



'On the Inside'
A project facilitated by Geese Theatre Company

Information for prison staff

Introduction to Geese Theatre Company

Geese Theatre Company is a team of actors and group workers who present interactive theatre and conduct workshops, staff training and consultation for the probation service, prisons, and other related agencies throughout the UK. The company has gained an international reputation for innovative work with offenders and young people at risk and since 1987 has worked in more than 150 custodial institutions and with 42 probation areas. During this time, we have worked with more than 100,000 offenders and 30,000 other individuals.

The company uses drama and theatre to encourage individuals to examine their own behaviour and as a catalyst for promoting personal development and change. We are continually developing innovative performances, workshops, long term partnerships and staff training inputs. The company uses a variety of creative approaches, tailoring them to the specific needs of client groups and works closely with criminal justice professionals to ensure the quality and efficacy of our work.

Introduction to 'On the Inside'

This is part of a bigger project in partnership with The University of Warwick exploring women's experience of motherhood in the CJS. It will be facilitated by Geese Theatre Company, Helena Enright (playwright) and staff from the University of Warwick who will be sharing archive material with the group. The project will be a mixture of theatre, drama and interviews designed to allow participants to express their feelings about being a mother separated from her child and the effect

that has on them and their families and also its effect on staff who come into contact with those women.

The project's aim is to encourage the women and staff to share their own experience and using archive material to enable discussion about how that experience may have changed for women in prison throughout history.

The groupwork process will engage the women experientially, using drama and active methods to contemplate historical and current issues.

Using the women's stories the project will culminate in a piece of 'Theatre of Testimony'.

Why Theatre of Testimony?

Theatre of Testimony involves the retelling of an individual's account of their experience. It creates opportunities for people to tell their stories anonymously, potentially leading to greater openness about their experiences and also allowing for an audience to contemplate the themes and issues in a safe place.

Key themes explored in '*On the Inside*' will be experience of motherhood, impact of imprisonment and offending on motherhood, needs of mothers in prison and how the prison meets those needs. This is the primary focus however we are aware that this process will potentially be emotive. The company strives to create a safe and supportive environment in which the women feel able to share experiences. So alongside the primary aims, the project may also have a focus on goal setting, building resilience, self-esteem and also managing some of the impact of the interview process. The project will involve the use of active exercises, role-play and theatrical metaphors such as 'the mask'

Who is 'On the Inside' suitable for?

The project is suitable for women who are mothers and most importantly that they have volunteered for the project and have been informed about its content. They will need to be aware that they will be sharing personal information through the interview process of their experience in prison and the impact of their offending on them and their children. Participants will not be asked to discuss their offences but inevitably their offending lifestyle will be part of the conversation about mothering – so they will need to be able to talk about it in general ways. So, although this project is not 'offence specific', it is not appropriate to include women who have committed sexual offences, offences against children or other offences which they might feel unsafe to make reference to in a group setting. It is also useful to consider the make-up of the group when considering referrals e.g. certain individuals may not be able to work with others or they may be co-defendants or partners,

which can have a negative impact on the process. *'On the Inside'* can accommodate up to 8 participants.

Ground rules

Participants should be willing to abide by the project's ground rules, which are around openness, confidentiality and working drug-free. They should be willing and able to attend all sessions. Participants should feel free to leave the project at any time or may be asked to leave if staff feel that it is appropriate.

Staffing

'on the Inside' requires a minimum of one member of prison staff who can attend all sessions and who is able to check up on the women outside of sessions if necessary. An understanding of offending behaviour, an already established connection with the women and the ability to conduct follow-up work or signpost individuals towards support would be desirable. Geese Theatre Company will provide two practitioners for the project.