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Trauma, Social Harm and Health in Criminal Justice Involved Women: The Women's Risk Needs Assessment Validation Research Study

Professor Simon Pemberton¹, Dr Susie Balderston¹, Dr Joanna Long¹¹University of Birmingham**1** Works for me dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.burynv7w j.e.long.

ABSTRACT

Study Title: Trauma, Social Harm and Health in Criminal Justice Involved Women: The Women's Risk Needs Assessment Validation Research Study

Background: Existing research shows that women's offending is characterised by 5 main risk factors linked to crime: trauma and abuse; mental health; substance use; children, parents and relationships; poverty and accommodation. But we still know relatively little about the interventions meant to prevent and tackle female criminal behaviour. Research studies often do not calculate or report their results about women, are mostly conducted in prison and very little research is conducted with justice involved women in the community. Currently, Women's Centres which support criminal justice involved women in the UK, all use different assessments of risks (for example of re-offending) and needs of the women who come to them for support. None of the current assessments are independently and publicly validated or demonstrate statistically significant scales with robust scoring and weighting.

In 2017, we independently reviewed 136 peer-reviewed tools for assessing the needs and outcomes of justice involved women, and concluded that the Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) was the most validated, gender responsive and trauma-informed tool for this population internationally. This study will be the first to validate the WRNA Probation module, in England and it will test how accurate the assessment is with criminal justice involved women in this national context.

Study Design: An observational validation study to test the predictive validity of the WRNA in England. Criminal justice involved women seeking support from Women's Centres following release from custody will be identified by caseworkers as potential participant and consented to the study. In the initial caseworker interview, participants will undertake the WRNA assessment that identifies risks, needs and strengths that predict criminal behaviour. Follow up will be conducted at 6 and 12 months using criminal offending data to link to recidivism and assess the predictive accuracy of the WRNA.

Study Participants: English speaking women who are over 18, with involvement in the criminal justice system (police custody/triage/probation/prison or at risk of justice involvement) who have capacity to consent to involvement will be included in the study. Participants will be recruited from the following pathways which feed into the Women's Centres: Through-the-gate support following prison (TTG); Release on temporary license (ROTL) services; or, through Liaison and Diversion (L&D) from Police custody, street triage or community (probation) referrals received by the Women's Resource Centres (WRCs) caseworkers from other services.

Sample Size: It is estimated that 700 criminal justice involved women in England are required for the validation, to allow for attrition rates.

Planned Study Period: The study will begin in May 2021 and data collection will take place across an estimated 6 month period. With 6 month and 12 month follow ups after the initial assessment interview. End date will depend on the point at which a sufficiently sized sample is achieved at follow up.

ATTACHMENTS

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KEYWORDS

Women's Centre, Women's Risk Needs Assessment, WRNA, Validation Study

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