



Fashion Education in Prisons

*An evaluation of London College of Fashion's
project with women prisoners at HMP Send, Surrey*

With forewords by:

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Treasurer and Chairman of
Sir John Cass's Foundation
— *pg. 04*

Baroness Corston

Author of the influential 2007
report on vulnerable women and
the criminal justice system
— *pg. 06*

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Sir John Cass's Foundation
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Kevin Everett, Treasurer and Chairman of Sir John Cass's Foundation, relishes the challenges and rewards of supporting "on the edge" initiatives such as London College of Fashion's education project at HMP Send



When London College of Fashion (LCF) first approached us in 2008 to support its Fashion Education in Prisons Project, we were impressed by the fact that – unlike some bodies that come to us seeking funding – it was not making outrageous predictions from the outset of unbounded future success.

The proposal was well thought out, enthusiastic and optimistic, but also contained a sensible dose of realism about the difficulties of operating in the challenging environment of prisons.

It was a combination that fitted well with our belief that backing only "safe" projects with predictable outcomes is unlikely to lead to ground-breaking changes. It also very much chimed with, and was inspired by, the 2007 Corston Report on vulnerable women in the criminal justice system.

Sir John Cass's Foundation, a leading independent City of London-based charity that takes its name from the eponymous politician and philanthropist (1661-1718), incorporates education in prisons as one of the four priority areas in its Grants Strategy. We have been providing support to this particular field of education for more than three decades – including initiatives to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of prisoners and ex-offenders, and helping prisoners and ex-offenders to gain skills and education qualifications that will help them into employment.

I am pleased to say that both these objectives have been clearly realised by the fashion education project instigated and run by LCF at HMP Send women's prison in Surrey, and with which we have been happy to be involved since its inception.

This new initiative had an enlightened view as to its structure, inputs and outcomes, and LCF appreciated that it was seeking flexible support and guidance for an "on the edge" project – albeit one with potentially exciting results.

LCF was also aware that such support is not usual among funders, as the majority of foundations do not welcome proposals with a degree of risk attached, and tend, as a result, to allocate funding for clearly-defined and structured activities that have likely outcomes.

Although not the largest project the Foundation has supported, the Fashion Education in Prisons Project has achieved notable outcomes in terms of, first and foremost, raising the prisoners' self-esteem – something that lies at the heart of many problems – but also in providing employment opportunities that will hopefully assist these women back into mainstream society.

This has been evident to all my colleagues at the Foundation, including Dr Ray Ellis (Chairman of the Grants Committee) and Richard Foley (Deputy Chief Executive), who have been involved from the outset and through speaking to the participating women prisoners on a number of occasions that we have visited HMP Send during the lifetime of the project.

A large, stylized graphic of the number '27%' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The '2' and '7' are connected at the top, and the percentage sign is to the right. The graphic is positioned on the left side of the page, below a horizontal line.

Increase in women's prison population between 2000 and 2010

Source: Ministry of Justice 2012

We have seen first-hand the real difference the phases of the project (fashion design and fashion journalism) have made, both in terms of raising self-esteem and self-confidence, and also in the women's improved chances of gaining meaningful employment on release from prison.

There was considerable interest in this project when it was featured as one of the workshops at a Prisoner Education Conference, which the Foundation arranged with the Institute of Education in June 2012.

However, the Foundation is conscious that much of the good work undertaken in this area is fragmented. We are of the opinion, therefore, that more should be done to work in partnership on initiatives, and that where independent evaluation reports such as this one are commissioned, these should be widely disseminated to all interested parties.

I am confident this evaluation report will provide invaluable data from which to inform the national debate on education in prisons, and places all those concerned in this project in a strategic role in the national discussion around reducing re-offending and the rehabilitation and re-settlement of prisoners back into society.

The Foundation looks forward very much to continuing to work with LCF on this challenging and exciting project, and on the social enterprise plans that have been born from it.

"A lot of the women in here have major confidence issues. If you've always been told you're useless, your self-esteem is on the floor. So getting proper recognition and praise from people in the fashion industry is wonderful. It's been great to get positive feedback. This has opened doors for me I never thought possible."

Peppa, HMP Send prisoner

Baroness Corston, author of the influential 2007 report on vulnerable women and the criminal justice system, advocates imaginative education projects that can help prisoners to develop the crucial life skills we take for granted



Let us be absolutely clear on this: one of our top priorities as a society must be the development and monitoring of a joined-up, co-ordinated and cross-government response to the problems of women with vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system. Diverting women from custody, rather than simply trying to help them when they are already behind bars, is an incontestably clear case of prevention being better than cure.

The disproportionate effects of prison on women screamed out at me from the evidence gathered in the inquiry I headed in 2007. For example, approximately two-thirds of women in prison are mothers of dependent children under the age of 18, and only 5% of those children remain in their own home after their mother has been given a custodial sentence. A mother's imprisonment can have such a dreadful long-term effect on those children, and can lead to this contagious and debilitating problem passing from generation to generation.

However, the path to prevention cannot be travelled in a few months or even a few years, as it takes in such complex and damaging areas as physical, sexual and psychological abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, and homelessness.

In the meantime, as we continue to press forward with urgent action on prevention, we must simultaneously bring together a variety of organisations and bodies committed to supporting women offenders, with the aim of implementing imaginative ways of helping them from becoming trapped in the revolving door of re-offending.

We know that this cycle of re-offending and repeat imprisonment results in a massive drain on the public purse – but, far more importantly, we know that it is a massive waste of lives and potential.

To release potential and channel it towards giving women a realistic chance of breaking the cycle, we must provide opportunities for acquiring relevant vocational skills and qualifications, but we must also be prepared to raise their expectations.

We must acknowledge that what most women in prison need is self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. So many of them have not had the opportunity to develop life skills – the things we all take for granted.

The London College of Fashion (LCF) education project at HMP Send has allowed women to do just that, and to realise that they are good at something. Their families can now express pride in them, they are seen as useful members of society, and they discover undreamed-of skills.

In the independent evaluation report on the project, this point is reinforced by Jocelyn Hillman, Chief Executive of the Working Chance recruitment consultancy for women ex-offenders. She says:

“Projects such as LCF’s can be inspirational. They have an important motivational role for women, and anything that improves their self-esteem and self-confidence will help to improve their employability.”

Why should ex-offenders always be pushed towards menial jobs? It’s very important for them to see the possibility of being able to go into ‘glamorous’ industries. That is a great incentive to them.”

51%

Of women leaving prison who are
reconvicted within one year

Source: Ministry of Justice 2011

She also points out that many people would be surprised to learn that 18% cent of Working Chance's candidates for jobs are graduates, and that "*you only have to look at the way some women decorate their cells*" to recognise that there is no shortage of creativity.

This emphasises why we must challenge the populist stereotypes that are wide of the mark for so many of these women. As I investigated women's prisons, I found a shocking level of unmet need and a high prevalence of institutional misunderstanding of the things that matter to women.

Since my report was published, there have certainly been many improvements, but there is much more to be done. There are still far too many women in prison for non-violent offences, too many being remanded into custody, and too many families being destroyed.

However, while we strive to find ways to divert as many as women as possible from custody in future, we must also continue to provide support for innovative education and training initiatives that help to give women in prison realistic alternatives to re-offending.

"I always find it hard to be a part of a group, but the people from the university have been so good to work with. It just sparks me talking with people coming from outside with fresh ideas about fashion and art, and I'm now doing more paintings than ever. This has changed my life. I can actually see a way forward now for the first time in my life."

Charlie, HMP Send prisoner

Frances Corner OBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor of London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London, highlights the potential for life-changing social impacts on prisoners and students alike when arts education inhabits the real world rather than ivory towers



Fashion is often dismissed as trivial by those who see clothes as adornment, rather than an external display of internal thinking. At London College of Fashion, while we encourage our students to think the unthinkable as they search for tomorrow's ideas, we do not want them to inhabit ivory towers, cut off from the rest of society. We also want to make a social impact.

That is why we first set up the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, so that we can tackle the environmental problems posed by mass consumption, and that is why we run a number of outreach projects – most notably, the Fashion Education in Prisons Project with women prisoners at HMP Send.

In the last decade, the women's prison population has risen alarmingly, with most held for non-violent offences. Most have been dealt a bad hand in life, and many – not surprisingly – have extremely low self-esteem, self-confidence and capacity for the social skills to form relationships based on trust and respect.

An evaluative report commissioned in 2007 by the former Anne Peaker Centre for Arts in Criminal Justice highlighted how arts subjects and activities in prisons are a vital gateway to learning, reflection, achievement, accreditation and re-habilitation – particularly for offenders with previous negative experiences of formal education.

Projects such as the Fashion Education in Prisons Project have demonstrated how the arts offer an effective way to engage offenders who have felt alienated from mainstream, qualification-led education, and how fashion education in particular can be an especially strong transforming force due to its wide appeal, which crosses social and educational barriers.

We have been extremely fortunate in our partners in this project: a funding body, Sir John Cass's Foundation, that is prepared to take the risk of supporting innovative initiatives seeking to make a real difference, and a prison management with a progressive and open-minded attitude to issues of prisoner education and rehabilitation.

This summer, we published the first edition of *The Beauty's Inside*, a unique and collaborative publication between LCF and HMP Send. The magazine – printed by prisoners at HMP Maidstone's Printshop – brought together serving women offenders and students from across our School of Media and Communication to produce content inspired by, and relevant for, the women prisoner readership. It forms part of our wider commitment to the rehabilitation of women offenders, following two womenswear design projects, also undertaken at HMP Send, over the two previous academic years.

Our students and tutors go into the prison with the aim of helping to provide offenders with useful skills that they can use in prison, and which can open up employment and educational opportunities upon release.

58%

Of women citing skills and unemployment as issues contributing to offending

Source: Social Exclusion Task Force 2009

However, while we are delighted by the enthusiastic response prisoners have had to the project, and by the benefits it has brought them, it must be stressed that this is most definitely a two-way process. It not only enhances students' awareness of the social and ethical contexts of fashion, it is also a valuable and memorable experience that can shape their futures. As one of our students said: "I was hoping the project would change my perspective on life, and it has. It's one of the best things I've ever done."

The project is benefiting a wide range of prisoners – from those serving life sentences to those close to release. For some who are working to make a life out of being in prison, to get as much as possible from their time there, the project has enabled that to happen. For those leaving, it will give them a chance of paid employment so they can take care of their children.

Fashion and the arts have an important and powerful educative role to play in helping these women to re-create who they are, who they want to become – and, in so doing, build the much-needed self-confidence and vocational and social skills so they can see an alternative to crime.

As a society, we should be encouraging more of this interaction, and we believe that the Fashion Education in Prisons Project's dynamic three-way partnership has equipped us to create a life-enhancing legacy for prisoners and students through the continued development of sustainable projects and social enterprises.

"One of the project's intentions was to change the perceptions of our students towards different sectors of society and I feel there is strong evidence to indicate we have been successful in doing this. I think it has also demonstrated to our students that there is more to fashion than just keeping up with trends as this project has shown how fashion can be used to increase people's self-esteem."

Camilla Howarth, Special Projects Manager,
London College of Fashion

Karen Elgar, Governor of HMP Send, welcomes a valuable and stimulating project partnership that has proved it can raise the aspirations of women prisoners by giving them a sense of pride in what they achieve.



Our job at HMP Send is to safely house the women committed by the courts and to protect the public, but with a clear remit to reduce the risk of them re-offending by engaging them in rehabilitative work. For many of our women, this work involves intensive therapeutic interventions, but for almost all there is work to be done to help them accept and take responsibility for their crimes, to become comfortable and accepting of who they are, and aspirational about the person they can become.

Our collaborative projects with London College of Fashion (LCF) are extremely valuable as they enable us to involve women in fashion education which has profound implications on their sense of self. The project's phases have offered a structured approach to creating something tangible – in the most recent case, a magazine called *The Beauty's Inside* – which allow the women to work as a small team, with external professional support, to achieve something they can see. For many of our women, it is the first time they have done something that gives them a sense of pride.

HMP Send looks after a diverse group of women who are highly complex, difficult and often vulnerable. The crimes they have committed are varied, but a significant percentage of them involve violence. Within the prison environment, much of that aggression is turned on themselves, with a high level of women engaged in repetitive and serious self-harm behaviour.

Often, although by no means always, women become involved in criminal activity through unhealthy, violent or dependent relationships with men – a high number have been subject to physical, sexual or emotional abuse at some point in their life, often beginning in childhood – and consequently have very poor levels of self-esteem and no self-confidence. They understand very little about relationship boundaries, or about their own identity and their own sense of femininity.

Part of the evolution of HMP Send is to ensure that it is a prison that meets the specific needs of its population, rather than being an extension of a wider Prison Service, which overwhelmingly caters for men.

The Government agenda of working prisons that focus on employment opportunities for prisoners is more complicated for women. Seventy per cent of women currently housed at HMP Send have children under the age of 16, and may therefore have formal responsibilities for caring for their children on release. Employment opportunities must be flexible and support part-time working, working from home, and potentially the option of self-employment.

For some women, the opportunity presented by working with LCF is a genuine opportunity to develop their skills and to focus on a future career in fashion. It can be a vehicle for women to explore their talents and to express themselves through creative and artistic work. The encouragement they get from receiving feedback from people outside the prison is invaluable.

53%

Of women prisoners have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused as a child

Source: Ministry of Justice 2012

The recent design and production of *The Beauty's Inside* magazine allowed women to explore their own sense of identity, what fashion and image can mean, and how their own choices about how they portray themselves and how they consequently behave are within their own spheres of control. It was produced to high standards, with set timescales, and covered journalism, editing, art and design, and creative writing. It supported our desire to create a work ethic within HMP Send that will allow women to gain employment and support their families in the future.

Partnership with such a respected educational institution such as LCF ensures that this stream of rehabilitative work is not frivolous or self-indulgent. It is part of a much wider commitment within the prison to empower women who have been involved in serious crimes, enabling them to make genuine transformational change in the future that will allow them to build a life away from crime.

As our relationship with LCF develops, I hope we can progress from the concept of short-term projects to a more integrated and sustainable delivery of resettlement work that is mutually beneficial for both HM Prison Service and the LCF students.

“Introducing projects from outside organisations gives the women a sense of belonging to the wider community, a sense that they have not been forgotten. The uniqueness of the LCF project has enabled them to explore and develop talents they didn't realise they had. The feedback from the women has been overwhelming appreciation of the experience.”

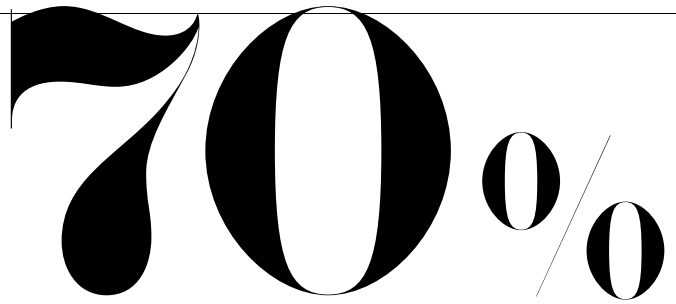
Lyn Cannon, Former Head of Community Engagement, HMP Send



Photo: Kevin Jude Walters



The Evaluation



Of HMP Send prisoners with children under the age of 16

Source: HMP Send

The over-riding justification for initiatives such as London College of Fashion’s education project at HMP Send are the case studies of people who can justifiably be categorised as “success stories”. These will always be the most illustrative and relevant ways of assessing whether a project has met the five key criteria of an evaluation: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

Phase II of the Fashion Education in Prisons Project formed part of LCF’s wider commitment to the rehabilitation of women offenders and followed on from two womenswear design projects also undertaken at HMP Send over the two previous academic years – the Pilot Phase and Phase I. It brought together 11 serving women offenders and 11 LCF students to collaborate on the production of contents for a 44-page prison magazine, inspired by and relevant for the women prisoner readership.

The impact of that collaboration was highlighted at an emotional final workshop session, where there was a genuine success story to celebrate. The sense of shared pride and delight among all the participants (HMP Send prisoners and staff, and LCF students and staff) was tangible when it was announced that one of the prisoners, “Peppa”, is being encouraged to apply to study full-time on LCF’s two-year foundation degree course (FdA) in Hair and Make-up for TV and Film.

“Peppa” is the nom-de-plume she chose for her articles in *The Beauty’s Inside*, the name chosen by the prisoners for the magazine. She is a young mother of three children who became eligible in September 2012 to begin working in the community. She is clearly determined to put her family life back together again when she is released, and

has availed herself of every possible training opportunity at HMP Send (GCSEs in English and Maths, and NVQs in subjects ranging from customer services and fitness instruction to hairdressing, textiles and calligraphy) to help her achieve that goal.

Her aim on release from prison was to find work in a hairdressing salon, but the recognition her creative talents have received and the confidence she has developed during the project have convinced her that she can set her sights much higher. On the advice of Camilla Howarth, LCF’s Special Projects Manager, Peppa has enrolled on the Level 3 Vocationally Related Qualification course in hairdressing at Nescott College, Surrey, which will qualify her to apply for the FdA course at LCF. Peppa, who was given permission by the prison authorities to attend an open day at LCF in October, said:

“A lot of the women in here have major confidence issues. If you’ve always been told you’re useless, your self-esteem is on the floor. So getting proper recognition and praise from people in the fashion industry is wonderful. This has opened doors for me I just never thought possible.”

While Peppa has a supportive family network to help her achieve her aims when she is released, “Charlie” is not so fortunate. There is still much for her to do to turn around her lifestyle and address her drug dependency, but her undoubted talents as an artist – featured prominently in *The Beauty’s Inside* – have also been recognised and highly praised during the Fashion Education in Prisons Project, to the extent that LCF arranged for her to have a one-to-one tutorial with a professional fine artist. He was so impressed by her work and creativity that he has offered to continue giving her tutorials. Charlie, who has had it made clear ●

to her during the project that she certainly has the talent to be able to study fine art within University of the Arts London, said:

“My life has always been pretty messed up and I’ve been in an out of prison – committing crimes intentionally so I can come back, because I view prison as safe and secure. This project has changed me, though... now I’m now determined to work towards being out of here within the next 18 months.”

The Beauty’s Inside, which was printed at HMP Maidstone, was a huge success and of very good quality, in terms both of content and look. The women prisoners themselves determined that the content would be broad-ranging and a little “edgy”, rather than focusing on catwalk fashion or the cult of celebrity. They were delighted – and somewhat surprised – by the quality of the finished product they had helped to produce, and proudly provided addresses of family and friends who they wanted to see the magazine. This led to further confirmation of the life-changing effect that being involved in the magazine production had on the prison participants as, almost by return of post from when the magazines were sent out, LCF received a very positive letter from the relative of one of the inmates.

“...since she has been involved with your good selves her letters are more positive and happier, and she now looks forward to a career in art in one form or another. This is the first time that I have received a positive letter from her, and it is all down to yourselves.”

“Keira”, one of the prisoners whose writing had particularly impressed Julia Robson, the LCF Associate Lecturer who acted as editor of the *Send* magazine, is another participant determined to turn her life around. She has now expressed genuine interest in becoming a journalist, and has set her sights on studying at LCF when she is released “on tag” next year.

Peppa’s success story, together with Charlie and Keira’s new aspirations, highlight that formal tracking and documenting of the progression paths (education, training and employment destinations) of women offenders participating in the project should be a key component in the design and evaluation of future Fashion Education in Prisons Project initiatives. This would require a co-operative approach involving the prison authorities and LCF, and drawing on expertise from organisations such as Working Chance, a recruitment consultancy for women ex-offenders. The successful women should serve as role models to other prisoners, and as exemplars in general of the benefits of rehabilitation initiatives.

These success stories should be disseminated as widely as possible to relevant institutions and organisations – including through the possible creation and regular up-dating of a dedicated project website. The LCF and HM Prison Service press offices should also collaborate on exploring the potential for sensitively placing “positive” stories in the mainstream press, to further explain the benefits of initiatives aimed at developing the skills, self-esteem and self-

confidence that can contribute to the rehabilitation of prisoners and the reduction of re-offending.

This tracking of progress will be particularly valid and important for social enterprise initiatives that develop from the project, such as the proposed permanent sample production unit at LCF – to be staffed predominantly by female offenders and ex-offenders – which aims to develop income-generating skills for women prisoners and recently-released women ex-offenders. LCF, HMP Send and Working Chance would be best placed to collaborate on establishing an effective system to track success stories – and to feed those stories back into the system to act as inspiration to other women prisoners in HMP Send, and hopefully beyond.

The security, logistical and organisational problems of running a project in such a challenging environment as a prison mean that success cannot be achieved without the support and goodwill of prison management and staff.

To date, the Fashion Education in Prisons Project has been fortunate in this respect as Karen Elgar, the Governor of HMP Send, has been very supportive of the project. As Phase II was drawing to a close she spoke of the “extremely valuable partnership” between the prison and LCF, and that “for many of our women, it is the first time they have done something that gives them a sense of pride”.

It is crucial to the success and sustainability of possible future LCF initiatives at HMP Send that they



Photo: Agnes Lloyd-Platt

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“As the person who manages the grants programme for the Foundation, this project has given me a real insight into what can be achieved in prisons. This is not only due to the robust proposal that was submitted, but because of the partnership that has developed and evolved over four years, involving the London College of Fashion, HMP Send, and of course, the Foundation. Partnership working is of paramount importance and this is clearly a case of where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”

Richard Foley

Deputy Chief Executive, Sir John Cass's Foundation

The Background

In the UK, only 5% of the total prison population are women, with the result that their specific needs are often overlooked. Prison impacts disproportionately on women offenders, who are far more likely to be solely responsible for the care of children and maintenance of a home than male prisoners, and employment has been recognised in major government reports as a key factor in reducing the probability of re-offending.

In the wake of the deaths of six women in one year at Styal prison, Cheshire, the Corston Report (2007) concluded that women offenders “need a distinct, radically different, visibly-led, strategic, holistic and woman-centred approach to allow them to develop self-confidence and the capacity to form relationships based on trust and respect”.

With this in mind, London College of Fashion began the search in 2008 for a suitable partner prison for the launch of a project to provide women offenders with practical skills that they can use during their time in prison, and which can open up employment and educational opportunities for them upon release.

The aim was also to enhance students’ awareness of the social and ethical contexts of fashion. With guidance from Working Chance, a charity that assists women offenders to make the transition into the world of work and employment, LCF eventually chose HMP Send, near Woking, Surrey, as its first partner - partly because women in HMP Send tend to be serving longer sentences than in London prisons such as HMP Holloway, and therefore there is less turnover. Sir John Cass’s Foundation was approached for funding for the Fashion Education in Prisons Project, as Prisoner Education is one of the foundation’s four priority areas in its Grants Strategy.

Of the three main faculties at LCF, the two considered most suitable for the project were the School of Design and Technology, and the School of Media and Communication. Following a pilot phase, the Fashion Education in Prisons Project (2010-12) comprised two - creative schemes: fashion design, and magazine production.



Photo: Agnus Lloyd Platt

continue to receive the full backing of the Governor, with a commitment to allocating sufficient staff resources to provide the necessary support for project activities to run smoothly and effectively. To this end, the Governor should be invited to engage in discussions on whether further support and active involvement could be provided by education staff at the prison.

The support of the Governor proved crucial, for example, in facilitating a quick turnaround to ensure that articles in the magazine met HM Prison Service Press Office requirements, thus expediting production of the magazine and helping LCF to be far more aware of where the boundaries lie in terms of press office approval. This will prove invaluable and time-saving for future magazine production.

There is a strong argument that all LCF students should be introduced to the challenging arena of social awareness issues, in keeping with LCF's ethos, and integrating this project into the students' curriculum could be one way of doing this. However, in addition to logistical and security problems of having more than a small number of students involved in the project at any one workshop session (in practice, the evidence of the 10 workshop sessions indicated that five or six students was the maximum number), some concerns have been expressed (often by the students themselves) that incorporating it into the curriculum

might result in the "wrong type" of students becoming involved.

In the highly sensitive, delicately-balanced prison environment, this might create potential for insensitive conduct that could seriously undermine the mutual trust built up between LCF and the women prisoners since the Pilot stage. These are often fragile and damaged women whose needs and aspirations must continue to be the primary focus of the project.

The sensitivity of the environment in which the project operates was forcibly brought home by the example of one inmate who wrote an article on self-harm for the magazine and who supports and mentors fellow prisoners who self-harm. This inmate was undoubtedly one of the most proactive, positive and upbeat prisoner participants throughout the whole of Phase II, so it was a real shock and sadness to discover that, between the final workshop and the session for the launch of the magazine in August, she also had been self-harming.

This example of prisoners' vulnerability and instability emphasises why it is essential to look very closely at how best to strengthen future recruitment procedures for students, to avoid the possibility of including any who are not sufficiently sensitive to the project. A requirement for student participants to sign a "code of conduct" would further

emphasise the need for sensitivity and full commitment.

However, it must be stressed that, in almost every case, the behaviour and sensitivity shown by students involved in the project has been exemplary throughout the project. Indeed, Julia Robson, the LCF Associate Lecturer who ran the workshops and took on the role of magazine editor, said:

"By the end of the project, these students had gained a place in the hearts of the prisoners.

The whole experience really has renewed my faith in students and young people."

In terms of recruitment of prisoners, it would be preferable if the project could draw in more of those who could be categorised as "hard to reach", rather than mainly the "creative" and positive types who are always ready to step forward for this type of project. It seems clear from the prisoners' views that word of mouth and information slips put under prisoners' cell doors are more effective (and perceived as less top down) than posters on notice boards.

Prisoners who have already been involved in the project can play a key role (and in some cases have done so already) in attracting other women to join in by sharing their positive first-hand experiences and explaining clearly what is on offer and what the benefits can be.

One of the most impressive aspects of the project has been the ●

willingness and ability of people leading the project to be flexible and responsive enough to make necessary changes “on the hoof”.

However, relying on this incredibly high level of commitment and goodwill carries its own potential pitfalls. As Susan Lesser, of University of the Arts London, points out:

“One issue that should be discussed is that, in the current economic climate, externally-funded projects – even successful ones – aren’t generally perceived as part of normal university business, and so are often dependent on the commitment of those involved to go the extra mile. External funding rarely captures sufficiently the extent of actual effort, with the result that projects become person dependent. If that person is no longer available, for whatever reason, the project is at risk, since sufficient person hours may not have been supported in the budget.”

One option that could be considered to help cement and support flexibility and responsiveness in a project such as this, which has to operate effectively in an environment where expecting the unexpected is the norm, is for a contingency fund to be set aside by future funders. Money from this fund could be drawn on, if necessary, by the budget signatory at the University, subject to funding body approval.

The great majority of foundations do not welcome uncertainty and risk, especially in an economic climate such as the current one, and tend to allocate funding for clearly designated activities with likely outcomes.

However, in its partnership with LCF and HMP Send in this challenging initiative on prisoner rehabilitation, Sir John Cass’s Foundation has shown that it is prepared to fund projects in areas a little more “on the edge” and with less predictable results, in the hope of breaking new ground. A more open-ended funding was approved for the Fashion Education in Prisons Project, with some specific details of the activities evolving as the project progressed. This flexibility on the part of the funder, as well as the project team, has led to some highly encouraging outcomes. Nevertheless, assessment and reporting are still key, and LCF is looking carefully at the lessons learned, so that the next phases of the project can be structured as effectively as possible, to minimise potential risk and to ensure the best use of funding.

There is growing momentum behind the recognition that incarceration alone is not a solution to the problem of criminality and re-offending. In his forward to the government green paper, *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders*, presented to Parliament in 2011, Kenneth Clarke, the then Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, spoke of the “national scandal of reoffending”. He said:

“Almost half of all adults leaving prison are reconvicted within a year – and for those serving short sentences, the figure is even higher. The same criminals are endlessly recycled through the courts, prison and community sentences, creating new victims of crime and extra costs to society. This vicious cycle costs ●

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“I’ve never done anything like this before, but it’s been brilliant... it’s inspired me, and a lot of other girls. We’ve worked really well with the students, like a real team. It makes you feel like you’re worth something... It makes you feel like you have got a talent and can do something when you get out.”

JJ
HMP Send Prisoner



Photo:



Photo: Agnus Lloyd Platt

The Objectives

The rehabilitation of offenders is a challenging area, and FEPP was conceived to help make a contribution towards addressing the issue, while also providing a valuable learning experience for LCF students. The key aims and objectives of the project are to:

Build up prisoners' self-confidence and self-esteem through the development of creative and collaborative skills, and help them to develop independent thought.

— Develop practical vocational skills that can help to open up employment and education opportunities for prisoners on their release.

— Make a positive contribution to reducing the risk of re-offending, and improving prisoners' prospects of reintegrating in society and maintaining family ties.

— Enrich the educational experience of LCF students from different disciplines by providing the opportunity for them to work collaboratively on creative and socially meaningful projects, and to gain deeper understanding of important social issues that can both inform their future work in the fashion industry and break down preconceptions about women offenders.

— Expand educational provision in the long term, so that it can be delivered throughout the year to benefit greater numbers of women offenders at other sites.

The direction of Phase II reflects the Pilot Project's aim to pave the way for a series of short and focused projects for students from different disciplines – therefore, involving students from the School of Media and Communication, rather than from the School of Design and Technology, as had been the case in the creative design work undertaken in the Pilot and Phase I.

The idea that the School of Media and Communication came up with was to produce a lively, attractive magazine tailored and published for the women offender audience, and including fashion and lifestyle features, as well as informative articles on aspects of life in prison and on where to go for help both inside the prison and upon release.

The emphasis was firmly on the magazine being specifically produced by and for women prisoners within HMP Send, and to help develop their skills (creative and inter-personal), self-confidence and self-esteem through their contribution in terms of writing, artwork, styling and creative hairdressing.

the economy between £7 billion and £10 billion per year. To cut crime, we need to be far more successful at getting prisoners to go straight after serving their sentence ...”

There seems no doubt that the Fashion Education in Prisons Project fits well within this vision and, having built on experiences from its Pilot Phase and Phase I, has clearly demonstrated potential to be fine-tuned and developed into a template for the introduction of similar education projects at other prisons, and by other organisations. This potential could be further explored by drawing on relevant professional expertise from outside LCF in a consultation process on the formulation of a detailed business plan for continuing and extending the project in future.

The evaluation of Phase II of the project provided the opportunity – for the purpose of disseminating information about the project, and as a baseline document for future

planning – to set out a narrative of the whole project, and present extensive views and perspectives from the HMP Send women prisoners, LCF students, HMP Send staff, LCF/UAL staff, and the chief executive of Working Chance charity. These views have been presented as condensed quotes throughout this brochure.

It should be emphasised that the evaluation process benefited greatly from the fact that the views given by participants were unfailingly thorough and open, and did not shy away from addressing delicate or difficult issues. The length and detail of these individual overviews provided are clear indicators of the commitment and enthusiasm shown by the project participants at all levels. The views paint an accurate and comprehensive picture from the “frontline”. . . and that picture is overwhelmingly positive. —



The magazine front cover Beauty's Inside



Clinging on to a sense of style was something the prisoners very much wanted to talk about at initial workshop sessions. The end result, the magazine, was very much a reflection of this and of the “spirit” of the women of Send. From the outset, I could sense that Send is devoted to the rehabilitation of offenders, about getting a second chance

Julia Robson
LCF Associate Lecturer and
editor of project magazine

The Implementation

Phase II of the project brought together 11 women offenders and 11 LCF students – three studying on the BA (Hons) Creative Direction course (one of whom, a student from overseas, had to drop out at an early stage because she did not have the UK residence documentation to be allowed in to the prison), three studying BA (Hons) Fashion Photography, three studying the BA (Hons) Fashion Journalism, one studying BA (Hons) Fashion: Hair And Make-up, and one studying BA (Hons) Fashion: Styling and Photography. All the students gave up their time voluntarily, as this project ran outside the LCF curriculum.

The teaching sessions, from April 20 to June 14, 2012, began with two brainstorming workshops to ensure that the women prisoners' views, creativity and aspirations would drive the direction that the magazine would take. The Beauty's Inside was suggested as the title for the magazine by a prisoner at one of the initial sessions.

Teaching was led by an LCF Associate Lecturer, Julia Robson, who also took the role of magazine editor. Workshops were deliberately run on an "informal" and "light touch" basis so that they did not have the feel of classroom teaching. In total, there were eight teaching workshops (six half-day sessions, and two full-day sessions).

Two full-day sessions were arranged to allow time for a complicated and wide-ranging photo shoots to produce images for the magazine. These proved to be the highlights of the project, with women prisoners enthusiastically agreeing to be styled and made up to model for the photo shoots, or working on the styling and modelling themselves.

The women said this had been much more satisfying than when the work they had created in Phase I of the project had to be modelled and photographed professionally outside the prison because of restrictions on bringing cameras into the prison. The relaxation of those rules undoubtedly had a major positive impact on the project.

Glitches from Phase I – relating mainly to security clearance and transport to and from the prison – had largely been addressed, with the major benefit that LCF student and staff attendance was much more constant and reliable.

Many of the women prisoners said they greatly appreciated the continuity of seeing and working with the same core group of students on a regular basis, enabling them to build up trusting and productive relationships.

The production of articles for the magazine was hampered by the fact that prisoners do not have access to computers and had to write out the articles by hand. These were then typed into a computer by Ann Hall, a University of Surrey criminology and sociology degree student, on a one-year work placement at HMP Send, and by Julia Robson.

Printing the magazine at HMP Maidstone reduced the cost, compared with the price quoted by LCF's commercial printer.

At the final session at HMP Send, on July 27 2012, to present the published magazine (printed on schedule), the women prisoners all expressed delight and pride at how the magazine had turned out, and there was much cheering as they were presented with completion certificates by Dr Ray Ellis, Sir John Cass Foundation's Chairmain of Grants. As one of the prisoners pointed out, many of them "will never have got a certificate in their lives".

Prisoners could not be involved in the final production stage of the magazine as computers required for design and layout could not be brought in to the prison, although the women determined the "look" and "feel" they wanted their magazine to have.

This production issue could be resolved by the prison authorities – as they did with the relaxation of rules on cameras being brought in to the prison for Phase II – by permitting basic computers (not linked to the internet) to be used for writing and editing. LCF has also indicated that it could work with a select number of inmates on the graphic design treatment.

The Future

Camilla Howarth, London College of Fashion's Special Projects Manager, looks at how lessons learned can move the project forward in two distinct directions

It would be fair to say that when, in the wake of the 2007 Corston Report, London College of Fashion first mooted the idea of launching a women's prison project, we were taking a leap of faith. At the time, we didn't know for sure what positive outcomes would be achieved, but we genuinely believed that we could use fashion education as an effective tool for change because it offers an informal approach to education that could attract people who had not always succeeded within a traditional classroom setting. It is also fair to say that we certainly know a lot more now.

It is clear from the feedback we have received that Phase II of the Fashion Education in Prisons Project has been overwhelmingly regarded as a success by the project's varied stakeholders. This is, I believe, partly due to the way that the relationship between LCF and HMP Send was strengthened over the course of the Pilot and Phase I stages, giving us a much greater understanding of how the prison works. Phase II has also been very educational in that respect and has taught us further valuable lessons for the future.

Having been fortunate enough to have worked on the Fashion Education in Prisons Project from the start I see potential for the project to progress in two directions.

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The continuation of the magazine project.

The production of *The Beauty's Inside* has been so well received by the prisoners and students who participated in Phase II that we would like to see this continue and be further developed over time.

There is a great willingness among academic colleagues to be involved in future editions of the magazine.

LCF teaches all elements of the fashion industry – from cosmetic science to fashion design, from hair and make-up styling to visual merchandising, and from fashion management to fashion photography. By bringing in lecturers for one-off tutorials, we will be able to highlight for the women prisoners the broad range of potential education and employment opportunities that exist within the fashion industry, while also helping to ensure that the magazine content continues to be wide-ranging and varied, as the lectures and the feedback from prisoners will readily form the basis of strong feature articles for the publication.

Another important and natural development for the publication would be to look into the possibility of having the graphic design element of the magazine production delivered within the prison, rather than being conducted at LCF. This would effectively result in the full magazine content being created in one project, through bringing a graphic designer in to work with a select number of women prisoners, thus also helping them gain graphic design skills. While a move in this direction would necessitate the authorisation of the use of specialist IT equipment by prisoners, there are positive precedents for such activity – such as the boost given to Phase II by the prison authorities' agreement to allow a camera to be brought into the prison for the purpose of the photo shoot. We therefore hope that bringing graphic design into the prison will become possible in due course.

We are looking to secure funding to see the magazine continue twice yearly, for three to five years. This will allow the ability to plan for future issues, and also give the project continuity, which is considered especially important among the serving prisoners ●

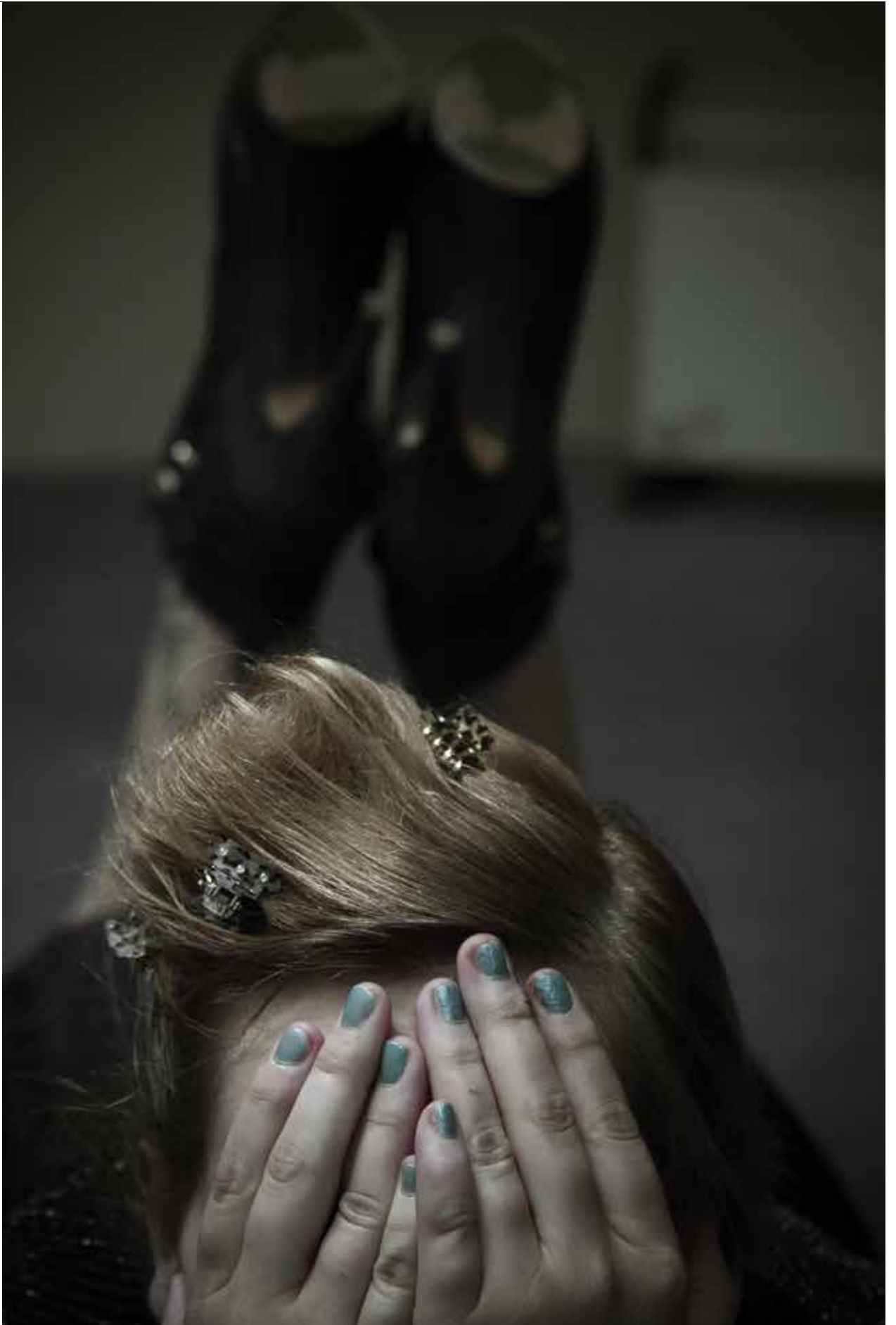


Photo: Kevin Jude Walters

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The development of garment manufacturing skills for women offenders.

Over the course of our projects undertaken at HMP Send, women offenders have told us that, on release from prison, their aspirations are often to get their children back, live in a secure environment, and to earn a living wage. Our projects to date have been run with the intention of equipping offenders with skills they can further develop during their time in prison and then use, upon release, to aid employment or education opportunities, and thus to actually realise their aspirations.

Success stories from our past projects have highlighted that higher or further education is not out of reach, and is a distinct possibility, for some participants when they leave custody. However, we are also aware that many women need or want to go straight into work when they leave prison, and we feel we are now well placed to help equip women prisoners with the technical ability that will fill a recognised skills gap within the garment manufacturing industry.

We are therefore in the process of working in partnering with HM Prison Service to establish a garment manufacturing training unit and commercial production facility within the prison estate that will provide income-led skills and meaningful employment for serving prisoners.

Women who are recruited to this project will spend approximately one year undertaking training, initially producing simple garments as they develop the high-quality manufacturing skills required to

fulfil commercial contracts, which they will undertake in prison until they leave custody. We will then assist the women to find employment within the UK garment manufacturing industry upon their release from prison, or, if eligible for day release, on temporary licence.

It is also our intention that we will ultimately establish our own independent garment manufacturing unit, within central London, to be run as a social enterprise in order to employ women who have worked in the prison-based manufacturing unit upon completion of their sentences. Many experts stress that women are at their most vulnerable when they are first released from prison, so the security of a job will help to provide much needed stability, including accommodation – a primary concern for mothers trying to get their children back from being in care ●

Of course the crucial aspect of the project, and the impetus for future developments, is the impact it has had, and will continue to have, on the women prisoners. This is something we and our partners must monitor closely, and then seek to disseminate widely in order to inspire others.

Perhaps the most striking example of a person who has changed dramatically during the course of Phase II is “Charlie”, a talented artist who has a history of drug dependency and crime. At first, she was ill at ease, anxious and found it extremely hard to be part of the group. By the end, she was totally engaged in the project, appeared to enjoy working with others and had a contagious enthusiasm. Charlie said her focus now is on “staying clean” from drugs, getting released as soon

as possible, and working towards eventually applying to study fine art within University of the Arts London.

Each of the women appears to have got something positive out of the project – some more than others. Several have realised for the first time that they have a talent for writing. For other women – those not immediately encouraged by their writing/art/hair styling – you could see how the day of the fashion photo shoot for the magazine really raised their morale and self-confidence. Raising self-esteem and confidence was one of the key objectives of the project, and although self-esteem is hard to quantify, the women’s positive feedback about the project goes a considerable way towards indicating that the objective has been achieved, and can continue to be built on.

It is important to note that the project’s benefits extend beyond the women prisoners involved. It was always the intention that the project would also impact positively on LCF’s students. From reading the students’ feedback and from being present at the project sessions, it is clear that it really has had an equally powerful effect on them as it has on the women prisoners. When we started out on Phase II the LCF students were all quite quiet, thoughtful and reserved, but they all gained confidence along the way.

Another of the project’s objectives was to change the perceptions of our students towards different sectors of society and I feel there is strong evidence to indicate that we have been successful in doing this. I think it has also made them realise that fashion is far more than just keeping up with trends and that it can also be

used as a tool to increase people’s self-esteem. Indeed, some students have commented that, as a result of the project, they want to have careers in which they can help people. This is another aspect of the project that should be tracked in the future.

With any project undertaken in a prison there will always be some “unknowns” that will require a certain amount of flexibility in the project implementation, but in general I feel confident that we have learned what works and what doesn’t. In effect, we have sufficiently tried, tested and fine-tuned a project template that could potentially be extended to other prisons, working with other educational institutions. —

