRE outcomes are more likely to be achieved at the early stage (Stage 1) of WIRE interventions.
- **People (resourcing):** The project struggled to match staffing levels with demand (principally due to funding constraints), despite this the team were able to meet housing and meet at the gates targets.
- **Administration:** There were a number of issues identified with reporting strategies. The evaluators worked with the WIRE team to identify and implement solutions.
- **People:** The complex nature and motivation of clients to change has the potential to impact the success of the project, clients need to want to engage for success to be achieved. The staff are also a key component of the success of the project, the workers need to possess a unique blend of tenaciousness to achieve outcomes and empathy to understand the women’s experiences.
- **Outcomes:** Housing outcomes are a strength of the WIRE and it is from this solid foundation that the workers are able to support the women in desisting from crime.
- **Process:** The individualised nature of the service requires staff have skills and that enable them to dedicate the time needed to support women through this intense period. High demand for the service and funding constraints mean staff numbers are such that they have been focusing on Stage 1 as opposed to stage 2.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- **Evidence practices:** A number of reporting and evidence practices have been improved in the course of this evaluation. These improvements should be endorsed and maintained, within the WIRE and beyond, as a way of improving services, ensuring value for money and potentially assisting with future fundraising activities.
- **Staff and resourcing:** Sufficient staff and resources should be allocated to the WIRE, including administrative support, to allow the core team to focus on delivery. To improve Stage 2 outcomes, the programme should be seen as sufficiently distinct (WIRE Plus) to require smaller case loads
- **Process refinements and stakeholder engagement:** Work should be done with prisons to restore an appropriate prison presence, even if just once a week, for WIRE staff. Awareness of the WIRE and its full range of work (i.e. beyond housing) should also be raised amongst other key organisations, along with the evidence of the WIRE’s work with clients.

The WIRE is a female run women only service that works closely to women ex-offenders to guide them from release, assist them with resettlement and aid them in reconnecting with their community. ‘I would have been back in prison without them.’ (Client)

*It should be noted that the (client reconviction study) results of this study relate to a sub group of WIRE clients (104) when in fact 342 women were referred to the service and 240 were engaged. The lack of consent forms, sourcing data from the MoJ, and the 12 month at liberty rule meant we could only conduct analysis for 104 clients. The results of this study must be understood in this context, which means further analysis of both of the 104 and 342 clients is required to make more definitive statements about impact, and effectiveness of the service.

2. An overview of female offenders and their experience

Introduction to offending

- **Reoffending:** Reoffending rates for women range from 51% - 88%¹ and is at a huge social and economic cost of an estimated £7-10 billion².
- **Women offenders:** Women offenders often have complex needs not seen in males³ and are often held in locations that are far from where they live, increasing their dependence on organisations to provide support on release⁴.
- **Service delivery:** The Corston report calls for radical changes to the way in which women who have been in contact with Criminal Justice System (CJS) are dealt with. Service delivery should be holistic and tailored to individual need - women services should be women centred⁵.
- **Targeting services:** A Ministry of Justice (MoJ) report⁶ identifies reducing reoffending as one of its three key priorities and calls for the voluntary sector alongside probation to focus on: (i) probation, police and other local services taking an integrated approach to managing offenders; (ii) getting drug dependent offenders off drugs and into recovery; (iii) getting offenders into jobs with somewhere to live so that they can pay their own way; and (iv) tackling mental health problems.

Female offenders

- As of June 2012 there were 13 women prisons that housed 4,116 women, a total of 10,181 women were received into prison⁷.
- Below is a brief outline of some of the key features of the current female prison population taken from the Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile June 2012⁸.

Women Prisoner's Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Substance abuse: Half (52%) of all women in prison used drugs such as heroin and crack in the month before being sentenced. ▪ Violence: Over half have experienced domestic violence and a third experienced sexual abuse. ▪ Psychological issues: Over three quarters (78%) exhibit some level of psychological disturbance on reception to prison. ▪ Attempted suicides: A third (37%) of all the women in prison, report that they have attempted suicide at some point in their life.
Offences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previous convictions: A quarter of women in prison (26%) had no previous convictions (29% for those sentenced under 12 months). ▪ Nature of offences: Women in prison are more likely to have committed non violent offences (81%) such as theft and handling (34%).
Reoffending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reoffending: Half (51%) of women typically reoffend within a year of release, rising to 62% of women for sentences under 12 months. ▪ Prolific offenders: Of repeat offenders, those with more than 10 previous sentences are even more likely to reoffend (88%).
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mother-child separation: Incarcerating women separates around 17,000 children from their mother. ▪ Sole parents: At least a fifth of women in prison are sole parents, leaving their children in a precarious position.
Preparation for Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accommodation: Over a third of women (38%) do not have accommodation arranged upon release. ▪ Repossessions: Around third of women lose their homes, and often their possessions, whilst in prison. ▪ Housing assistance: Just 11% of women received help with housing matters whilst in prison. ▪ Skills atrophy: Only a quarter (24%) of women with a prior skill had the chance to put their skills into practice through prison work.

The women in contact with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) are some of the most difficult women to engage with. They often present with multiple issues that create a complexity not seen in the male prison population. Meeting these needs upon release into the community is a challenge that programmes such as the WIRE are attempting to address.

3. A description of the work the WIRE team do

Entry to the WIRE

There are **multiple pathways into the programme**, some women are referred whilst in prison whilst others after release and some self refer after being released. What they all have in common is all of them have been in contact with the CJS, the only inclusion criteria. While the majority of clients are met at the gates (or a proxy site) most come to the service to obtain housing, benefits and to deal with substance misuse issues.

A description of what the WIRE aims to do

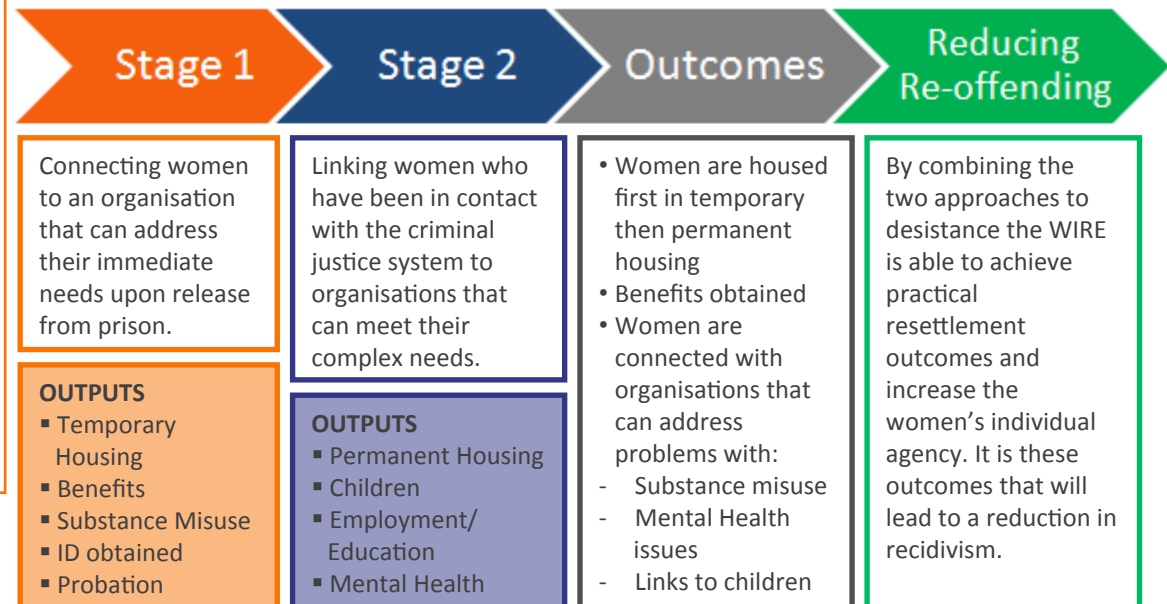
The programme provides constant **emotional support and practical help** to the women in their adjustment to life outside of prison, and guides women with realistic expectations of what life outside of prison is like. While the programme offers six months of support, this usually goes beyond six months which, while understandable in practice, means the programme has to stretch resources to deliver (breaking trust or relationships too early can undermine previous work).

Nature of the engagement

The service is intentionally flexible, the workers respond to each individual woman's needs, as a result service provision can be radically different in that not all women require the same intensity of support. What is consistent though is the commitment to provide more than a referral to another agency, the WIRE advocates on behalf of these women, counsels them on the correct decision for them, provides information, will accompany them to appointments and provides firm emotional support.

The service involves advocacy and signposting, we worked with the team to map out the two stage process.

- **Stage 1** involves helping the women with their immediate housing needs, making appointments at doctor's, Homeless Person Units and Drug Intervention Programmes, etc.; often the women are escorted to one or all of these. This is the most intensive part of the programme (taking hours or days of staff time) and without a client's ID none of these are possible. It is important to ensure women meet their probation and stay within the details of their licence.
- **Stage 2** relies on the women returning to the service as often staff prioritise new releases. When they do return they are supported with access to solicitors to help reconnect them with children, or to organisations that can help them with any issues around their mental health.



The WIRE team are essentially helping the constant flow of clients to get back on their feet and establish a solid base for them to re-engage with the community. The outcomes from the programme are directly related to practical activities at stage 1 and 2 which are designed to provide the women with support and skills to desist from crime.

4. An overview of the WIRE's clients

The WIRE has supported women offenders since April 2010, this report considers data up to April 2012. There were a total of **364** cases (342 women) referred to the WIRE. For ease of analysis three groups were created and below is a summary of the numbers of individual cases and numbers of women that have been referred to the WIRE (for demographic information see Technical Report, slide B).

WIRE Client Groupings (TSIP)	No. of cases	No. of clients	Notes
Referred – referrals to the WIRE project	327*	311	There were 16 individuals participated more than once.
Engaged - had contact with the project	240	227	Includes those that engaged and were still engaging with the WIRE.
Referred only	87	84	Those referred to the WIRE but did not engage in any way.

*NB. These groups exclude 37 clients, who weren't released (9), not eligible (15) and those that did not engage after initial contact was made (13).

Complexity of women offenders and the WIRE's clients

While data is not available to compare the WIRE clients with the general population on all the indicators mentioned earlier, the information that does exist highlights that the needs and complexity of WIRE clients are representative of the general female prison population. The table below compares the general population with all women who have been referred to the WIRE and those that have actually engaged with the WIRE.

Indicator	Female Prison Population ⁹	All Referred to the WIRE	Engaged with the WIRE	Population
Substance Misuse	52%	56%	63%	Clients
Domestic Violence	50%	41%	45%	
Mental Health	78%	45%	78%	
Offences (Theft and Handling)	34%	26%	24%	Cases

WIRE women by prison

The women referred to the WIRE come from a number of different prisons, the original target prisons were Holloway (42%) and Downview (30%) making up almost three quarters of engaged clients. Women from Holloway prison are a unique cohort that are characterised by short sentences for women who are chaotic often with a large number of previous convictions (see Technical Report, slide C), that they feature heavily in the WIRE referrals (38%) is likely to impact on the nature of the client group.

WIRE women and multiple needs

What is striking about the 311 WIRE clients is that many women have multiple needs. Responses to the wellbeing assessments carried out upon entry to the WIRE suggest that nearly two thirds (65%) of women reported activity in three or more of the wellbeing indicators nearly half (46%) experienced four or more and almost a quarter (23%) five or more. This suggests that they have multiple needs and that SGT are supporting a very difficult client group (for more information on wellbeing indicators see Technical Report, slide D).

That the WIRE women are similar to the larger population suggests that SGT does not 'cherry pick' clients. Regardless, the clients are more likely to come from a prison that is known for its revolving door and to have a high number of previous convictions. What we do know is those that are referred to the WIRE have multiple needs that prove challenging to meet from a service delivery perspective.

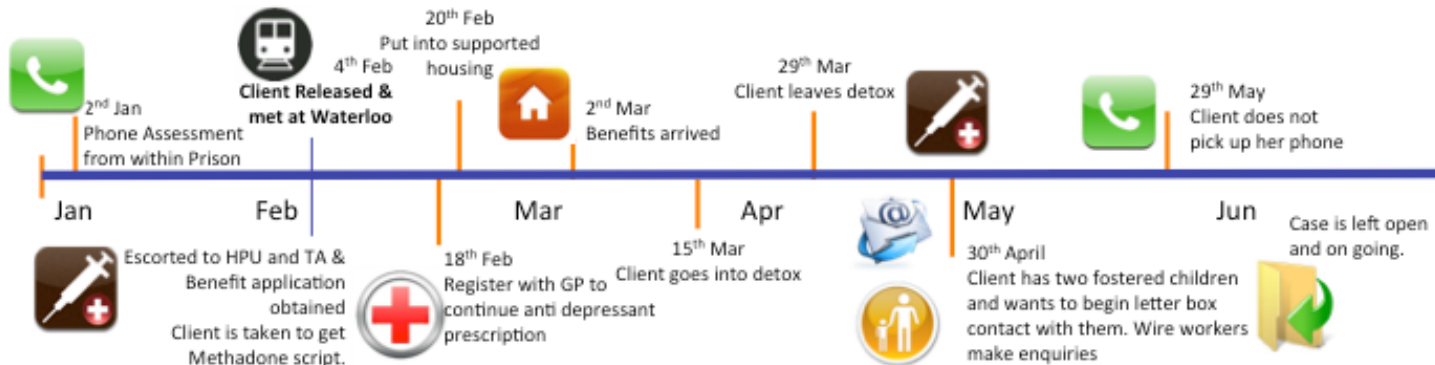
5. Examples of a typical client journey through the WIRE

Client Journey A : Angelica who uses all of the WIRE programme services and is successfully settled into community.



The challenge of supporting these women requires sheer effort from WIRE caseworkers. The women are often challenging to work with and require a high level of engagement from the WIRE team. These timelines highlight the complexity of WIRE cases and the challenges in delivering successes in this work.

Client Journey B : Evelyn who was referred to the WIRE programme with high drug support and health needs.



The client journeys demonstrate the effort what is required from the WIRE team to resettle women back into society. It is clear that the focus is always on housing, benefits and tackling immediate problems – which takes time to fix. The timelines do not reflect the hours and days that can be lost waiting for clients who are late or miss appointments.

6. Unpacking what goes in to client engagement

The WIRE team are delivering a service that is not driven by a statutory requirement or job description – it is driven by **need**. The service is tailored to meet each individual client’s requirements While there is room to bring some focus to this, this work ethic means working with clients is an intensive and complicated activity, as reflected below:

	Activity	Actions	Support	
Pre Release	Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually received by fax or email Allocated to worker who contacts the prison 	At this stage no contact has been made with the potential client.	2 Week Period
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be face to face or via telephone Establish client needs and plan for release If client has no identification begin getting new id before release date. 	The most important meeting, as the workers need to quickly establish rapport, trust and set realistic expectations for what the service will deliver. This is more difficult by phone as clients are guarded when it comes to be assisted. Support is centred on ensuring fears are alleviated, the burden is shared.	
Post Release	‘Meet at the gates’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call the prison to reassure the client on the day before release. Arrive at the gates often early in the day. 	This is the most intense period and often this interaction takes a few days. The workers spend their time advocating for the women as well as managing their emotions and expectations. The worker takes the worry away from the client.	1 Day to 1 Week period
	Temporary Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most likely this requires a visit to the HPU Place in a B&B if there is a delay at the HPU or release is on a Friday. 	This visit can take many hours, it requires workers to be persistent, they need to ensure the client does not get feed up and leave as well as ensuring the HPU accepts the application.	
	Probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact probation and try to arrange a visit the day after release. 	Often women go to probation by themselves, the WIRE ensures this happens, staying in close contact with the probation officer, and monitoring the client.	
	Substance Misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the client has their script. Take them to fill their script and ensure that they use the medication not other drugs. 	Workers need to monitor the clients’ behaviours and look for signs that the client has slipped back into using. If so take action to mitigate this and keep the client positively focused on meeting challenges.	Post Stage 1 and ongoing
	Permanent Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often sourced through the local authority or the private rental sector. 	Workers keep in contact to ensure that the women are maintaining their tenancies through encouraging and guiding them with budgets.	
	Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure registered with local GP and appointment made. 	Provide informal support that can be simply being a shoulder to cry on or someone to talk to when they are feeling isolated and alone.	
	ETE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer on to other organisations or education providers. 	Managing expectations around preparedness to work, workers get the clients to focus on getting clean and healthy, so that they will be fit for work.	
	Family and Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can vary depending on client needs. Links to relevant organisations and solicitors. 	Providing emotional support and advice to ensure the client is aware of their options, rights and obligations.	

Stage 1

Stage 2

7. Our approach to evaluation

Why is evaluation important?

- **Service improvement, funding and understanding impact:** The global social sector is changing and organisations need to demonstrate the value of their services and understand why services have, or have not, worked and where they need improving. St Giles Trust (SGT) has shown a strong commitment to evaluating the programmes they deliver.

Measuring reconviction

- **Reconviction rates:** Whether an offender is convicted of an offence in the 12 months since release, is the most commonly used measure in understanding re-offending¹⁰. Using reconviction as a measure of the success of a program is flawed, in that the only 'successful outcome' is the cessation of offending behaviours.
- **Desistance:** Desistance theory is an idea that suggests reducing re-offending is a process in that often offenders gradually desist from offending. There are two theoretical approaches, resettlement and motivational, that inform reducing recidivism from this perspective (see Dicker, 2011 for more information¹¹).
- **WIRE combines resettlement and motivational theories** in that it is a service that provides practical support to the women alongside emotional support and mentoring targeted at changing attitudes and beliefs¹².

What we did

- TSIP designed and implemented a mixed method evaluation of the WIRE (see Diagram 1) that attempts to understand the impact that the WIRE Project has had on reducing re-offending by understanding reconviction rates complemented with an exploration of the practical and emotional support that is provided to assist in desistance.

Activity	Description
Evaluation Framework	A mixed method approach was designed to conduct the evaluation, by focusing on assessing the reoffending rates of the clients that had engaged with the project through a client reconviction study and including the qualitative experience of those that have worked with or participated in the project.
Client reconviction Study	A detailed analysis of client conviction rates and trends was carried out. This was achieved by applying and securing access to data from the Police National Computer and NOM's OASys system.
Programme Assessment	Data on clients was analysed, log and reporting mechanisms were considered and subsequently a picture of the client group emerged.
Interviews with key stakeholders	Semi structured interviews (25) were delivered with staff (5), clients (8) and delivery partners (12) either face to face or by phone to understand views on the programme.
Analysis and Reporting	The programme was analysed and in particular profiles of clients, their needs, services accessed and offending patterns were developed. The work culminated in three reports: the full report, a client reconviction study and an executive summary.

Diagram 1: Evaluation Framework



8. Our approach to analysing client's conviction outcomes

The information below is a summary of two reports; please see Sutherland's methodology paper¹³ and separate client reconviction study¹⁴ for further information.

	Description
Plan client reconviction study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial plan: As part of the evaluation TSIP planned to conduct a client reconviction study that involved comparison of the women who were referred/engaged with the WIRE to a cohort of a matched group of offenders (age, offence, location and sentence length). ▪ Revised plan: Due to the the length of time involved in acquiring data from the relevant statutory bodies data for the client group, only, was received in time for the completion of the project and forms the basis of the evaluation, despite these limitations of this (see separate client reconviction study¹⁵), this information facilitates an understanding of the clients conviction histories 12 months pre and post-intervention.
Application for access to data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data sources: Data for a client reconviction study requires access to data from three different sources (i) Police National Computer (PNC) files; (ii) National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Offender Assessment System (OASys) files and the WIRE administrative files. ▪ Approved data requests: An application for approval for the project was received from both the Police National Computer/Databases Information Access Panel (PIAP) and NOMS planning and analysis group National Research Committee. Separate applications were submitted to for access to PNC and NOMS data for both groups.
WIRE clients' data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data sharing requirement: The WIRE administrative data was used to identify all the women who were referred to the program and establish if the file contained a data sharing agreement (needed for both data applications). Because many of the women recorded in administrative logs were 'referral only', never attended (or needed to attend) the WIRE project, or physically met a worker, some consent forms could not be completed. ▪ Data sharing levels: From a potential 342 women referred to the program 183 women had data sharing agreements, of these the PNC files were able to identify 166 of the conviction histories of WIRE clients. For the OASys data matches were found for 138 of the 183 women, differences in completion of OASys forms means that not all women for whom OASys forms were requested actually had forms available associated to sentences prior to participation in the WIRE project. In these cases, the form closest to the intervention date was used.
Comparison group data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data was requested from both the PNC and NOMS for 1200 women from which it was hoped a matched comparison group would be able to be selected. Difficulties (from MOJ and NOM's) in preparing information on such a large sample resulted in a data not being received in time.
Data preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PNC data preparation methodology: The PNC conviction data for the clients required preparation before it was possible to conduct a comparison of offence histories. The complete methodology for this process is outlined in a separate paper (see Sutherland's methodology paper¹⁶), in short only guilty offences committed 12 months 'at liberty' pre and post the WIRE intervention start date were counted. Calculating 'at liberty' means that for some women counting back 12 months took place over a number of years, conversely this if true of counting forwards. ▪ Final PNC sample: As a result of our sample criteria, some women had not been released from prison for long enough to be eligible, reducing our sample to 123 women. As we wanted to explore intervention effects we were interested in women who engaged with the WIRE, as a result we had only 104 women who had engaged and had enough information to compare conviction 12 months pre and post-intervention.
Analysis	<p>PNC convictions data and OASys data were analysed separately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PNC data usage: PNC data was used to summarise the sentencing and offending history. ▪ OASys data usage: OASys data used to give an indication of how risks and needs assessed by the probation service map onto those self-reported by women when attending the WIRE project.

9. The findings from our client reconviction study*

Reconviction rates

- **Reconviction rate:** The reconviction rate for the eligible 104 engaged WIRE participants (of a total of 342) for whom data was available is **42%**.
- **Available comparisons:** In spite of timely requests, data could not be obtained for a comparison group, drawn from women from the same prisons as WIRE participants. However, the reoffending rate of engaged WIRE clients compares favourably to national average rates for reoffending amongst women offenders, which range from 51% upwards.
- **This is especially impressive as a large percentage (over 50%) of WIRE clients have a conviction history that has more than 10 offences** (comparable to the national reoffending rate of 88% for those with more than 10 custodial sentences).

Desistance

- **Sentencing history:** WIRE women (80%) are more likely than the national average (60%) to have received custodial sentences of six months or less in their offending career, with a third of WIRE women receiving a sentence of one month or less.
- **Offending profile:** The WIRE sample of 165 women had an average of 32 offences per woman, a total of 5,268 proven offences.
- **Frequency of offending:** The average number of offences per participant **halved** for the 12 months at liberty as compared to the 12 months before (at 2 offences as compared to 4 previously, for those who reoffended).

OASys

- **Predicted reconviction:** While acknowledging the caveats around comparing this information to the OGRS3 (see Sutherland's methodology paper) it is worth noting that at the one year mark just over half of those that are categorised as at high risk of re-offending at two year point have re-offended within the first year. Even more interestingly only a third of those that are categorised as at a very high reoffending at the two year point have re-offended within the first year (see Sutherland's methodology paper).

Quality of evidence

- **Absence of comparison group:** Comparison group data, whilst applied for and approved, could not be gained in sufficient time to compare against the WIRE clients. The original intention was to compare WIRE clients to a comparison group drawn from the same prisons as the WIRE's clients during a corresponding time period, who relocated in London. However, challenges and delays in gathering PNC data, caused principally by the ground-breaking nature of this work, precluded such a comparison
- **Available comparison:** National comparative data, whilst indicative, does not provide the same quality of evidence as a proper comparison group. This limitation should be borne in mind when assessing the WIRE's reconviction performance.
- **Additional supporting evidence:** The findings of the client reconviction study should be understood within the broader context of this report, which provides qualitative support of the reliability of its findings.

*It should be noted that the (client reconviction study) results of this study relate to a sub group of WIRE clients (104) when in fact 342 women were referred to the service and 240 were engaged. The lack of consent forms, sourcing data from the MoJ, and the 12 month at liberty rule meant we could only conduct analysis for 104 clients. The results of this study must be understood in this context, which means further analysis of both of the 104 and 342 clients is required to make more definitive statements about impact, and effectiveness of the service.

The client risk and need profile suggests that the WIRE has a substantial impact on reconviction rates and the frequency of offending for those who continue to offend. National statistics and our additional qualitative research provide further support, but we must acknowledge the limitations of our findings given the absence of an appropriate comparison group

10. A review of the Programme

- **Process review:** To understand the programme the TSIP team worked closely with the WIRE team to understand and review the internal processes and systems of the WIRE. There were two sources of reporting information, the log and monthly reporting statistics. The log is the internal system of recording client information and outcomes at the WIRE and is based on paper files which are transferred to an Excel spreadsheet. The programme also has monthly reporting requirements, standard across the organisation, that are filled in by each worker every month, this is based primarily on client outcomes. There is no formal requirement to have this information linked to information in the files as it is a separate mechanism.
- **Review Process:** Each paper file was checked to ensure that it was accurately recorded on the log. This involved ensuring that basic information was recorded correctly and reviewing case notes to understand any outputs that were achieved. These numbers were then compared with the reporting statistics to understand if demand for the service had increased (see Technical Report, slide G). It was found that there were discrepancies in these numbers with the log demonstrating relatively consistent demand and reporting statistics showing in the second year of the project.
- **Log completeness:** The **WIRE log** that TSIP received contained 224 cases, however a number of paper files existed but were not on the log. Often these were closed cases and women who had not engaged. These files were added back into the log, for sake of completeness and analysis, creating a total of **364 cases**.
- This review exercise required the team to work closely with the WIRE and it highlighted a number of issues which have been summarised in the three key findings below (discussed further in the Technical Report, slides E-H):

1. Programme Strategy

Confirming that there was increasing demand for the service was difficult. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the demand for the service was more than expected. To understand this both reporting sources were analysed (see Technical Report, slide E). It was found that the WIRE was having greater success at achieving outcomes at stage 1 of the programme rather than at stage 2.

This supports the idea that the **WIRE was becoming busier and fits with the principle of constantly meeting demand.** The team appears to be focused on the first stage of the programme, and continued to offer support to clients who wanted to engage.

2. People (Resourcing)

There is a very high demand on the WIRE's small but dedicated team. The staffing skills mix can influence a programme's outcome and eventual impact. While staffing allocation seemed sensible at the start – the high demand impacted staff. The original WIRE contract was to meet 100 women at the gate and house 60 in the first 12 months, these targets were both reached.

A number of strategies have been used to increase the staff skills mix/numbers, the most effective being the use of volunteers (who are good but are usually part time and require guidance) (see Technical Report, slide F). Despite these efforts the staffing levels struggled to meet the demand, resulting in periods where the WIRE did not accept new referrals.

3. Administration

The comparison of the log and the reporting statistics indicated that there were some issues with recording the work. Anecdotal evidence suggested that WIRE workers spend most of their time dealing with clients that requires them to be out of the office for long periods, often late into the evening resulting in reporting and recording requirements as an afterthought.

Our review of the log supported this assumption as there were three main issues identified (i) Counting the work; (ii) Administrative Challenge and (iii) Filing. The TSIP team worked closely with the WIRE to implement solutions to the problems identified (see Technical Report, slide G and H).

The evaluation team worked closely with the WIRE in this part of the evaluation. Where administrative issues were identified solutions were developed and the process of implementation has begun. That there were issues with staffing levels and program strategies suggests that administration is a symptom of a series of complex problems.

11. A case study of housing outcomes

It was established early on in the evaluation that the log may be undercounting the work done by the WIRE (see Technical Report, slides E & G) and at times there was no information in the log for which to base a decision. To investigate this further, housing outcomes were used as a case study. Housing outcomes were selected because SGT is recognised for its work in supporting clients into housing. The steps below set out how we approached this exercise:

CASE STUDY

1. The housing outcomes consisted of temporary housing (TH) and permanent housing (PH), for the **240** cases that engaged with the WIRE. The evaluation team found that **79** cases did not have information about PH outcomes and **90** cases did not have TH outcomes. Contacting clients or housing services to check **169** cases was not feasible. So the decision was made to explore the evidence of housing outcomes for those cases that had neither TH or PH.
2. This process revealed that **39** cases had no information about housing outcomes (see Diagram 1). To establish the evidence base the cases were first re-examined. This initial review revealed that only **35** of the **39** cases had actually engaged with the service, further reducing the size of the case study to **35**. If there was evidence in the form of case notes or tenancy agreements then the log was updated, if not probation officers, next of kin and the clients themselves were contacted (for results see below).
3. The outcome of this was that housing outcomes were found for a **total of 30 out of the 35** women:
 - **16** women received **only** temporary housing
 - **5** women received **only** permanent housing
 - **8** received **both** temporary and permanent housing
 - **1** woman was still waiting for housing
4. For the 30 women for whom evidence was found showed that nearly a quarter of evidence was either a letter or tenancy agreement (24%) but most were case notes (68%) (see Diagram 2).

OUTCOME

Of the 240 WIRE cases a successful temporary housing outcomes were initially recorded as achieved for 65% of cases and for permanent housing this rose to 70%. Following our review this rose to 75% (180 cases) and 75% (181 cases) for temporary housing outcomes and permanent housing outcomes respectively. It should be noted that most of the evidence for these figures is case notes.

Diagram 1: Missing Housing Outcomes

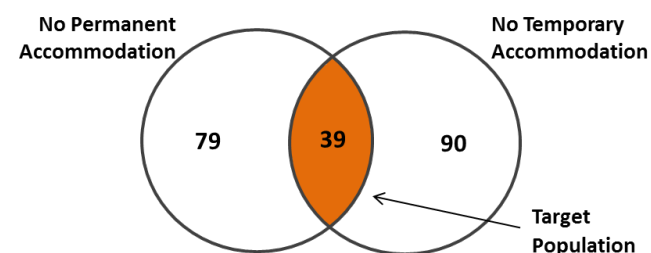
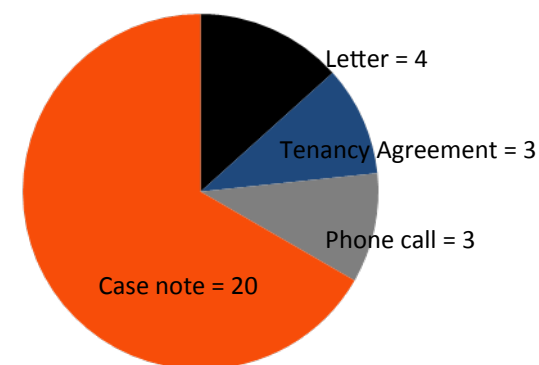


Diagram 2: Housing Outcomes by Evidence Type



The housing outcomes study indicated that the assumption that the log was not capturing WIRE outcomes accurately was in fact correct. In the future effort should be spent on improving not only recording practices but evidencing WIRE outcomes as this is a method that can be used reliably to evidence the work the WIRE achieves.

12. A summary of the Programme review's findings

The findings of the programme review are the result of an intensive period of work where the TSIP and WIRE team worked collaboratively to identify issues, brainstorm solutions and begin the implementation of solutions. While these issues are programme specific there are learnings that could be across the organisation and the sector. This will be a process of learning and growth for the WIRE and SGT that will shape best practice for the future.

Programme Strategy

1. Through **examining the WIRE log it became evident that the overall strategy for the project (described as a two stage process) was focusing primarily on Stage 1, sometimes at the expense of Stage 2.** The main reason for this is the program rarely turned clients away, gained popularity amongst partners who use it and focused on immediate client needs (housing, drug rehab, benefits etc.). In the circumstances this 'work around' has ensured that nearly all women who engaged the programme got help with core needs, rather than turning women away.
2. The **Housing Study** highlights that **increased effort in ensuring that the records are kept up to date** and accurate is essential in being able to quantify and demonstrate the success of the WIRE. From our analysis it indicates that excellent work on facilitating housing about three quarters of its clients could be better captured.

Resourcing

1. **The challenge of meeting the increasing demand** has been a feature of the program over the last two years. In the first year the project exceeded its 'meet at the gates target' of 100 by 17 clients with a further 84 being met in the second year of operation (see Technical Report, slide G).
2. **Strategies to manage workloads** (e.g. recruiting volunteers) and referrals (e.g. closing the program to referrals for short periods of time) have helped ease the burden but not alleviated the problem.
3. **Time and effort should be allocated to administrative tasks, potentially by a funded post** – freeing up the WIRE team to focus on their core skills.

Administration

1. **Counting the work done:** The current recording system only records outcomes not actual work (often an outcome may be delivered more than once or takes a number of actions to achieve). This results in an under-representation of the work done.
2. **Administrative challenges:** There is a large administrative burden (monthly statistics are not always relevant) and not enough support for staff to commit time and resource to ensure that outcomes and actions are recorded.
3. **Filing:** The filing system is paper based and could be made both online and setup with more sophisticated filing arrangements (e.g. surname and a client ID) as clients change their names, forget their names or don't correct workers if names are spelt incorrectly

The Programme Strategy has become focused on delivering on Stage 1 outcomes, which can affect delivery on Stage 2 outcomes and hamper staff's ability to provide the intense levels of support required. Administration is a symptom of the strategy and resource issues and has been negatively affected.

13. Interview approach

Approach	Description	Headlines
Interview plan and templates	The Evaluation team developed an interview plan of internal/external stakeholders (staff, clients and stakeholders) to consult regarding the WIRE.	Three separate interview templates were created that contained some overlap in content but were tailored to each groups knowledge and interest levels. Clients had three sections, partner agencies four and staff six sections that informed and shaped the interview analysis.
Client interviews	The WIRE team identified 25 women who had engaged with the WIRE, of these we were able to contact 16 and organise interviews, and 8 of these showed for interviews. Meeting with the women was challenging and the team were unable to meet all of the clients face-to-face (4), the other 4 were on the telephone. Written notes were taken of interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Routes into the WIRE: While experiences of entry into the WIRE varied the 'meet at the gates' service was highly valued by clients. ▪ Meeting client needs: Housing need were the main referral reason yet the WIRE was able to achieve outcomes in a number of different areas. ▪ Assisting in Desistance: None of the women admitted to reoffending and most of them attributed this success to the support that they received from the WIRE.
Staff interviews	The five SGT staff that either worked on or were associated with the WIRE were interviewed by the Evaluation team. At the time of the evaluation there were three workers on the project; the programme manager and the community service manager were also interviewed. All the interviews were semi-structured, recorded, and conducted face to face.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Routes into the WIRE: The referral process is unique to the WIRE. ▪ 'Meet at the Gates': Is essential to reducing re-offending as it helps avoid temptation. ▪ Supporting Clients: in a number of areas but the first priority is housing. ▪ Administrative Requirements: Recording mechanisms not user friendly or accurate. ▪ Working with External Agencies: Overall is positive but varies by agency. ▪ Assisting in Desistance: Should reduce re-offending but when women fail they return and this is seen as a positive reaction to the service provided.
Partner agency interviews	The Evaluation team conducted telephone interviews with twelve external stakeholders to discover perspectives on the WIRE. Individuals at various organisations were consulted, such as prisons, probation and other resettlement services. All of these interviews were conducted over the telephone and, extensive notes were made during and after the interview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Routes into the WIRE: Most refer to the WIRE when they are unable to assist the clients with housing needs. ▪ 'Meet at the Gates': Stressed the importance of face to face meeting before release. ▪ Meeting service user needs: Achieving housing outcomes was seen as the key strength of the WIRE. ▪ Assisting in Desistance: The strong relationship that the WIRE has with clients was seen as a key component of the WIRE reducing re-offending.
Analysis	The interviews were analysed separately using a thematic approach by the interviewers. The key themes from each group were then analysed to establish commonalities and points of difference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People: Both staff and client characteristics have an impact on service delivery. ▪ Outcomes: Achieving housing outcomes is the key strength of the WIRE. ▪ Process: The services responsiveness to clients individual need makes the service unique and challenging to deliver.

14. Client interview responses

Clients were interviewed to obtain a picture of how they perceived the WIRE, how they found out about the project, the referral process, what they got out of their contact and if the WIRE had made a difference to whether or not they had reoffended. More than eight interviewees would have been helpful but despite frequent attempts to make contact seven chose not to engage. These women may have changed their minds, for some it may have been a desire to put some distance between their prison experience and their lives now, or they were busy organising their lives. The experiences and views presented here need to be seen in this context. However, they offer an insight into some women's needs related to the WIRE's principal purpose.

The women were asked questions about the following three areas and what is provided is a summary of their views:

SECTION 1: Routes into the WIRE

'I've been with the WIRE for two years with two prison sentences. The referral came through the prison housing service – I'd asked them about housing, they arranged for an interview, did the paperwork and they can help you if you're going to be homeless.' (Client)

- For most women, introduction to the WIRE was **facilitated by prison housing services** which told them about the project in preparation for release.
- Not all women had the same experience of contact with the WIRE prior to being released (some positive/negative).
- The **'meet at the gates' service was seen as an important element** of the service, especially when being released for the first time.
- While the **full referral process** should have included referral, follow up call, possible visit, and to be met at the gate the WIRE didn't provide the whole service to each woman – every time.

SECTION 2: Meeting Clients Needs

'The WIRE worker has been very supportive. I can call anytime for help and they help me with what to do. If I need an appointment, they would send someone to meet me and I still talk to the WIRE worker now. They've been more supportive than other agencies.' (Client)

- Women described a **variety of ways** in which the WIRE had helped them including:
 - Providing **support** at crucial times
 - Help with **accommodation** and housing
 - Help with **keeping away from drug use**
 - Breaking the cycle of **arrest**
 - **Help with luncheon vouchers**
 - Someone to talk to
 - Taking the stress off clients and advising on what to or not to do
- The women also described how the WIRE had been unable to meet their needs, but acknowledged that they may be beyond the programmes remit (advanced employment work).

SECTION 3: Assisting desistance

'I've not reoffended and I'm clean. It's partly the WIRE because if I didn't have contact with them, I would reoffend easily. St. Giles has given me a new start in life, they give people hope.' (Client)

Women were asked about whether or not they had reoffended and if not, had the WIRE (in their view) made a difference to them"

- **None of the women had reoffended and most said that the WIRE had contributed to this.**
- However, a small number were less clear and suggested that it takes commitment and contributions from themselves and the WIRE team to change.

For additional comments see Appendix A, and for client case studies, see Appendix B and C. For additional analysis of the client consultation, see Technical Report, slide 1.

15. Staff interview responses

The staff that were directly involved in the day to day operations of the programme as well as key management members were interviewed to gain an understanding about their views on the programme, how it works in practice and what impact it is having on reducing reoffending for women. These conversations provided a unique insight into how the programme was operating and gave the team an opportunity to share what works and elaborate on the challenges that are involved in working with this client group. The questions were grouped around six key areas and the key findings are summarised below:

SECTION 1: Routes into the WIRE

- Referrals are direct to workers and not via managers as in other SGT projects.
- Referrals come from multiples sources, making it hard to manage volume.
- Assessments face to face are best yet as the programme has matured they are more likely telephone.
- *'In the first year the referrals were steady, there is no way a triple pick up would have happened then (in a day). In the second year we get triple pick ups and pick up day after day, you just can't keep up.'* (Staff)

SECTION 2: 'Meet at the gates'

- Reduces reoffending by guiding the women in the first few hours/days, avoiding temptation.
- There are challenges with providing the service to prisons /meeting demand.
- Staff attributes such as being assertive and persuasive are essential in delivering this service.
- *'To be met and escorted to your appointments its like sharing your worries and you don't have to worry alone, you have someone to assist you and advocate for you.'* (Staff)

SECTION 3: Supporting clients

- The team recognise the priority is housing (followed by substance issues, mental health and benefits).
- Housing outcomes are achieved for most women, outcomes related to the other needs are less consistent.
- SGT's ability to access private rented accommodation for clients is essential.
- *'Benefits is universal but almost a given. Everyone needs housing, most need substance referrals, some need access to children. After that it is ETE but most of the women in this program are no where near ready for that.'* (Staff)

SECTION 4: Administrative Requirements

- Administration is perceived as a burden that distracts from service provision.
- There is an appreciation of record keeping (client outcomes), but the team structure and workload does not facilitate this.
- The two different systems (see Technical Report, slide G) for recording information are seen as overly burdensome at times.
- *'But it is not big enough to meet the demand for the service. If you've noticed we can't even keep up with the administrative burden that we've got.'* (Staff)

SECTION 5: Working with External Agencies

- Overall the working relationship with other organisations was positive.
- Contact with them varies, Prisons, Probation and HPU are strong, if not strained at times.
- After the WIRE team refer women to other organisations, progress may not always be monitored.

SECTION 6: Assisting Desistance

- The WIRE should reduce reoffending but knew that this may not always occur.
- The WIRE is reliant on client engagement and their individual motivation to change.
- Women returning to the WIRE after reoffending could be deemed as a success in that the trust of this vulnerable group has been maintained by the service.
- *'Change is something that the client has to do, we can't force them. How much the client wants the help, effects what the service can do.'* (Staff)

For additional comments see Appendix D and additional analysis of the consultation period with staff, please see the Technical Report J.

The unique staff attributes have resulted in the programme successfully achieving results despite facing many operational challenges. The demand for the service is constant, managing it and staffing will ensure that the WIRE continues to support the clients and reduce the reoffending patterns of these women.

16. Partner agencies interview responses

A number of different organisations were invited to give their views on the referral and assessment process for the WIRE, the 'meet at the gates' service and the programs ability to meet client needs and assist them in desistance. In total 12 interviews were conducted with nine people who worked in organisations that refer clients to the WIRE and three that the WIRE refers it clients to. Many of these organisations were not very knowledgeable about the range of services and support that the WIRE offers; most thought that the WIRE existed only to help women get housing.

The interviewees were asked questions about the four areas and their responses are summarised below:

SECTION 1: Routes into the WIRE

- **Other organisations refer to the WIRE** when they are unable to house ex offenders, either complex needs or no needs at all (don't meet HPU criteria).
- While **supportive of the referral process** it was suggested there was room for improvement in the WIRE's administration.
- When asked about **the WIRE's relationship with the clients there was overwhelming consensus that this was a key feature** of the service.
- *'Very good, it is a close supportive relationship that is not overbearing, they promote independence in the women.'* (Partner)

SECTION 2: 'Meet at the gates'

- **Most were aware that the WIRE offers this service** for clients and it was the key service provided.
- *'Meet at the gates is really important. Also because its gender specific and can understand and assist with some difficult needs such as domestic abuse, drugs problems and assist with clients linking in to services.'* (Partner)
- **Geographic locations** of prisons can be prohibitive. Strategies to meet at central London hubs instead of the gates is a good compromise.
- Stressed the **importance of having a face to face** meeting before meeting clients at the gate.
- It is a **time consuming job** it is important that there are enough staff to cope with demand for this service.

SECTION 3: Meeting Service User Needs

- Overwhelmingly it was thought that the WIRE principally, if not only, provides **housing assistance**.
- **Achieving housing outcomes for clients** was seen as a key strength of the service.
- Other outcomes, mental health etc. were not the considered to be within the WIRE's remit.
- *'Generally they are there to help women with the transition period. It is a complicated task because there are lots of issues which need to be considered.'* (Partner)
- There were **mixed views on how the WIRE fits in with existing service provision**. Some thought it provides a unique service, others not.

SECTION 4: Assisting Desistance

- The **WIRE workers are responsive** to client needs.
- The WIRE achieves what they say they will, **building strong relationships** with clients in the process.
- There was agreement that **the WIRE does help women to reduce and or stop their reoffending behaviours**. However it was acknowledged that the client had to participate in this process.
- Interviewees felt that in their opinion **the programme was successful**.
- *'Really great concept, people who have offended can easily become de-motivated and disinterested if they don't get results. That is how it falls down it needs to keep that high level of contact.'* (Partner)

For additional comments see Appendix E and for a more detailed analysis of the consultation period with external organisations, please see Technical Report, slide K.

Other organisations refer to the WIRE because they are strong at housing those that others can't house. The unique support that the programme provides clients is seen as beneficial in enabling women to reduce their offending behaviours.

17. A summary of interview responses

People	Outcomes	Process
<p>Nature of the client group External organisations and staff note the difficulties of working with prolific offenders. <i>'There were times where I needed more support, very rarely is it less, and they have been there for me.'</i> (Client)</p>	<p>Assisting in Desistance All three groups acknowledged that the programme can assist women in getting their lives on track. It was accepted that this is a process and that sometimes women may reoffend. Success can be reducing frequency of offending and clients trusting in the service and returning for help when they next need it. <i>'No one can stop you re-offending; it is something you have gotta do for yourself. You gotta get a job, get busy every day that way you won't do it because you are bored.'</i> (Client)</p>	<p>Strategy The service aims to provide long term support but staffing concerns and high demand has resulted in a focus on the first stage of the programme. This was noted as undesirable but inevitable without more support. <i>'The first few days of support is intensive but after that it is variable.'</i> (Partner).</p>
<p>Client motivation All groups spoke about the need for the clients engagement and desire for change. <i>'Recognition of a persons needs, what is causing the issues clients face. As well as a clients willingness to engage. There is not a one size fits all approach.'</i> (Partner)</p>	<p>Housing outcomes The WIRE is good at securing housing for clients, for both those with few needs and the most challenging clients, usually successfully. It is for this reason that other organisations refer to the WIRE and why women return. <i>'The team take women at face value and work with them to get them housed'</i> (Partner)</p>	<p>Individualised service That the WIRE is a flexible and individually tailored service that responds to clients needs was identified as a unique and positive feature by all three groups. <i>'It takes women and treats their individual needs.'</i> (Partner)</p>
<p>Staff Attributes All three groups identified the staff's unique skills and experience as essential to working with offenders. <i>'Most of us are ex offenders and we are committed to working and not reoffending so we do too much because we feel like we need to prove ourselves.'</i> (Staff)</p>	<p>Relationship with clients Both clients and external stakeholders spoke of the strong relationships that the WIRE team build with clients. Their ability to deliver results quickly sets the foundations for a strong and supportive relationship with clients. <i>'I didn't know they (the workers) were ex-offenders. They treated me like I was a normal person and they were never too formal.'</i> (Client)</p>	<p>People as a resource All groups identified the need for more staff as a critical factor in the successful provision of the service. <i>'More staff are needed a lot of the women have complex needs 3 or 4 major issues, it is a hefty caseload and they can't always do it all. Every service has limits.'</i> (Partner)</p>
<p>Communication Strong communication skills of the staff is a project asset noted by all groups. <i>'The workers are like, you can't be doing this, they talk sense into you when you are making bad decisions... you need that sometimes.'</i> (Client)</p>		<p>Administration Is not seen as a priority and can often be perceived as a distraction from service provision. Often it is not essential for the staff to evidence their work for external orgs. <i>'I understand that they are doing the best they can with so little resources, I know what it is like and I don't want to knock them but they definitely need some administrative support to get the work organised and done.'</i> (Partner)</p>

It is clear that the overwhelming view is that WIRE provides an essential service that needs to be well resourced to ensure that it is able to deliver its goal. Overall the WIRE is seen as an effective service that gets housing outcomes for women upon release from prison. The staff's ability to quickly establish rapport with the clients is an essential feature of the work, at times to the detriment of recording requirements. Better resourcing will ensure effective delivery.

18. A summary of our findings

In conducting the evaluation the team worked collaboratively with the WIRE team and it this experience that highlighted the unique nature of the engagement that the WIRE workers provide to this hard to reach population. Below is the findings that were the result of the evaluation activities.

Evaluation Activities	Summary Findings
Programme Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme Strategy: Evidence from the log suggests that outcomes are more likely to be achieved at Stage 1 of the WIRE as opposed to stage 2. This is most likely the result of increased demand for the service that was not matched by increasing staffing levels. Staff were coping with demand by ensuring that the women's immediate needs were met and were unable to deliver the intensive long term support needed to all clients. ▪ People (resourcing): The project has struggled to maintain staffing levels that matched demand levels due to funding constraints; despite this the team were able to meet housing and meet at the gates targets. ▪ Administration: There were a number of issues that were identified with the current reporting strategies that lead to discrepancies between reporting statistics and an undercount of the work that has been done. The evaluators worked with the WIRE team to identify and implement solutions, it is hoped that this good work will continue as examples of best practice.
Interviews with key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People: The complex nature and motivation of clients to change has the potential to impact the success of the project, clients need to want to engage for success to be achieved. The staff are also a key component of the success of the project, the workers need to possess a unique blend of tenaciousness to achieve outcomes and empathy to understand the women's experiences. ▪ Outcomes: Housing outcomes are thought to be a strength of the WIRE project and it is from this solid foundation that the workers are able to support the women in desisting from crime. ▪ Process: The individualised nature of the service provided requires that staff have a certain set of skills and that they are able to dedicate the time needed to support women through this intense period. High demand for the service and not enough staff has resulted in the staff focusing on Stage 1 of the project as opposed to stage 2.
Client reconviction Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reconviction rates: Based on a reconviction analysis of 104 women who engaged with the WIRE and for which appropriate data was available (of a total 342 women), the reconviction rate was 42%, which is lower than the national average of 51%. In spite of a timely request for comparison group data, none was made available in time to do an appropriate comparison in this evaluation. ▪ Desistance: WIRE clients are more likely than the larger women's prison population to receive sentences of six months or less. The frequency of convictions (for those that were convicted) post the WIRE intervention was halved for those that engaged with the WIRE (from four to two). ▪ OASys: Encouraging results were found at year one at liberty when WIRE participants were categorised by the OGRS3 to predict reoffending, at least half of those in the high and very high categories had not offended, results will need to be confirmed at year two of the project.

The identified reconviction rate of 42% and halving in offence frequency are indicative of the WIRE programme's effectiveness. Due to the sample size and unavailability of appropriate comparison data TSIP employed a mixed methodology method to support our findings, providing qualitative support to the client reconviction study's findings.

19. Overall recommendations

Improve evidencing of work and outcomes

1. The evidence collection practices improved as part of this evaluation should be maintained. Evidence based practice should be implemented from the start of all projects, ensuring that future evaluations can use evidence to show project outputs and outcomes
2. Administration needs to be completed weekly by staff or volunteers who have this as part of their role.
3. Evidence based practice should be implemented at the beginning of all projects to ensure that future evaluations are able to use evidence to show project outputs and outcomes.
4. In response to the increasing move towards 'Payment by Results' the importance of evidencing work needs to be acknowledged organisation-wide, with acceptance driven by the head of SGT so that time and resources are allocated accordingly.
5. Targets for the programme need to include outputs that are reflective of the work done (e.g. attending appointments).
6. Clients that enter the programme more than once need to be reflected in the log and reporting statistics as a new case.

Ensure sufficient staff and resources for the WIRE

1. Ensuring that projects are appropriately staffed to balance the complex cases that the teams work with the high demand for services and the need to establish an evidence base.
2. Referrals, when capped, need to match the level of staff on the project (in accordance with an agreed maximum staff: client ratio).
3. Referrals, when capped, need to prioritise clients according to risk and redirect to other existing services where appropriate.
4. A commitment to working with offenders at SGT is commendable, this commitment needs to be strengthened through working and developing individual strengths but also through enabling staff to work on their weaknesses.
5. Make use of volunteers to maintain phone contact weekly with clients and highlight issues before they become a crisis.

Refine WIRE process

1. Project management needs to be prioritised to ensure that projects don't 'lose their way', regular project "pulse checks" should be done to understand if the project is meeting its objectives.
2. Managers should identify high risk clients and allocate them to senior workers whilst ensuring workers have enough time to engage.
3. Offer the service in two parts, the short term "meet at the gates" service and then the long term support for women with high/ complex needs (effectively funnelling clients) can be provided by a separate programme (joined to the WIRE) such as a WIRE Plus.

Expand prison presence and stakeholder engagement

1. Engage with key external organisations to raise profile and understanding of what the WIRE actually does.
2. Try and get a regular and constant presence in the prisons or arrange to have enough time to conduct prison visits.
3. Harnessing opportunities to gather new funding through understanding the strengths and weakness of the current projects, also identifying gaps that can be filled when service provision identifies new areas of need.
4. Look for opportunities to provide joined up services with other organisations.
5. Establish a stronger relationship with London Probation, Ministry of Justice and the Police National Computer Information Access Panel to enable future reconviction studies.

As part of TSIP's evaluation, a number of reporting and evidencing improvements have already been made (see Technical Report, slide H), these should be consolidated. Continued success of the WIRE programme will require sufficient staffing and resourcing, including ongoing administrative support.

20. Next Steps

Evidence practices

1. **Endorsing and maintaining improvements:** share administrative learning's within SGT and establish best practice so that evaluators can assess outcome achievement and conduct reconviction studies to a high standard.
2. **Tracking work and outcomes:** Ensure targets/outcomes are set early on and are relevant to the project aims, monitor on a regular basis to ensure targets are relevant and info is being collected.
3. **Value for money and funding:** The improved evidence base for the WIRE should be used to support appropriate allocation of funding within SGT and to underpin value for money in SGT's activities. The improved evidence base provided for the WIRE by this study should be used to underpin fundraising activities going forward.

Structure and resourcing

1. **Staff resourcing:** focus on allocating enough staff, focus on administrative skills, hiring administrative assistants and/or the use of volunteers to supplement paid employees.
2. **Administration allocation:** there needs to be an organisation wide movement which is driven by the top down. Administration/reporting/recording statistics are essential for the organisation if they want to carry out reconviction studies in the future.
3. **Wire Plus:** start with trying to manage high demand clients by using the referral process to identify those that will require more assistance, senior case workers to have a smaller case load to reflect the complex nature of the client group. Consider reshaping the program into WIRE Plus so that appropriate bespoke funding can be obtained for the WIRE Plus clients along with greater time allocation by relevant case workers.

Process refinements and stakeholder engagement

1. **Prison presence:** work with prisons to establish a presence in the target prisons, even if it is just once a week, this early contact is essential in building trust with the clients.
2. **Working with other key organisations:** raise awareness of the WIRE programme and all that it does so that people can identify who should be referred to the program and what sort of work they do (expanding awareness beyond housing).
3. **Shaping future reconviction work:** active presence with the MoJ and Prison Information Access Panel (PIAP) to agitate for best practice in conducting small scale reconviction work.

SGT is well positioned to consolidate the WIRE's successes and apply lessons beyond the WIRE. To ensure the WIRE's continued effectiveness the WIRE needs to be appropriately resourced going forward, and its effectiveness should be consolidated by working with prisons to establish WIRE team members' presence in prisons, and by publicising the range of the work the WIRE does and successes it achieves to key organisations .

A. Additional Client Interview Comments

'Meet at the Gates'

- *'I was met at the gates which was really important, it's a bonus really. The worker than took me to all my appointments, she picked me up every day and took me where I needed to go.'* (Client)
- *'They met me at the gate and I would have been lost without that support, I wouldn't have had a clue what to do when I got out without their help.'* (Client)
- *'Meeting at the gate is really important because I don't know what would have happened when I got out otherwise.'* (Client)

WIRE Process

- *'The first three months of intensive contact with the worker calling or seeing me almost every day.'* (Client)
- *'If I've got a problem with the council, they will get on the phone and sort it out. As long as I'm not on the mic and they think it's reasonable. They help me sort it out.'* (Client)
- *'They rung up the benefits office to sort out my benefits and they checked my id, into a B&B and then got me into private rented accommodation and put me on a waiting list for my drug issues and have referred me onto it.'* (Client)
- *'They helped get me into housing, getting a place to stay. We went back to the office and filled in some forms, they had private rented housing ready for me but it wouldn't be ready for a few days so they put me in a B&B to start.'* (Client)
- *'I didn't get any more help from them because, well, I intended to come back and try and get into the job club and training but once I got set up I got a bit distracted and never made it back in.'* (Client)
- *'They have helped me to improve my life. I had nowhere to live, which was my first priority. I needed housing to help me get back into the community.'* (Client)

Staff Attributes

- *'It is important for the staff to be ex-offenders because you can trust them better and they don't judge you.'* (Client)
- *'I had no housing and the prison sent me out without nothing. I had done a long stretch and just wouldn't have known where to start. I need that support, someone there to tell me where I had to go and what to do.'* (Client)

Assisting in Desistance

- *'The cycle would have continued for me I would have had to go back to the old area and that means I would have moved in with my boyfriend. Then things would have just got crazy again, we would have got in a fight and I would have got arrested or he would have got arrested. Because of the WIRE's help I was able to get my own place and not get caught up in that again.'* (Client)
- *'They helped me to stay clean, it was just good to have someone who would call and check on me. I needed someone to call me, I am not always ready to chase them, that is what they are supposed to do.'* (Client)
- *'They helped me with everything I just can't say enough about them they got me benefits, housing, let me use the phone, taken me to the doctors, court, probation, got me to Foundation 66, mental health and my children.'* (Client)
- *'They help me out if I'm hungry, they will give me a voucher to get me some food. And stop me begging on the streets.'* (Client)
- *'It is good having someone to talk to if I have got any problems and that is what they can do for me.'* (Client)
- *'When we come out they should make sure we don't reoffend, give us a job. Lots of people won't give you a job after prison, but these guys do. It gives you something to look forward to. If you have a job it stops you from going down the road and stealing.'* (Client)
- *'I couldn't fault the workers for nothing. If I didn't have their support I would have been on my arse.'* (Client)
- *'This program that is the best thing that they have ever done.'* (Client)

B. Clients – Case Study 1

Mary

- Mary had been a client of the WIRE project for a few years. The project had worked with her after release from two prison sentences and both times referral was through the prison housing service. Mary had asked them about housing and they arranged for an interview. She learned that the WIRE worker would do all the necessary paperwork and help if they know a woman is going to be homeless.
- The first time, Mary was met at gate. The second time, she had to go and meet them but said it did not bother her as she knew what to do. Mary said ‘if it was the first time, it’s more important to be met’.

‘There’s nothing they’ve not done – not a bad word to say!’ (Client)



- The WIRE arranged shared accommodation but this did not work out and Mary (who also has children) was recalled as she was on licence from prison. In the intervening period, she had private accommodation but then the landlord wanted house back so she moved. On the second occasion leaving prison, Mary didn’t wait long for help. She knew the WIRE senior worker from previous experience and that they could help if she was going to be homeless. This time she knew where she didn’t want to be as the location, according to Mary, had been cause of reoffending but she was only given a hostel in the same area. This and the unacceptable state of the room lead to staying elsewhere.
- The WIRE worker accompanied Mary to the Homeless Persons’ Unit but they refused to house her as she was not a priority. They then went to the Single Homeless Project and Mary was assessed, reassessed, placed and has now got a flat. She was second choice but first person turned it down. Mary said the WIRE worker had been very supportive, she could call anytime for help, and she is still in contact with the WIRE worker despite having been housed. Mary said she had not reoffended and, having been a drug user, was clean.

C. Clients – Case Study 2

Joan

Joan was referred to the WIRE early in 2012 after speaking to the housing officer in the prison. They suggested the WIRE because they said they were good at helping women find housing. Joan spoke with the WIRE worker by phone about three days before her release so, in her view, it all happened very fast. When More time might have been better but Joan said that she didn't think this was the WIRE's fault as the prison had problems making contact due to public holidays.

'I would have been lost without their help.' (Client)



- Joan recounted that she was not met at the gate because of the location of the prison. However, prison staff made sure she was taken from the prison to the train station and they had talked to the WIRE worker and to her to ensure that the worker would be at the other end to meet her. She wasn't too worried about this but was concerned that the WIRE worker would not be there or that they did not find each other. They did and Joan said that being met either at the gate or at a station was really important for women who do not know how to get around London.
- For Joan, the WIRE provided a service which helped her into housing. Having been met, she and the WIRE worker went back to the office and filled in some forms. There was private rented housing already arranged but not ready so the WIRE project arranged temporary accommodation in a B&B.
- Joan suggested that she was sorry that she had not received more help from the WIRE but not because it was not being offered. She said she intended to go back and try and get into the job club or training but once she was established in her new accommodation, was distracted and never made it back.
- Joan said she did not know much about the service or what the WIRE could do as her immediate need then was finding help into housing. However, she recognised that she will need help with more and had not thought about this at the time of first contact. Meeting at the gate was really important because she didn't know what would have happened otherwise.
- Key to Joan's progress was not going back to the geographical area she came from and she described a spiralling situation leading to re-arrest. She said:
'Because of the WIRE's help I was able to get my own place and not get caught up in that again.'
- Now Joan would like help getting into a full time course that she had started but due to the withdrawal of funds could not continue. She had not asked the WIRE because she believed that they could not help. Now Joan knows there is a job club which she can join at St. Giles.

D. Additional Staff Interview Comments

Staffing Concerns

- *'It is a specialist job and it is hard to find volunteers who have the practical skills and empathy, its a lot to ask.'* (Staff)
- *'It is such a great project but we are just trying to do too much with too little staff. Sometimes there is only one person in so staff are not around.'* (Staff)
- *'It is not just a 9 to 5 job we need to put in so many hours, sometime s we are still working at 10 or 11 at night.'* (Staff)
- *'A volunteer to do this work would be great but whether they can do that or not is a different thing. We are putting to much pressure on them.'*(Staff)

Client Motivation

- *'When the women are in prison they are often keen to participate but when they get out they lose their commitment. We have done the work and they just aren't interested.'*(Staff)
- *'Depends on whether the client engages , if they do then the outcome is very good.'* (Staff)
- *'If you can't maintain contact with your client they get disheartened.'* (Staff)
- *'They can give in to temptation. Those first few hours after being released are extremely important.'* (Staff)
- *'You have got to maintain contact with clients otherwise it disheartens clients and sabotages all the work you do.'*(Staff)

Building Relationships with Clients

- *'From that point they know that you are true to your word, these women have been let down and have problems trusting people, they appreciate it.'*(Staff)
- *'Even if women reoffend they still want to get back in touch with the WIRE. They know they will get the support and care.'* (Staff)

Staff Attributes

- *'Everyday, You have got to fight to get priority. We wont leave if we think our client has a right to be housed, we are determined. They know us and will generally house our clients. They know we are determined and that we won't leave, we're the last to leave.'* (Staff)
- *'The staff that run the WIRE are its greatest asset. They make the program what it is.'* (Staff)

Service Demand

- *'I think the project has lost its way, if it stays the way it is then we can really only do stage one. You will see a worker on entry into the program and then it gets harder to maintain contact with the client.'* (Staff)
- *'On the surface the files don't look good, but we have put a lot of effort into these women.'* (Staff)

WIRE process

- *'We should not accept all referrals, we don't have a team of ten we are two. If we take a last minute referral it is stressful for the client and for us, we can't catch up.'* (Staff)
- *'It is unusual as the process normally goes through management who pass on the referrals. It is a bit more chaotic.'*(Staff)
- *'Face to face, allows you to set the rules, set boundaries, build better relationships. They know we are serious and are going to do what we say we are going to do.'*(Staff)
- *'It is much easier to lie over the phone as opposed to in person. Some think they will improve their chances by omitting stuff when actually their chances would have been better if they were truthful.'* (Staff)
- *'In the last year we did most assessments over the phone as we didn't have time to do them in prisons, whilst in the first year we did. We had a lot more staff than so we had time to go to do this in the prison, now we don't. Even if we could go to the prisons we don't have the time to go now.'*(Staff)
- *'It takes a lot of time to work with them on the first day, it can take all day to start them off with the key things. It is really intensive. Clients can be anxious as they don't know where they are going to be that night.'* (Staff)

E. Additional Partner Agencies Interview Comments

Relationship with Clients

- *'They have a good relationship, especially as it is difficult to develop relationships with some of the women, who have very chaotic lifestyles. They can do it better than other agencies.'* (Partner)
- *'I don't do much work after the women walk through the gate but I hear that they have a great relationship with the client. That is if the client engages with the worker then the WIRE does a lot for them.'* (Partner)
- *'They had a really good relationship, the caseworker had a lot of experience dealing with this type of women. She would talk to her straight and was not very easily manipulated.'* (Partner)
- *'Brilliant because I think they do a wonderful job. Women can be apprehensive about the service, they aren't very trusting. It is an issue they get passed from agency to agency but the WIRE are able to work with them.'* (Partner)
- *'Sometimes it is good, sometimes it is bad. I hear the telephone assessments and sometimes the workers are really good and sometimes they are really rude.'* (Partner)
- *'They are better at dealing with prolific offenders (then other organisations) because they just deal with her like she is a normal person and give her the added support when she needs it. They are aware of her history so they can deal with problems appropriately but they don't treat her as her problems.'* (Partner)

Housing Outcomes

- *'Providing accommodation, I don't know the full extent of their remit.'* (Partner)
- *'Community support is also important and I know they do a bit of that but they are really focused on accommodation.'* (Partner)

Strategy

- *'No clarity on what happens afterwards. They are good at getting them into the B & B but what happens after that it is hard to figure out what the WIRE does. Other organisation's are able to get hostel apps in etc. and keep us up to date but the WIRE struggles with that.'* (Partner)
- *'The relationship didn't last as long as it should have to benefit her. I think if it had it would have really made a difference.'* (Partner)
- *'There should be more ongoing clarity after initial stage, service is good but should work with clients for longer.'* (Partner)

Individualised Service

- *'There isn't one thing that they do the important thing is that they put a package together that is enabling the woman to remain in the community.'* (Partner)
- *'Signposting them according to the care plan that they have set up. They work with the individual and I feel confident that they would do a good job of this.'* (Partner)

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- If you would like to know more about the work of TSIP or are interested in the work we are doing please visit our website www.tsip.co.uk.

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