

Hallam Centre for Community Justice

# THE ANSWERS ARE WITHIN ME

An evaluation of a person centred counselling service  
for men at HMP Doncaster who have had experience  
of domestic violence 2005-2007

Paula Hamilton, Dr Katherine Wilkinson  
and Linda Meadows

with Nichola Cadet

March 2008



Sheffield  
Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

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## Executive Summary

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In 2004, Doncaster Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (DRSACC), a participating member of Doncaster Domestic Violence Working Party (DDVWP), was successful in securing funding from Lloyds TSB and the Tudor Trust to establish a counselling service for prisoners who have been affected by domestic violence<sup>1</sup>. The service, which has become known as DoVeS<sup>2</sup> has recently come to the end of its second year of providing counselling support to prisoners at HMP Doncaster.

This report details the evaluation of the service over this two year period, incorporating and building upon the initial evaluation and emergent findings at the one-year stage<sup>3</sup> and focuses on issues relevant to the development of the service over its lifetime. The evaluation has focused on progress and performance in relation to the specific objectives of the DoVeS service<sup>4</sup> along with consideration of process issues and counselling outcomes.

This report also highlights factors which the data suggest have been vital to the widely perceived success of the DoVeS counselling service at HMP Doncaster and also makes a number of recommendations in relation to future development and sustainability of the project. Key findings, successes and recommendations are summarised as follows:

### Key Findings:

- 232 men (84 in year one and 148 in year two) have put in applications to access the DoVeS counselling service at HMP Doncaster between September 2005 and September 2007
- Of the 232 men submitting applications to access DoVeS, 161 men have attended at least one counselling session
- In both years one and two the main referral route for men accessing the DoVeS service was from the CARAT team
- Clients accessing the service report an increased sense of agency, self-efficacy and empowerment and described being listened to as a powerful experience
- Both clients and prison staff reported that engaging with DoVeS had had a positive affect on the prison environment
- The evaluation found that the service has become embedded into the prison and prison staff report that they see the service as an essential element of the Resettlement suite

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of domestic violence adopted by the DDVWP and the DoVeS project is “the emotional, physical, sexual or mental abuse of a person by their partner, family members or someone with whom there is or has been a relationship”.

<sup>2</sup> This title was suggested by prisoners at HMP Doncaster to acknowledge the `Domestic Violence Service` focus, but associated the acronym with DoVeS to symbolise peace and non-aggression.

<sup>3</sup> The initial evaluation report entitled `Raging Anger Within Me` is available from the Hallam Centre for Community Justice.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter One: Introduction section 1.2

### **Key Factors in Success:**

- Importance of the Counselling Service Becoming Integral to the Prison Environment but Remaining Independent
- Skilled and Experienced Counsellors
- Flexibility of Approach

### **Key Recommendations:**

- Increasing the capacity of the existing DoVeS counselling service is recommended as the levels of service usage have risen dramatically
- A key factor in terms of the sustainability of the service is the need to secure appropriate long-term funding as soon as possible. It is recommended that the steering group meet regularly and develop a strategic agenda for securing funding
- Promoting follow-up work on release should remain self-directed on the part of the (ex) prisoner, however building in mechanisms for promoting and facilitating this could be extended
- The steering group could consider, as part of future project development, how effectiveness, i.e., reducing re-offending could be demonstrated more robustly
- Raising awareness of domestic violence amongst prison staff has played an important part in the success of this project. It is therefore recommended that the role of Liaison Officer is re-instated in order to continue this important aspect of the work of the project.
- Expansion to other prisons could be considered. It is recommended that the key factors associated with the success of this project at HMP Doncaster (see Chapter Four) are given full consideration in any possible expansion
- It is recommended that service user data continues to be collected after the withdrawal of the external evaluation team. In this way, the DoVeS project can continue to produce data which may help to support bids for future funding

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# Chapter One: Introduction

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## 1.1 Origins and Development of the DoVeS Counselling Service at HMP Doncaster

The origins of the DoVeS counselling service lie in the recognition by some members of DDVWP, of the widespread experience of domestic violence amongst male prison populations both as perpetrators and victims (including historical victimisation).

The DDVWP approached their long-term partners from Doncaster Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (DRSACC) to help them facilitate establishment of a counselling service within a local male prison. HMP Moorlands was originally approached to become involved in the project. However, a number of obstacles, including staff movement, made it increasingly difficult to negotiate project set up there and the partnership turned to HMP Doncaster. HMP Doncaster is a remand prison and therefore has a particularly constituted prison population which has raised a number of issues for the project which are referred to throughout the evaluation.

In 2004, the partnership between DDVWP and DRSACC was successful in securing funding from the Tudor Trust and, in 2005, from Lloyds TSB. The project incorporated three key elements:

- Initial research into the extent of provision for both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence in the UK
- Counselling service delivery
- Counselling service evaluation and sustainability

## 1.2 Objectives of the Counselling Service

The key objectives of the DoVeS counselling service offered by DRSACC at HMP Doncaster, as detailed in the tender documents were as follows:

1. To employ two counsellors to provide counselling for ninety male prisoners who are victims/perpetrators of domestic violence over a two-year period
2. To raise awareness of domestic violence among prison staff
3. To provide advice on support agencies in the community post-release
4. To provide support for partners of this cohort of men<sup>5</sup>
5. To improve the quality of life of service users, ultimately leading to a reduction in re-offending

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<sup>5</sup> This objective is considered to be related to the post-release support follow up in terms of supporting partners.

It was envisaged that these objectives would be achieved through adherence to the underlying key principles of DDVWP, for example:

1. Empowerment of victims
2. Maximising accessibility of services available to them
3. Adopting holistic approaches to support.

### **1.3 The Counselling Model**

As is the case with DRSACC, DoVeS is committed to a person-centred approach to counselling. In brief, this approach to counselling highlights the importance of three main conditions between counsellor and service user which are necessary and sufficient for therapeutic change. These are:

1. Unconditional Positive Regard  
The Counsellor accepts the client unconditionally and non-judgementally. The client is free to explore thoughts and feelings, positive or negative, without being rejected or condemned.
2. Empathic Understanding  
The Counsellor accurately understands the client's thoughts, feelings and meanings from the client's perspective.
3. Congruence  
Congruence is achieved where the counsellor is authentic and genuine. There is no air of authority or hidden knowledge.

The Person Centred Approach aims to facilitate the strengthening and expansion of the client's identity which results in the client thinking and acting independently. In this way, a person centred counselling environment is created which is characterised by trust, confidentiality and safety, where clients encounter *themselves*. A person centred counselling approach treats the client as the expert in their own lives and supports clients to take responsibility for themselves and their actions.

Offering person-centred counselling service within a prison environment is, particularly within the current context, an innovative and somewhat unusual approach given the current predominance of interventions aimed more directly at criminogenic need and this has therefore been a key focus of the evaluation.

### **1.4 Service Structure and Delivery**

Service delivery commenced at HMP Doncaster in November 2005. Two Counsellors were recruited from existing DRSACC staff and Prison Induction undertaken. Initially the two counsellors were seconded to the DoVeS service for one day each per week. However, since March 2006, only one counsellor has remained with the Service, she now attends the prison four days per week.

Service users are offered an ideal maximum of sixteen, hour-long, weekly counselling sessions, although this may be extended or reduced if deemed appropriate by the service user and counsellor. The DoVeS counsellor at HMP Doncaster is physically located in the Resettlement Team wing of the prison and has access to a private office in which to hold counselling sessions.

## **1.5 DoVeS Steering Group**

The organisations represented on the steering group are DDVWP, DRSACC, HMP Doncaster (Resettlement) and Sheffield Hallam University (Hallam Centre for Community Justice). It was decided that quarterly steering group meetings would take place from March 2006. The DoVeS steering group met quarterly initially. In February 2008 these meetings resumed after a six month break.

## **1.6 Funding**

As previously mentioned, the DoVeS pilot project was funded by the Tudor Trust and Lloyds TSB for a two year period, ending in September 2007. As this date approached, the DoVeS counsellor began to prepare her clients for the official service closure date of 25th September and closed the waiting list. In August, the DRSACC Development Co-ordinator wrote to the prison authorities informing them of the date of service closure and requesting that any potential funding opportunities were forwarded to her.

The DRSACC Development Co-ordinator approached an individual from the Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (RDASH) which is a statutory provider of mental health services commissioned by the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). RDASH had an under spend which they were able to allocate to the DoVeS project and effectively underwrote the project on a week by week basis while supporting DRSACC to access funding directly from Doncaster PCT. At this time, Doncaster PCT had a pot of non-recurrent funding designated for prison mental health work, to be spent within the current financial year, and agreed to allocate part of this funding to support the project until end of March 2008.

A series of meeting and conversations also took place with Prison staff and in mid-January 2008 the DRSACC Chair and Development Co-ordinator met with the Director of the Prison. This meeting resulted in the Director committing £15,000 of funding to provide a further six months service as well as the opportunity to work together to access more secure funding.

## **Chapter Two: Evaluation Approach and Methodology**

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### **2.1 Evaluation Approach**

As referred to previously, where possible the evaluation design aimed to adhere to a humanistic, person-centred framework so as to be consistent with the underpinning values and approach of the service and its `parent` organisations.

The evaluation employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection. Again in order to promote internal reliability and validity, the same data collection methods were employed at year one stage and year two stage although actual research instruments were amended and refined at year two in order to particularly probe any issues related to development, change and transition in the service and in stakeholders' perception of this.

### **2.2 Rationale and Aims of the Evaluation**

The aim of the evaluation is to provide a rigorous and user-friendly assessment of the extent to which the DoVeS counselling service at HMP Doncaster has progressed and performed in relation to its aims and key objectives using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Key aims of the evaluation at this second-year stage have been to assess the extent and nature of the *development* of the service since its inception with the focus therefore being around the themes of *change*, *transition* and *adaptation*, both in terms of the Service itself and Service delivery, but also in terms of perceptions of the Service.

Throughout the evaluation an action research methodology was adopted. This approach allows for a continual linking of research with practice and enables evaluators, researchers and stakeholders to learn from each other through a cycle of planning, action and reflection. In this sense, action methods can be responsive to situations in a way that many other research methods cannot be. On-going dialogue, participation and joint decision-making were also a key feature of our approach to evaluation.

### **2.3 Objectives of the Evaluation**

1. To provide information on the progress made towards objectives as outlined in tender documents
2. To identify what worked well and what did not work so well, in terms of both what was done (outputs) and how it was done (processes)
3. To identify and assess the effectiveness of steps taken to address any problems encountered
4. To provide information on the extent to which the counselling service has met the needs of the target group

5. To document progress of service users and the impact of counselling on different areas of their lives
6. To monitor uptake of the service
7. To assist with the planning of future projects

## **2.4 Evaluation Design**

The evaluation has therefore two main components:

### **2.4.1 Process Evaluation**

Evaluating and assessing process was a key feature of the evaluation throughout and allowed for an understanding of the critical factors and mechanisms which shaped service delivery and outcomes. Particularly pertinent have been issues related to providing a counselling service within a prison environment.

### **2.4.2 Outcome and Impact Evaluation**

This element of the evaluation sought to examine the `success` of the Service for stakeholders primarily for service users themselves, but also in terms of prison staff and the prison environment more broadly. An additional component of the evaluation was conducted specifically to pick up on these issues as prison staff's perceptions and observations are key to understanding the impact of the service in terms of prison staff/environment.

## **2.5 Evaluation Methodology**

### **2.5.1 Service User Data Collection**

In relation to Service Users the following methods were employed at both stages of the evaluation (i.e. year one and year two evaluation):

- Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted exploring experiences and perceptions of the counselling service
- Quantitative data was captured by using a specially designed scale, where respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with statements designed to probe their feelings and attitudes towards themselves and their lives.

Given that a primary aim of the evaluation was to explore impact of the service on service users, both these measures were employed with men before and after their counselling experience. This allowed for comparison and reflection upon any shifts or changes in men's attitudes, both towards the counselling service and towards themselves and their lives.

## **2.5.2 Key Stakeholders Data Collection**

A number of qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with key prison personnel, particularly those that had a role, or potential role, in making referrals to the service. Again, these interviews were carried out at both year one and year two stages of the evaluation. Whilst efforts were made to re-interview the same individuals at the year-two stage, this was not always possible however it was possible to capture issues around changing views/ perceptions through the design of the interview schedule at the year-two stage.

A number of qualitative interviews were also carried out at both stages of the evaluation with key stakeholders including personnel from the Committees of the DRSACC and DDVWP, the DoVeS Liaison Officer, the DoVeS counsellor(s) and representatives of organisations who were instrumental in attempts to secure funding streams for the DoVeS service.

## **2.6 Accessing the Views of Prison Staff: Additional Component**

The staff interviews in the first year evaluation revealed anecdotal evidence that men's participation in DoVeS was impacting positively on their experience of prison and their relationships with staff and their peers. DRSACC successfully approached the Tudor Trust for additional funding in December 2007 to conduct an additional component to the evaluation predicated on the observation that staff who have day to day contact and care of individuals experiencing personal change are often the first to identify any transformation. The specific aims and objectives of this component are outlined below:

### **2.6.1 Aims and Objectives of the Additional Component**

- To establish the impact of DoVeS on the wider networks and relationships of service users inside the prison setting
- To explore the views and observations of prison staff members of prisoners attending the DoVeS counselling service at HMP Doncaster
- To incorporate this research into the second year evaluation report in order to offer an insight into the influence of attending DoVeS counselling service on prison life and as the service becomes embedded at the prison

### **2.6.2 Field Work Conducted: Additional Component**

Eight<sup>6</sup> additional interviews were undertaken with key prison staff. The aim of this component, as described above was to interview Prison Custody Officers, who had daily contact with prisoners. Prison Custody

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<sup>6</sup> Ten individuals were identified and agreed to an interview; however 2 potential interviewees proved unavailable to contribute.

Officers have care of prisoners on the wings. All but one of the interviewees had had direct experience on the wings at some point in their careers. The eight officers interviewed have a combined service of almost 60 years. Many of the interviewees were also involved in the Assessment of Care in Custody Team (ACCT). An ACCT file is opened when an officer reports that prisoners are experiencing stress, are having suicidal thoughts or have self-harming issues. An Operations Manager and a Probation Officer were also interviewed. These data have been incorporated into a distinct section in this final report (see section 4.5). The quotes included in this section of the report have been attributed to Prison Custody Officers in order to ensure anonymity.

## **2.7 Documentary Data Collection**

In addition to the data collection methods outlined above, a variety of documentary and information resources were utilised/analysed for evaluation purposes. These resources included:

- DRSACC client contact sheets
- Client Log (DRSACC)
- Weekly log sheets (DRSACC)
- Lloyds TSB Foundation Bid
- Tudor Trust Bid
- Proposal documents
- Minutes of meetings Doncaster Prison Project
- Individual Prison Project Logs (DRSACC)
- DRSACC information sheets
- Advertising for DoVeS counselling service (designed by prisoners on IT course)
- HMP and YOI Doncaster Data protection information

## **2.8 Data Analysis**

### **2.8.1 Qualitative Data**

All semi-structured interview data was analysed using a thematic framework approach. This involved working through a number of distinct although interconnected phrases (familiarisation, identifying a thematic framework, indexing and coding, mapping and interpretation) in order to make sense of the data. Analysis was an interactive process between members of the evaluation team. This approach is particularly effective as it provides a 'checking mechanism' for the interpretation of data, thus adding to the validity of the results.

### 2.8.2 Quantitative Data

A descriptive statistical analysis of data was conducted to examine the demographic profile of users of the service based on information collected by the counselling service. This was analysed for the two groups of men for each year of the two years of the evaluation. For both years, group one consists of all of the men accessing the counselling service; group two is a subset of these men on whom scale data was also collected (see below). The data for each year were compared to highlight any differences between the two years of the evaluation. The data was then combined to give a complete picture of the two years of the service.

### 2.8.3 Scale Data

As indicated in the first year of the evaluation, both SHU and DRSACC staff were resistant to employing evaluation data collection techniques that included numbered or boxed ranges and recognised that such small numbers require cautious interpretation. Thus a continuum measure was developed jointly by SHU and DRSACC staff (see Appendix 3).

At the entry interview, men were given a series of 23 simple statements and asked to mark the scale to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with the statements using a blue pen. At the exit interview, an average of nine weeks later, the same men were asked to identify their feelings about the statements on the scales again, this time using a red pen.

These two sets of ratings were quantified using a simple numerical 10 point scale<sup>7</sup> and then analysed. The scale sheet used is included in Appendix 3. The ratings from each individual's exit and entry interviews were entered into Microsoft Excel and averages calculated for each man at entry and exit. This was aggregated to give an indication of difference between the two interview points. Again, this was done for year one and year two of the evaluation to identify any significant differences and then the data was combined across the two years of the project. These findings are discussed in Chapter 3 and aggregated responses are shown in Appendix 4.

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<sup>7</sup> The numeric data taken from seven of the statements (numbers 4, 6, 11, 16, 17, 20 and 21) which had a negative rating -(e.g. statement number 4: "I feel I do **not** have much to be proud of") were reversed to allow for a positive rating which could be corresponded to the rest of the statement findings

## Chapter 3: Findings Service User Data

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### 3.1 Service User Data

This chapter outlines the service usage details of the 232 men accessing the DoVeS counselling service at HMP Doncaster between September 2005 and September 2007. Examination of the data from year one and year two stages of evaluation highlighted many similarities between the samples. For the purpose of this final report, the data gathered from year one and two of service delivery are grouped together to provide a comprehensive overview of users of the service over the two years of the evaluation. However, there are also two distinct populations accessing the DoVeS counselling service which are discussed in this report, these are detailed below:

- Group One - the total number of men submitting applications to access the service over the two year period (n= 232)
- Group Two – a sub sample of the above group who participated in the in-depth evaluation and completed the scale data sheet over the two year period (n= 32)

This chapter presents **Group One** data in order to present an overall profile of the men accessing the service over the two year period. This chapter also provides demographic data for **Group Two**. Group 2 engaged with the evaluation team by providing one-to-one interviews. Group 2 consists of 20 men from the first year and 12 from the second year (total 32). The demographic information discussed here is encapsulated in graphs in Appendix 1.

### 3.2 Group One Data (n= 232)

#### 3.2.1 Service Usage

During year one of the delivery of the service, 84 men from HMP Doncaster put in applications to access DoVeS. During year two, this number was 148 men. Thus, between September 2005 and September 2007, a total of 232 men from HMP Doncaster put in applications to see the DoVeS counselling service. This total significantly exceeds the project's objective of providing counselling to 90 men over the two year delivery period.

#### 3.2.2 Demographic Data

HMP Doncaster has a designated maximum capacity of 1, 135 men, in January 2008, the prison population stood at 1,181 men. Therefore the proportion of men accessing the service is 19.6% of the whole prison population (in January 2008). This represents 1 in 5 of the total prison population who have attempted to access the DoVeS service. There is no data to illustrate the age range of the total population of men at HMP Doncaster.

The current minority ethnic prison population data from HMP Doncaster is 22% (259 men). 78% (922 men) identify themselves as white, 10% (119 men) as black, 9% (101 men) as Asian and 3% (39 men) identified themselves as 'Other'. The target audience for the service delivery in the original tender documents estimated that their service would reach the following diversity categories of men:



Men who accessed the DoVeS counselling service were mainly between the ages of 17 and 39 and white (see Fig: 1.1 and 1.2 in Appendix 1). Therefore although the estimates for the original service take up were not wholly met in terms of diversity, and a significant percentage of clients' ethnic background information remains unknown, the men accessing the service are relatively representative of the whole of the prison population.

### **3.2.3 Profile of Men's Engagement with DoVeS**

As detailed in Fig: 1.3 in Appendix 1, 3% of men completed 16 sessions or more and 7% are currently attending the counselling service. 34% declined the counselling service after attending at least one session (the reasons given for this are detailed later) and 2% were not seen for safety reasons. A significant number of men putting in applications to access the counselling service had their attempts impeded by 'regime issues' within the prison system. These issues are discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **3.2.4 Regime Issues**

As can be seen in Fig 1.4 in Appendix 1, a significant number of men had their attempts to access the service impeded by regime issues. Of this sub-total, 47% were moved or released. Of this 47%, 28% were transferred to a different prison and 19% were released from custody before they could complete a significant number of counselling sessions. By far the largest percentage 52%, were moved or released before they had had their first introductory session with the counsellor.

As HMP Doncaster is a remand prison these types of movements are not unusual. Both prison and counselling staff have worked together during year two of service delivery to minimise the disruption created by working in a remand environment.

### **3.2.5 Men Declining the Counselling Service**

As previously stated, 34% of men submitting applications to access the service declined counselling after at least one session (see Fig: 1.3 in Appendix 1). In fig. 1.5 in Appendix 1, it can be seen that 30% of these men admitted that although they were interested in counselling, they did not feel safe enough in prison or ready to start counselling while in prison. Having gained more details of what the counselling involved (in conjunction with the counsellor) these men decided that the service was 'not for them'. The counsellor felt that these sessions remained important as these men received what was often their first exposure to a counselling service.

A further 35% approached the counselling with inappropriate expectations, usually manifesting in men wanting their attendance to help them in court reports. 15% of men declining the service did so as they felt they were too close to their release date to make their attendance at counselling worth while. These men were offered contact details of other counselling services in their area.

### **3.2.6 Sessions Attended**

Of the 232 men submitting applications to access DoVeS, 161 men have attended at least one counselling session. Two men have attended over 16 sessions and 5 men have attended between 13 and 15 sessions. Where originally the 'ideal' full complement of sessions was defined as 16 during year one of the service, in reality men attending between 13 and 15 sessions has become a more realistic objective. In practice, the 'ideal' complement of sessions is negotiated individually with the service user in the light of either individual circumstances or needs. For example, a client often comes for his first introductory sessions knowing he is going to be released or transferred in the very near future. The counsellor and the client then discuss what they can achieve/ attempt to cover in the reduced number of sessions available. Given this reality, the 16 week 'full complement of sessions' coding appears less relevant as session delivery is defined on an individual basis.

### **3.2.7 Referral Routes**

The evaluation examined the referral routes to the DoVeS counselling service taken by the total 232 men accessing it (see Fig: 1.7 in Appendix 1). In both years one and two the main referral route for men accessing the DoVeS service was CARAT. Over the two year period, 27% of the total referrals have been from the CARAT team. In year 2, 12% of the total referrals were through Resettlement staff, which is a lower proportion than in year 1. This may be taken as suggestive of the increasingly embedded nature of the service, as other departments are making up larger proportions of the referrals in year 2. 18% of referrals have come through the In-reach Mental Health team and 13% of the

referrals responded to the internal prison advertising of the service. This data illustrates that the departments within the prison most likely to refer to DoVeS are rehabilitation focussed and those whose representatives have one-to-one access to the prison population. Please see section 4.5 where this issue is discussed in more detail.

### **3.3 Group Two Data (n= 32)**

#### **3.3.1 Demographic Data**

Men in Group 2 who were interviewed by the evaluation team twice during their access to DoVeS and in terms of demographic information were similar to Group 1, in that they were mainly young and white (see Fig: 2.1 and 2.2 in Appendix 2).

#### **3.3.2 Profile of Men's Engagement with DoVeS**

As detailed in Fig: 2.3 in Appendix 2, of the Group 2 clients, 16% completed the full block of counselling sessions. 38% were moved or released before completing their full set of sessions. 9% of the men in group 2 had declined the service. For 16% their counselling is on-going however, 22% were unlikely to receive a significant set of sessions due to the threatened closure of the service in September 2008. Please see funding section (1.6) for more detail.

#### **3.3.3 Sessions Attended**

Of the 32 men interviewed in Group 2, one man had completed 16 sessions and 5 men between 13 and 15 sessions. The majority of men in Group 2 had attended between 4 to 6 sessions (13), while 4 men had attended between 1 and 3 sessions (see Fig. 2.4 in Appendix 2).

#### **3.3.4 Referral Routes**

The evaluation examined the referral routes to the DoVeS counselling service taken by the total 32 men accessing it (see Fig: 2.5 in Appendix 2). The majority of men in Group 2 had been referred to DoVeS by Resettlement staff, while 19% had responded to prison advertising. The CARAT and In-reach Mental Health teams also make up significant referral routes to Group 2.

## Chapter Four: Key Findings

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### 4.1 Impact of the DoVeS Counselling Service: Service Users, Offending Behaviour, the Prison Environment and Regime Issues

The qualitative data provided here is taken from the one-to-one interviews with 32 service users over the two year service period (Group 2). In addition to the qualitative data provided here, the qualitative scale data also shows significant improvements to the service users' attitudes and behaviours since accessing the DoVeS service. The scale data collected were grouped into statements in five separate, but inter-related sections (see Appendix 3):

- Feelings about 'self'
- Relationships with others
- Abilities to change and/ or improve life
- Behavioural change
- Attitudes to re-offending

The scale data from both years one and two are encapsulated in Excel graphs which are included in this section when appropriate.

Data analysis suggested that the service has had a discernible and positive impact across these three areas. These will be addressed in turn below. The qualitative data analysis around the impact of accessing the DoVeS service upon the men themselves suggests three key themes:

#### 4.1.1 Increased Sense of Agency, Self-efficacy and Empowerment

Many men talked about an enhanced sense of control over their feelings, emotions and of their lives generally, since accessing the counselling service:

*"I thought it (counselling) was getting the answers, but it's not. It's getting them from yourself basically, you discuss certain things and you can iron them out in your own mind"*  
(Service User).

*"I knew the answers are within me, you know, regardless, but the way she.... she's somebody that doesn't just march you through saying `This is this and this is that`, but is there to hold your hand while **you** do the exploring"* (Service User).

The positive effects on service users' attitudes and behaviours have also been observed by prison staff:

*“There have been huge differences: remarks they make on the wing, differences in behaviour and attitudes- a huge amount. They’re more confident about what they do, they seem to understand more. You can tell there’s a difference because they are much more confident, they tend to know what they want to achieve in the future and they seem to understand why they are in this situation now. Now they say ‘I’m going to do something about it’, which is a huge difference. They feel that they have more control over their future” (Resettlement Staff).*

*“I think it's given them a different outlook... a different outlook on life even, but a different outlook on the way they run their life” (Probation Staff).*

These feelings of control were also reported as impacting on the service users hopes for their future:

*‘It helps me feel like I have more control....I’m thinking about the future more now, getting out, getting a job....seeing my kids” (Service User).*

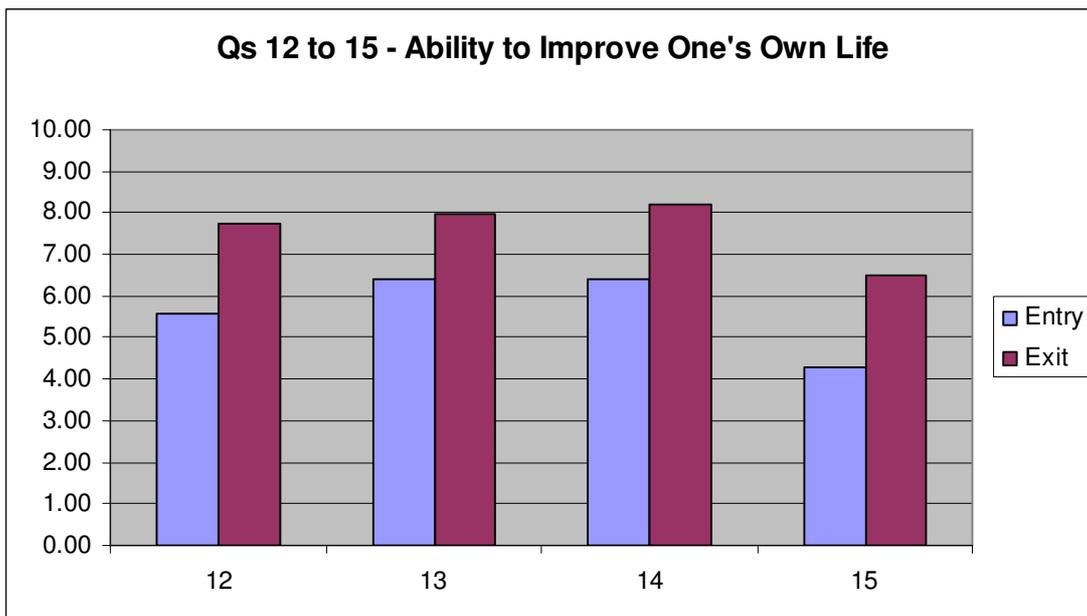
*“They’re not there to judge you, they don’t give their opinion. They try and make you work out, you know, different angles of thinking basically. I just feel as if a big weight has just come off my shoulders” (Service User).*

The scale data gathered from the men in Group 2 also confirms clients' positive shifts in feelings of control since their engagement with the counselling service. This is apparent in the statements concerning how clients feel about themselves, where the range of improvement between entry and exit interviews is between 13% and 43% (see Fig. 4.1, below). Scale data also shows significant improvements in clients' sense of agency, with improvements as high as 53% (see Fig. 4.3, below).

**Fig: 4.1 Questions 1-6: Self**



**Fig: 4.3 Questions 12-15: Ability to Improve One's Own Life**



#### **4.1.2 Being Listened to as a Powerful Experience**

Many men spoke about having someone to talk to and being listened to as a very powerful and cathartic experience. Many men also said that they had had very few other opportunities to do this in their lives. They reported that this was a particularly valuable resource whilst in prison where they felt their coping strategies were often stretched to their limits.

*“I do bottle it up inside, but when I talk to somebody different from the family and I can explain it to (the Counsellor) how I feel and it just gets stuff of my chest” (Service User).*

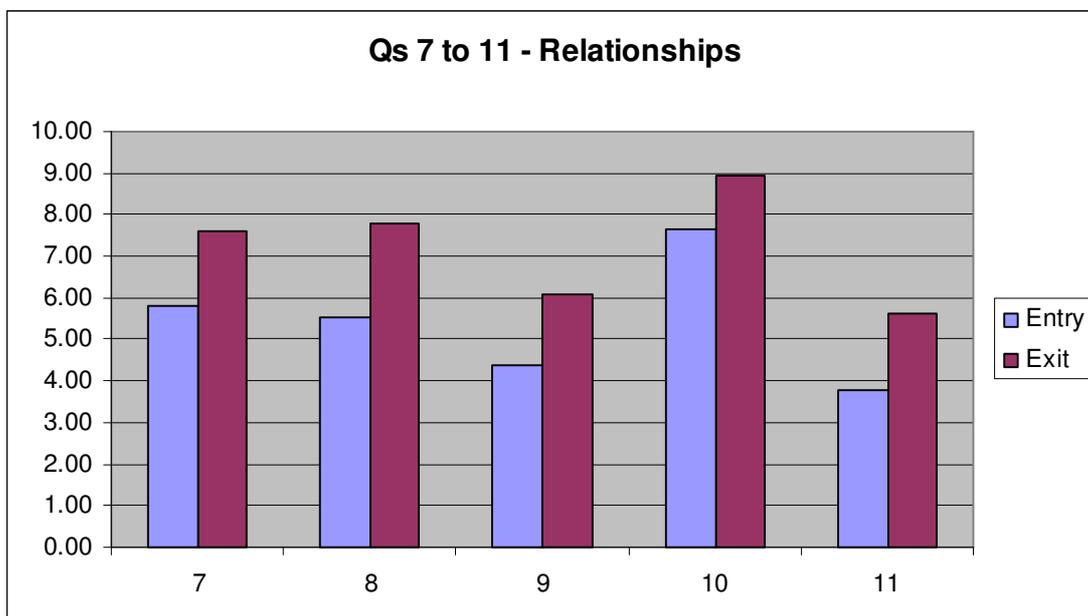
*“I would say just to offload things that are on my mind and any problems or troubles, just to be able to talk to somebody and to feel better because I can’t talk about these things to the people who are around me” (Service User).*

*“I just wanted someone to talk to, like a little bit of help, somebody to talk to because here you can’t talk to other prisoners because people are taking the piss out of you all the time” (Service User).*

*“It’s helped. It’s given me that little bit of an idea, somebody to talk to and get me emotions and me problems out to” (Service User).*

These findings are supported by improvements between entry and exit scale data. This is apparent in the statements concerning clients feeling more positive about their relationships with others (see Fig. 4.2, below).

**Fig: 4.2 Questions 7-11: Relationships**



#### **4.1.3 Impact on Experiences Associated with Domestic Abuse and Offending Behaviour**

Many men spoke about how they felt that their experiences of counselling would enable them to deal with problems/issues in a more pro-social manner and thereby have an impact on their offending

behaviour. They often also spoke about counselling in terms of helping them explore and address the root causes of their offending often for the first time. These root causes of offending, as defined by the men themselves, were often related to their experiences of domestic abuse in childhood.

*"I use drugs as a way of coping so I commit crime to get drugs. So we go back to the crime [in prison] but we don't get back to the real meaning and the counselling was where the real meaning was" (Service User).*

*"I can say now that turning to drugs for me now is not the option. I knew that and I got that from the drugs courses, but what I didn't get from the drugs courses is the root cause. There was still something inside there, inside me, what I hadn't spoken about that hadn't allowed me to do the drugs programme properly and that's why a counselling service is absolutely imperative really and I believe it should be in every jail. Every jail. Every jail." (Service User).*

*"You know, if a man understands himself and understand what makes him tick and why he's feeling the way he feels, instead of frustration and aggression he becomes more reasonable to deal with. More tolerant and the more his confidence boosts, the less he needs to show aggression and violence" (Resettlement Officer).*

Some men spoke about how undergoing counselling had freed them from feelings of guilt and shame associated with the impact of domestic abuse in their childhoods.

*"It's made me realise that things that have happened to me in the past were not my fault....I've been having lots of sleepless nights, flashbacks and stuff like that" (Service User).*

*"I think the first thing I'd say is that I think I was ready and the second thing is the counselling. I'd say it's given me a push and the coping skills to look forward to my life. We've certainly not only talked about my physical abuse, mental abuse or sexual abuse. I've talked about a hell of a lot more of my life. There's things in my life that I've talked to the counsellor about that my family don't even know about" (Service User).*

The extent to which the link between childhood abuse and criminal behaviour has been corroborated by service users has also been a surprise for stakeholders who were initially involved in the pilot project:

*“Domestic violence influences children, but the extent of how it affects criminal behaviour....I mean that’s been a real learning curve. The men accessing the service, most talk about historical abuse that’s never been disclosed and it’s never been addressed and I think if we tried to do this a lot earlier in life, we might see the general crime statistics brought down”*  
(DDVWP Domestic Violence Manager).

Accessing the DoVeS service is also shown to have affected a small, but nevertheless positive shift in client's attitudes to their own offending behaviour between entry and exit interviews. This range of improvement is recorded as between 9% and 14% (see Fig. 4.5, below). However, these smaller shifts may be explained through the limitations of recording this scale statement, as during the entry interview most of the clients recorded a high point on the scale data in this section. At the exit interview, many wanted to score themselves *even higher*, but it was felt that extending the scale was not methodologically sound. However, as can be seen from the service data, they are clear about how DoVeS has helped them reflect on their experiences of childhood, their abuse and the effects this has had on their criminal behaviour:

*“I know why I started committing crimes- it was to do with feeling rejected by my parents who always told me I'd amount to nothing. I was doing things to get attention from them, to make sure they noticed. That turned into more serious stuff like drugs as I got older. But now I feel strong enough to choose not to do that stuff”* (Service User).

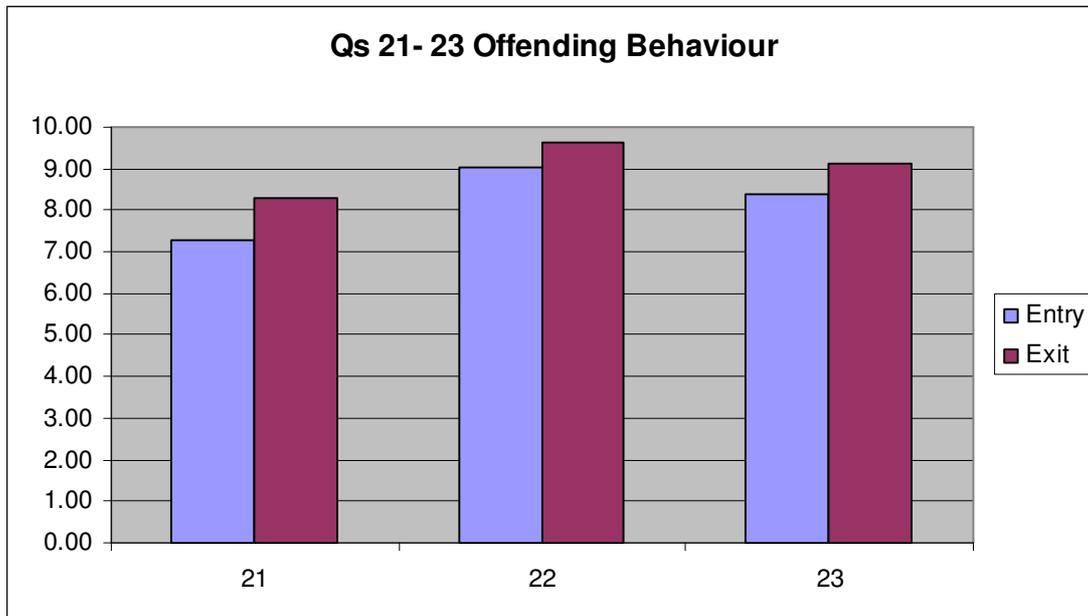
Service users felt that with the support from DoVeS they had an opportunity to reflect on and deal with their past and come out feeling stronger and more capable for that experience:

*“A lot of things that have happened to me can be related to what happened to me when I was young, I'm trying to work through the first 5 years of my life at the age of 42, but with DoVeS I've realised I can cope ok”* (Service User).

Service users and prison staff therefore report that accessing this service has a positive impact, put simply:

*“Happy, healthy people make happy, healthy choices- a very broad generalisation, but the changes that have been measured and the changes that the staff have noticed would point towards that being achieved here”* (DRSACC Development Officer).

**Fig: 4.5 Questions 21-23: Offending Behaviour**



#### **4.1.4 Positive Impact on the Prison Environment**

Many clients and prison staff talked about how the provision of counselling had had a positive impact upon the wider prison environment, particularly in terms of reducing volatility and aggression, which included self-directed aggression.

*“They’re calmer. We’ve got to be aware of potential suicide rates in here and potential self-harming incidents”*  
(Resettlement Manager).

*“Chaplaincy has approached me saying that they feel that the service has resulted in a reduction of violence generally. They feel that because the men can come here and express their anger and frustration, it’s just better for the general prison atmosphere”* (Counsellor).

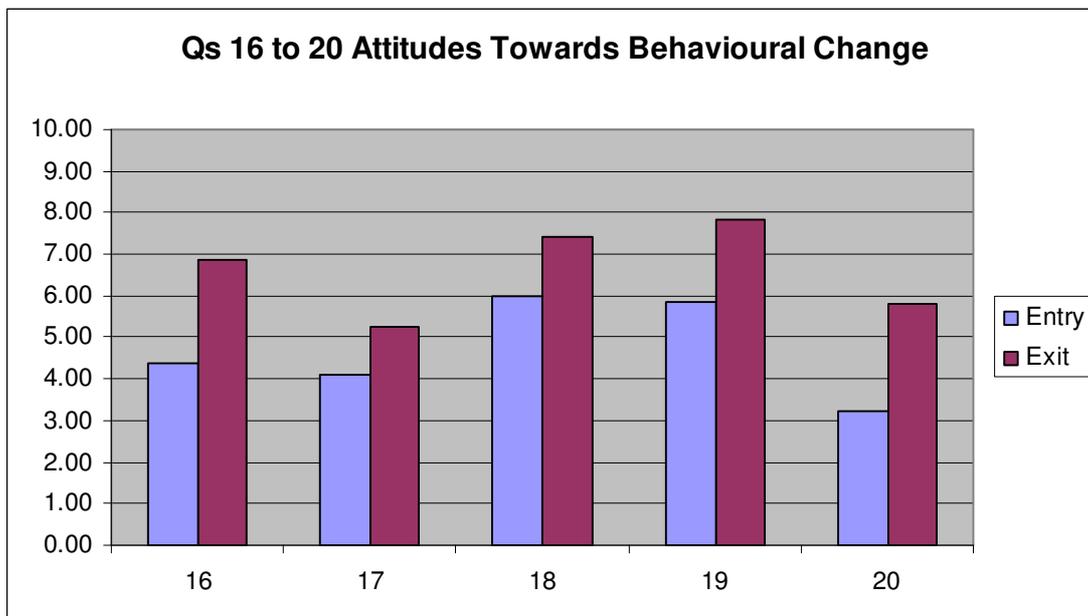
*“Domestic violence counselling works for prisoners, we’ve seen that. We can see that because they come out feeling and acting a lot better. They’re looking at their own situation, dealing with it all with her support. Not knowing how to deal with the problem can make them a volatile prisoner and can also make them susceptible to abuse themselves in here”*  
(Resettlement Manager).

The service users reflected that their accessing DoVeS had helped them be more positive about many seemingly unconnected parts of their life:

*"It's changed the way I think about things, my thought patterns- I used to just shove things away and not deal with them and they'd come back and haunt me. Now I'm organising my thoughts and therefore my life, thinking about work, getting out [of prison]. DoVeS has taught me ways of coping that work across the board in all the bits of my life" (Service User).*

The positive impact of DoVeS on the prison as a working environment is explored in more detail in section 4.5. The scale data illustrates that since accessing DoVeS, many men felt their ability to talk about their feelings, work through their problems and ask for help were much improved. Further, men felt that they saw themselves as thinking through their behaviour before acting, a skill that engaging with DoVeS had enhanced. In some cases the scale data shows improvements of up to 79% between entry and exit (see Fig. 4.4, below).

**Fig: 4.4 Questions 16-20: Attributes Towards Behavioural Change**



#### **4.1.5 Counselling within a Prison Environment: Changing Views**

Offering this type of person-centred counselling within a prison environment is undoubtedly an innovative approach particularly given the current context where, very largely, the emphasis is firmly placed on interventions that are explicitly aimed at criminogenic needs/offending behaviour. Given this innovation, it is perhaps not surprising that some stakeholders had some initial reservations and concerns about the appropriateness of the service within the prison environment. Key concerns or envisaged potential difficulties are explored below (section 4.2). However, what has emerged from the data is that either these initial concerns have not materialised or have been addressed and diminished throughout the lifetime of the Service.

Factors emerging from the data in overcoming these potential difficulties are also explored below (section 4.3).

## 4.2 Potential Difficulties/Obstacles

The potential tension around offering a counselling service within the prison environment was recognised by many stakeholders and the data suggests that initial concerns can be broadly categorised around:

- **Type of counselling service within a prison environment.** Including tensions between the underpinning values of a person-centred approach, for example self-determination and autonomy and the emphasis on maintaining discipline and security within the prison context.
- **Causing distress to prisoners as a result of the counselling experience and consequent increased volatility with the prison environment.**
- **Issues around confidentiality.** Including potential tension between offering a confidential service to prisoners within an environment with a strong culture of information sharing and also in terms of ability to offer prisoners confidentiality around attending counselling sessions.
- **Regime Issues.** Including the ability to offer counselling within a remand prison where the prison population is particularly fluid and prisoner movement can be sudden and frequent but also the ability to get prisoners to counselling sessions regularly and on time.

## 4.3 Overcoming Potential Difficulties/Obstacles

However, as referred to above, analysis of data at the two-year stage suggested that these envisaged or potential difficulties were perceived to have been very largely addressed and overcome. Again, the data suggests that salient factors in how this had been achieved can be categorised as follows:

- **Strength of counselling skills and personal skills of the DoVeS counsellor.** This was particularly spoken about in terms of how potential issues around managing possible distress to prisoners through undergoing counselling had been overcome through skilled handling of sessions, particularly ending of sessions and also through a commitment to transparency in terms of being open and realistic with prisoners around what could be achieved through the counselling process given the context. This was also spoken about in terms of how the potential conflict between offering a confidential service within an environment where information sharing is the norm. The potential tension between offering counselling within a remand prison in particular had been a key point of concern raised at the stage-one evaluation but the data suggests that this had been largely addressed in terms of the counsellor adopting what may be termed a `flexible` approach to the work that was responsive to the changing

environment. Given this situation, the DRSACC Counsellor accessed a NACRO training session in London entitled: 'Mental health, client confidentiality and multi-agency working'. This workshop was developed by a probation officer and covered issues of confidentiality and information sharing from a prison perspective. The counsellor felt much more confident about how she fitted into the prison's established ways of working having engaged with this training.

- **Support from other colleagues/departments and the prison regime.** This was spoken about as key in terms of how any possible distress to prisoners could be monitored and addressed by colleagues, including the In-Reach Mental Health team and through prison systems such as monitoring and review procedures.
- **`Adaptation` of Regime Issues.** The data suggests that a number of adaptations have been made, some evolving naturally and some more consciously negotiated, which have helped in potential difficulties and problems being overcome. For example, the location of the Service within the Resettlement Suite which has a heavy flow of prisoners accessing a range of services, and adaptations to how prisoners can self-refer to the Service have minimised potential difficulties around maintaining confidentiality.
- Also pro-active steps taken by the DoVeS counsellor were viewed as having helped to minimise difficulties around getting prisoners to appointments.

#### **4.4 Becoming Integral to the Prison: Embeddedness and Identity**

##### **4.4.1 Benefits of Increasing Integration into the Prison**

Analysis of the data at year-two stage, strongly suggests that the DoVeS counselling service has become more well-known and embedded in HMP Doncaster and has come to be viewed as an integral part of the prison.

This has been seen to have a number of benefits, for example:

- Increased knowledge of the Service and what it offers amongst prisoners and prison staff alike and a subsequent increase of referrals.
- Increased appropriateness of referrals
- Increased accessibility/informality of the referral process
- The counsellor being able to negotiate aspects of the prison regime more easily in order to facilitate increased prisoner attendance at sessions
- Increasing links with other services inside the prison for example In-reach Mental Health team etc.
- Increased trust in the Service by the prison and its staff, which has been a factor in the Service retaining its independence.

#### **4.4. 2 Importance of Separate Identity**

However, the data also suggests that within this increasing integration, the Service has maintained its separate identity and highlights the importance of this. This is seen as important for a number of reasons, although primarily in terms of prisoners having confidence in the confidentiality and therefore the integrity of the counselling service.

*“I think it’s seen as external. That’s why it’s been a success in here because we’ve made it and we’ve stated to the prisoners ‘This is not a service from Doncaster prison’. Yes, it’s within the prison, but it is a confidential counselling service that is provided”* (Resettlement Officer).

*“I think they see her as separate now. I think its taken time. At the beginning they maybe thought they saw her as part of the prison but now I think they realise she physically comes into the prison. They see the way she works, I think she’s taken as separate”* (Resettlement Officer).

*“It’s a beneficial thing (service being seen as separate) the lads see her not as an authority figure and more confidential”* (Resettlement Officer).

#### **4.4.3 Importance of Being Part of the Team**

Whilst the data highlights that the service has maintained its separate identity within the prison and the perceived importance of this, it further suggests that the counsellor herself is increasingly perceived as part of a team (in this case in the first instance part of the Resettlement team) and that she herself feels part of a team.

*“I think the whole of the team feel that she is just a colleague, she is there, you know, and she is with us”* (Resettlement Officer).

This was seen as having a number of important benefits. For example for the counsellor being perceived as and treated as part of team was felt to increase her ability for her work to remain independent and allow her to ‘get on with the job’

*“Because of the way the staff here have made me feel part of a team, its almost as if I’ve just been allowed to get on with my counselling without being interfered with in any way”* (Counsellor).

## 4.5 Additional Component: 'Accessing the Views of Prison Staff'

As previously indicated an additional component was added to the initial evaluation report remit (see section 2.6.1). Under this component, 10 interviews with prison staff who have day-to-day interaction with men in prison were conducted<sup>8</sup>. The following themes were identified during the analysis of these data:

### 4.5.1 Prevalence of Domestic Violence Related Issues

The prison staff spoken to made the general observation that domestic violence issues were quite common in the prison population. Staff admitted that to begin with they found this kind of disclosure a shock:

*“At least 80% of the men I have assessed for ACCT in the last three years have had domestic violence problems in the past”*  
(Prison Custody Officer).

Staff reported that they viewed men disclosing domestic violence issues as being a positive step towards dealing with the issue:

*“You expect it, its never pleasant but you are glad that they are at the point where they can disclose- some find it hard to get there- so not a shock anymore- but relief really that they are opening the door....”* (Prison Custody Officer).

Prison staff reported that since the availability of DoVeS they had found their jobs easier, in that:

*“Before DoVeS, well we used to try and skate round it [disclosure of domestic violence] to be honest- didn’t want to push it because we had nothing in place to manage that distress if they opened up to us...”* (Prison Custody Officer).

Staff who have been disclosed to on many occasions over the years reported that knowing there was a service to refer these men on to was in itself empowering for them at work:

*“I wouldn’t feel like I could refer them on to anybody. We haven’t got anything if DoVeS is not there. I find it does help at least I can say- “We have this”. Makes me feel more confident- it’s like back up for me, if they do have domestic violence problems”*  
(Prison Custody Officer).

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<sup>8</sup> Ten individuals were identified and agreed to an interview; however 2 potential interviewees proved unavailable to contribute.

*“In a sense without DoVeS it’s like fobbing them off, because I can’t help them and I know they are desperate to be helped because when they bring it up - they do want to talk about it”*  
(Prison Custody Officer).

Officers reported that disclosure of domestic violence was part of their day to day life, and that they often saw domestic violence related issues as being a root cause of some of the more distressing behaviours they witness at work:

*“When on suicide watch it’s common for men to express these types of problems, those with self-harming history were often victims of domestic violence as kids. They cut themselves- take it out on themselves”* (Prison Custody Officer).

#### **4.5.2 Connection between Experience of Domestic Violence and Criminal Behaviour**

Prison staff reported their belief that exposure to domestic violence in early childhood often resulted in complex and cyclical problems in later life for the men they worked with:

*“The more you work in this atmosphere the more you realise it’s a common and indicative problem in here- men who as kids have been abused and/or witnessed abuse”*  
(Prison Custody Officer).

*“It’s a cycle- you will mimic what you see- so if you see your parents conducting domestic violence on each other you learn that that is behaviour that is acceptable as adults- how men and women interact- then what’s to stop you from going on and doing the same- repeating that pattern of behaviour and then your children go on and do it too”* (Prison Custody Officer).

Many officers felt that in their experience domestic violence affected the men in their care in many different ways and their general view was that it was bound to affect men’s attitudes to appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in later life:

*“Sometimes it’s like a different world. It’s so not like my life- it’s something like you see on telly- there was this one guy and his life was just like...everything he’d grown up with was violent, guns and knives and it totally shocked me”*  
(Prison Custody Officer).

*“Childhoods the way that they’ve learnt- there’s a lack of normal role models”* (Prison Custody Officer).

The prison staff’s perspective on these issues reinforces the service users’ reflections on their own experiences associated with domestic

abuse and the effects of accessing the DoVeS service on their attitudes to their own offending behaviour (see section 4.1.3). Indeed, for many of the prison staff, the link between domestic violence issues and adult behaviour was one they had seen, time and time again:

*“The link is clear for me- domestically abused themselves by siblings and/or parents, some have witnessed it, some been involved and this has had an effected them in many ways and in some sense moulded them. They are here as a direct result of domestic violence and the effects it’s had on them and their criminal history” (Prison Custody Officer).*

*“One prisoner in here, having had years and years of dealing with domestic abuse issues, he’d come to a point where he didn’t know what to do and it was a recurring nightmare for him. He’d committed offences as a way of dealing with it all. He just couldn’t cope, when he felt low and started to think about what happened to him- that was when he was more likely to go out and punish himself, which led to re-offending. Running away from it almost and it was affecting his family- the things he was dealing with meant he was pushing away his own family and they were suffering because of it and he started threatening his partner which affected his children. He went to DoVeS- says he’s coming to terms with it now, along with low self esteem issues. He’s even talking about getting work when he gets out now” (Prison Custody Officer).*

One officer felt that exposure to domestic violence in early life was indicative of many of the men in his care’s attitudes to violence per se:

*“In my experience there is a relationship between men who are violent generally and early exposure to domestic violence” (Prison Custody Officer).*

In line with this view, all the officers reported that they saw the DoVeS service as fitting well into the overarching aims of the prison service:

*“It sits in with a package of overarching services provided here. Changing behaviour- we’re all here for the same reason. It’s like a tool kit which DoVeS is part of. It sits in there, taking a slightly different avenue [to more Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approaches] to changing behaviour” (Prison Custody Officer).*

From this perspective, many saw the DoVeS service as helping men in prison to break the cycle of effects of domestic violence and take control of their lives:

*“These men are just going round in circles otherwise- it’s their life style- but DoVeS can change that although it must be a difficult and draining process...” (Prison Custody Officer).*

### 4.5.3 Improvements in Individuals and their Wider Relationships

Prison staff reported that men in their care who had been signposted to DoVeS often came back to them with positive remarks:

*“I’ve had men say- thanks-it’s [accessing DoVeS] been really good, I wish I’d done it years ago”* (Prison Custody Officer).

Officers had also noted more intimate changes in men accessing the service, which are described by staff as having a broader positive effect on the men’s general well-being:

*“I’ve seen their self-esteem increasing...even seen some of them come off their ACCT after going to DoVeS”* (Prison Custody Officer).

*“One guy, he actually said he’d never spoken about it before and had carried the guilt for years and it had been brought up again recently because the abuser had died. I’ve seen him and I’ve noticed that he is not on his ACCT anymore and he just generally seems more ok with himself, happier really, and now he always goes out his way to speak to me when he’d usually be withdrawn and not speak before, just something about him”* (Prison Custody Officer).

Parallels can be drawn between these findings and the service users’ own reflections on the service as increasing their sense of agency, self-efficacy and empowerment (see section 4.1.1). Prison staff also observed that the changes like the ones described above have had a positive impact on these men’s relationships inside prison:

*“I’ve seen men who come in not coping, are withdrawn, have low self esteem and no confidence who start off isolated. Then, after accessing DoVeS- they are feeling happier, coping better, it brings them out of themselves and they venture out into wing areas and begin to mix with other prisoners. They begin to respect themselves and this also makes staffs’ lives easier, calmer, happier”* (Prison Custody Officer).

*“I hope it’s not too much to say that he’s transformed since he’s accessed DoVeS. He has grown massively in confidence. When he first came in he self-harmed and was a withdrawn person, he didn’t want contact with anyone. The DoVeS and the prison have worked hand in hand really- he’s had jobs in prison which have encouraged him too- now you get big smile and a chat and he seems to have stopped self-harming....”* (Prison Custody Officer).

Prison staff interviews clearly indicate that staff believe that accessing DoVeS has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on both the

individual men and on the environment in which they live and others work.

One officer also noted that the men's relationships outside of prison were benefiting from their engagement with DoVeS, in terms of their interaction with partners. The officer described many of the men he has cared for as coming from quite negative partner relationships. However, some of the men accessing DoVeS had, he claimed experienced an improvement in their relations outside of prison:

*"Whereas before they'd start the visit badly, now with their improved communication skills since going to DoVeS, it's just calmed them down and they are able to have a decent conversation with their partners. They are less stressed. Some have volatile relationships with partners- arguments- you should see the change in some prisoners- it's unbelievable- it's really good to see"* (Prison Custody Officer).

Indeed, one gentleman's partner is reported as approaching this officer with a question:

*"What have you done to him? He wants to talk. Before he never wanted to talk about anything!"* (Prison Custody Officer).

#### **4.5.4 Positive Contribution of DoVeS Engagement on Staff Morale and the General Working Environment**

The prison environment is a demanding place to work. There are set regimes which officers, particularly wing staff have to complete at set times with a large number of men. While it was reported that prison staff are empathic to men experiencing difficulties, many admitted that finding time in the day to support these men just wasn't feasible:

*"It's having the time to have that one-to-one when you are working the wings. Staff are busy- it's the nature of the beast- staffs cut to the bone, while year on year the prison population grows"* (Prison Custody Officer).

*"There's no time in the day to day. When an individual comes to me saying he needs to talk to someone I have to tell him that I'm not here to listen to your problems. But I tell the unit manager and he sorts out who they go to"* (Prison Custody Officer).

Staff also admitted to feeling ill qualified to deal with such specific and traumatic problems on the wings:

*"I think all of us feel in here well, that we can't deal with it [domestic violence disclosure] here- we need outside help. These are deep problems that officers just can't deal with. I am*

*sympathetic you know- but I don't know how to do it, I'm not trained and we are so busy anyway* (Prison Custody Officer).

Some felt that his situation interfered with their duty of care to these men:

*"If we don't talk to them that could result in more self-harm or violence or general agitation on the wings"*  
(Prison Custody Officer).

It was reported that prison staff often see men 'acting out' on the wings due to the lack of outlets in which to talk about their abuse:

*"They are always aggressive and angry because they've been so pent up with it all"* (Prison Custody Officer).

This situation, the prison staff argue, has implications for the dynamics of the whole wing:

*"They cope by scaring everyone off- being hot headed and noisy- acting out on the wing. If you've got somebody that's acting out [on the wing], if they are getting help and it calms them down and calms down the whole wing. One or two volatile prisoners affect the whole of the wing and it spoils it for other prisoners and makes an uneasy atmosphere. So getting help makes it better for all- tension is not good with 91 men per wing. They need calming down too and it helps with wing dynamics too. [After accessing DoVeS] they've come back to me and said it's really, really helped and these blokes are not very accepting people- so that's a big compliment"* (Prison Custody Officer).

In this way, prison staff reported that having DoVeS there to help was beneficial, not only to the men, but also to the daily working lives of all prison staff:

*"The more help the better I think. It's back up for us- the things we can't deal with on a day to day basis.... it's letting them know there is some help rather than us having to say- "we'll have to talk to you later". We want back up...its better for us...they have someone they can have a one to one with.... they don't get that on the wings"* (Prison Custody Officer).

#### **4.5.5 Future of Service**

Prison staff consider the DoVeS service as appropriate for the men they work with. Staff reported their concern regarding the threats to the continuation of the service due to funding problems. Some found it astonishing that the service was under threat:

*“It’s an essential service. I hope it continues...I think it should grow” (Prison Custody Officer).*

Prison staff reported that in their opinion the service could be developed to accommodate more men, with some staff stating that they believe the counselling remit should be broadened to admit men who have experienced trauma and loss which are not associated with domestic violence issues.

*“Its imperative- DoVeS- prisoners that I’ve had that were transferred and other prisons don’t have DoVeS. It’s been a big worry for me- its very frustrating sometimes, we need similar services in other prisons...” (Prison Custody Officer).*

Indeed, as illustrated above, prison staff admitted to worrying about men being transferred to other prisons without the DoVeS counselling service.

As this additional component has demonstrated, prison staff have found the DoVeS service a useful and appropriate service for the men they work with. All the staff interviewed agreed that the DoVeS service had effected positive changes in the men accessing it which they had observed during their day to day work around the prison. Staff members also reported that the existence of the service had positive effects on their own working lives and the working atmosphere on the wings particularly.

## **Chapter Five: Key Factors in Success and Recommendations**

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### **5.1 Importance of the Counselling Service Becoming Integral to the Prison Environment but Remaining Independent**

This would appear to be a key factor in the success of the DoVeS counselling service at HMP Doncaster. It is widely perceived that the service had become far more well-known and integral in the prison over the two-year period and that this had a number of benefits including the development of trust between the service and the prison staff. However, what the data also suggest is that a counselling service remaining independent and being perceived as such, is integral to success, particularly in terms of being able to maintain confidentiality and therefore the integrity of the counselling approach used.

### **5.2 Skilled and Experienced Counsellors**

The data suggest a widely held perception that much of the success of the service within HMP Doncaster lies in the particular set of skills of the DoVeS counsellor. The involvement of a highly skilled and experienced counsellor would appear to have been a vital factor, particularly in terms of ability to effectively manage and negotiate a number of complexities associated with offering a counselling service within a prison environment.

### **5.3 Flexibility of Approach**

A further factor in the success of the DoVeS counselling service within HMP Doncaster suggested by the data, is the flexible approach adopted by the service which took into account and adapted to providing counselling within various constraints, primarily time constraints, and responding to `emergency` situations often contingent to the prison context.

### **5.4 Summary**

This evaluation report has shown that the DoVeS counselling service has exceeded its objective of offering the service to 90 male prisoners who have experience of domestic violence, over the two year funding period. There is a clear demand for this service within the prison population, given that 232 men have put in applications to use the service. A positive partnership between DRSACC and the prison staff has been developed and maintained effectively. This has proved essential to the development of this service. This report has provided data to illustrate that an effective counselling service provision has been established at HMP Doncaster by the DoVeS counselling project.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

The positive outcomes for the men involved in the DoVeS service, which are included in this report are testament to the success of this project. We hope that the following recommendations will assist in identifying priorities for development and sustainability of this person-centred counselling service:

### **5.5.1 Increasing Capacity of the Existing DoVeS Counselling Service**

The increase in the level of service usage would suggest that there is a need for expansion in terms of recruiting more counsellors to the project. This would allow staff to engage in more strategic planning and development for example in relation to expanding links with community-based organisations for follow-up work on release.

### **5.5.2 Sustainability**

A key factor in terms of the sustainability of the service is the need to secure appropriate long-term funding as soon as possible. Again, this would allow energies to be directed to further development and improvement of the service. It is recommended that the steering group meet regularly and develop a strategic agenda from which the funding issue can be approached.

### **5.5.3 Promoting Follow-up Work on Release**

Providing advice on appropriate support agencies post-release is an objective of the DoVeS service. This objective came up against many unforeseen obstacles as the dynamic and changing population at HMP Doncaster makes it difficult to respond practically to this original objective. A high proportion of service users are moved, transferred or released before a significant number of sessions can be completed. These men often do not know themselves when they are about to be transferred, so cannot inform the counsellor in advance.

However, where clients have been aware of their release date and living location, the counsellor has discussed their needs and offered appropriate information and contact details. A number of service users have requested to continue counselling at DRSACC post release. DRSACC have existing and extensive knowledge and experience of Domestic Violence Support provision locally. Due to the often geographically diverse release locations of the DoVeS service users, DRSACC have had to broaden their domestic violence support identification to a national scale.

Whilst it is recognised that the desire to follow-up and continue with counselling on release should be self-directed on the part of the (ex) prisoner, building in mechanisms for promoting and facilitating this

could be extended. This recommendation could also facilitate the original objective of providing support for partners of this cohort of men.

#### **5.5.4 Demonstrating Effectiveness – Reducing Re-offending**

The available data does suggest that the counselling service may well have an impact on reducing offending behaviour. However, the steering group could consider, as part of future project development, how effectiveness in these terms could be demonstrated more robustly. Demonstrating effectiveness through reconviction/reoffending follow-up studies with a comparable control group with this population would, it is recognised, prove complex. An alternative approach might be to consider the use of validated tools to measure attitudinal shifts which seek to measure changes in attitudes and thinking which have been suggested by research to be linked to and supportive of offending behaviour.

#### **5.5.5 Raising Awareness of Domestic Violence Amongst Prison Staff**

The data suggest that some important progress has been made in relation to this objective throughout the lifetime of the project. It would appear that the existence of the project and the process of it, and the Counsellor herself, becoming more embedded within the prison, have played an important part in this. However, the Liaison Officer's attendance at training sessions held with prison staff has also been important. It is understood that the Liaison Officer role is presently vacant due to staff movement. It is therefore recommended that this role is re-instated and expanded in order to continue this important aspect of the work of the project.

#### **5.5.6 Expansion to Other Prisons**

The data suggest that roll-out to other prisons, perhaps initially those in the local area, is a possible area for future development of the project and has been identified as such by key stakeholders including the men themselves. It is recommended that the key factors associated with the success of this project at HMP Doncaster (see Chapter Four) are given full consideration in any possible expansion to other prisons.

#### **5.5.7 Importance of the DoVeS Steering Group**

The role of the steering group is crucial to the strategic development of the DoVeS project, particularly in respect of securing sustainable funding. There is also a role for the steering group to take a lead in addressing some of the operational issues given the challenges of providing a service to such a large number of men with a sole counsellor.

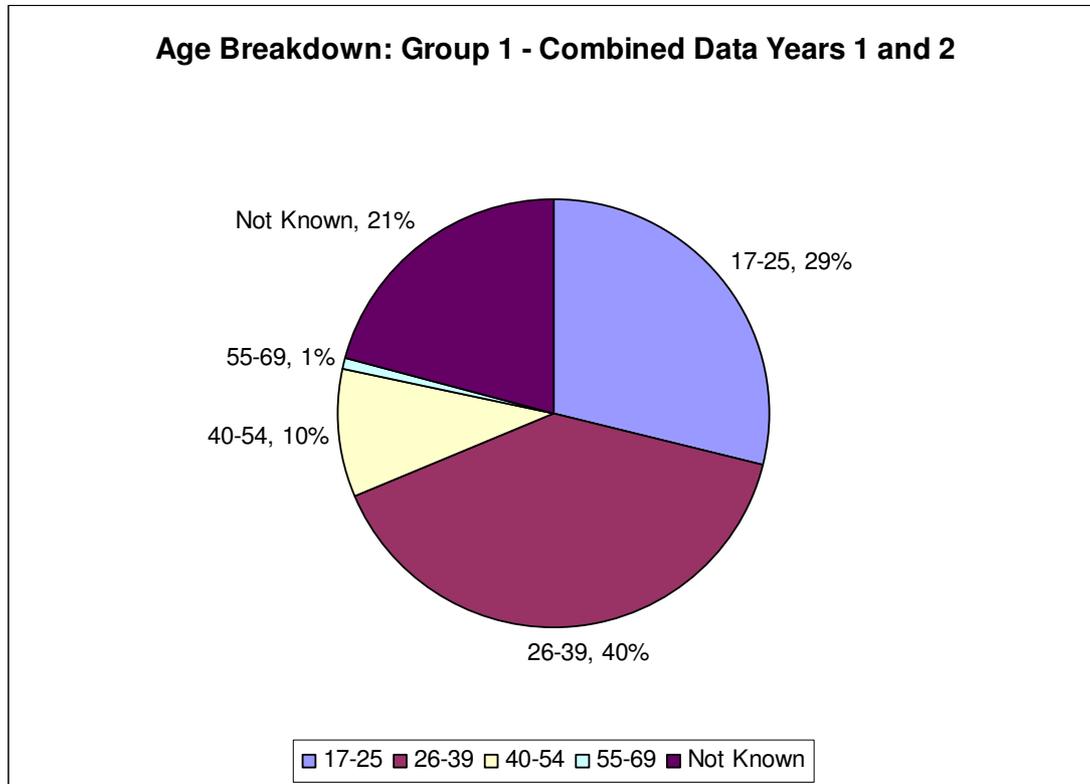
### **5.5.8 Collecting Performance Data Post Evaluation**

It is recommended that service user data continues to be collected after the withdrawal of the external evaluation team. In this way, the DoVeS project can continue to produce data to support future funding bids.

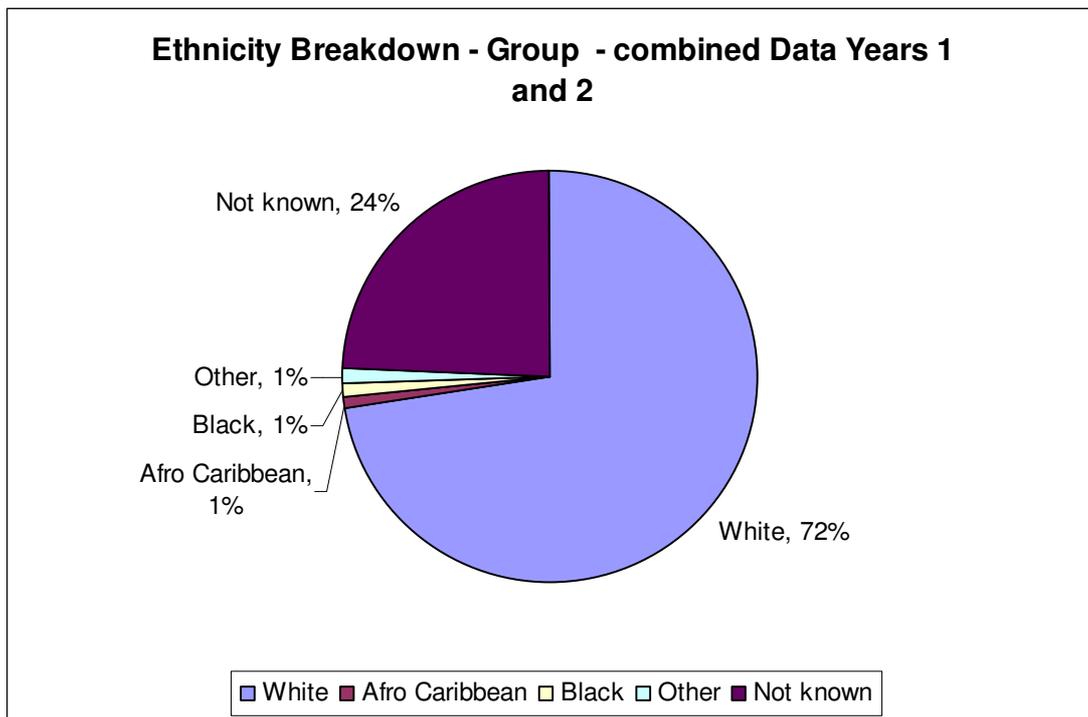
## Appendix 1: Demographics of Men Submitting Applications to Access DoVeS: Group 1

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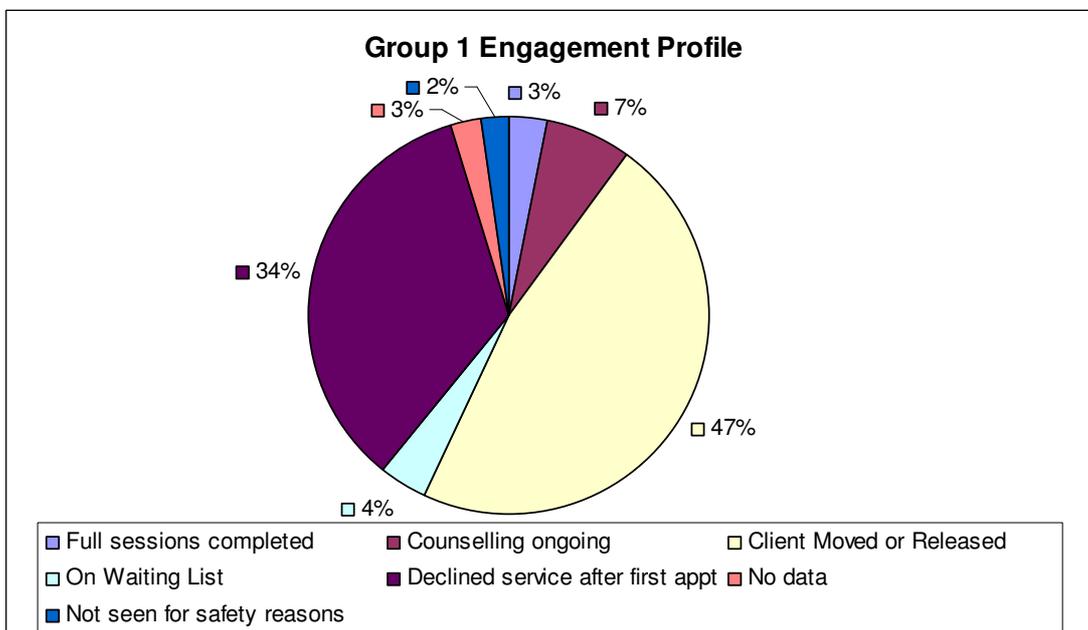
*Fig: 1.1 Age of Men Accessing DoVeS Service*



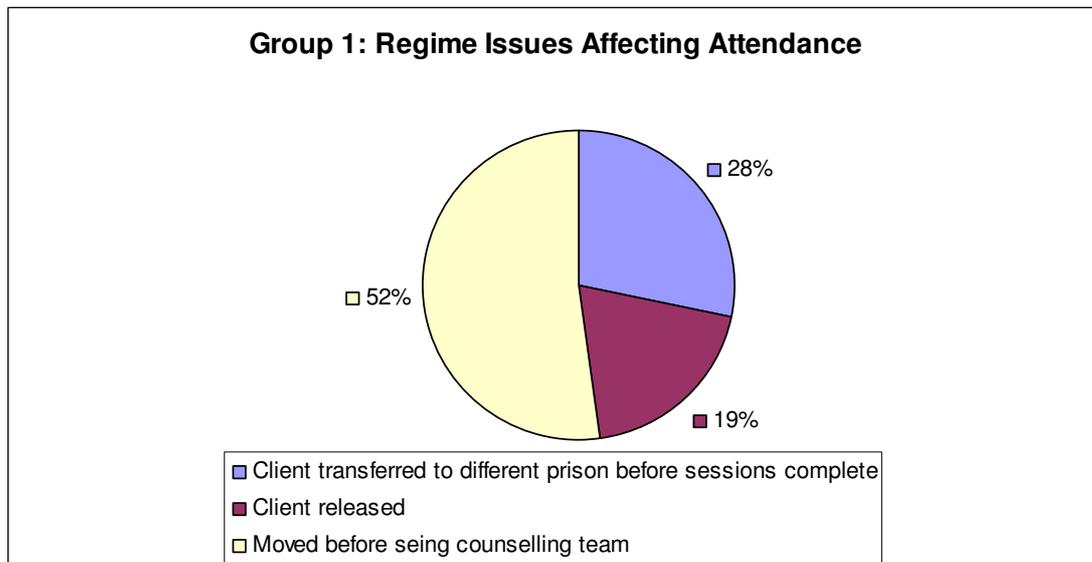
**Fig: 1.2 Ethnic Origins of Men Accessing DoVeS**



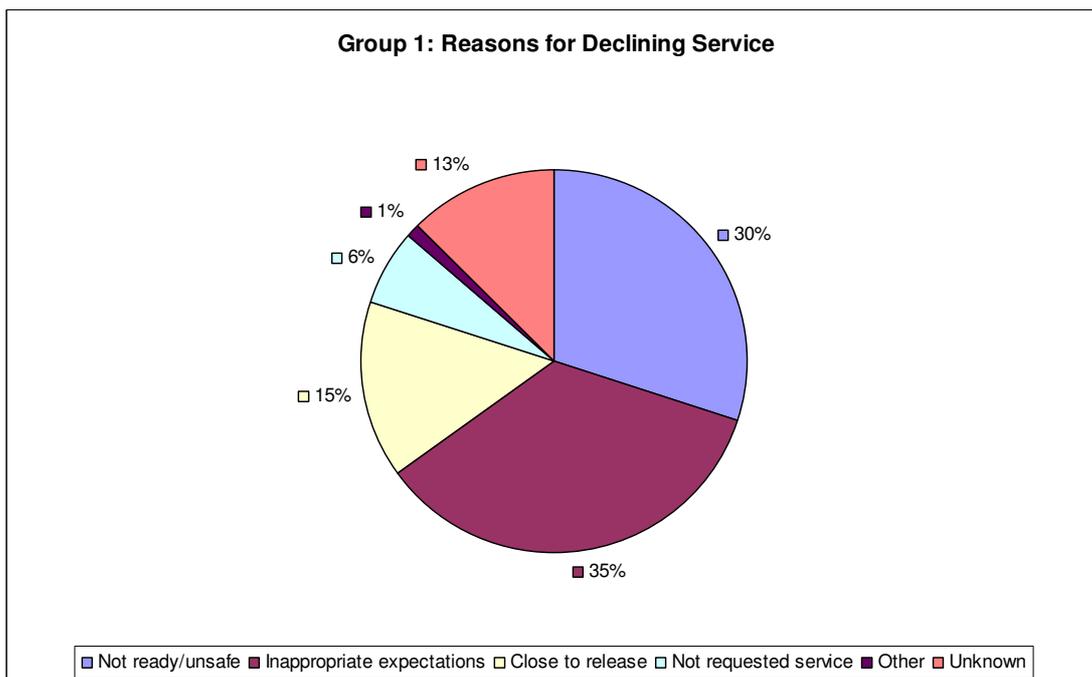
**Fig: 1.3 Engagement with DoVeS Service**



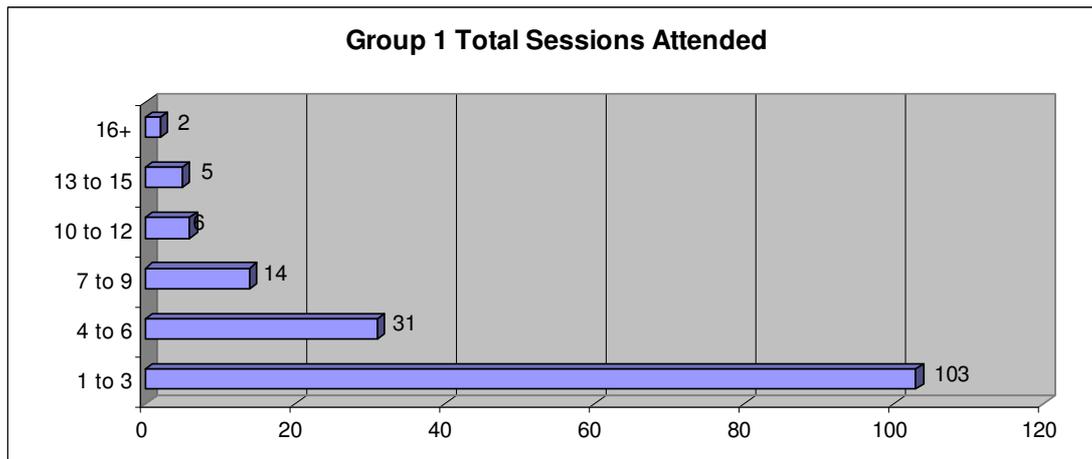
**Fig: 1.4 Regime Issues**



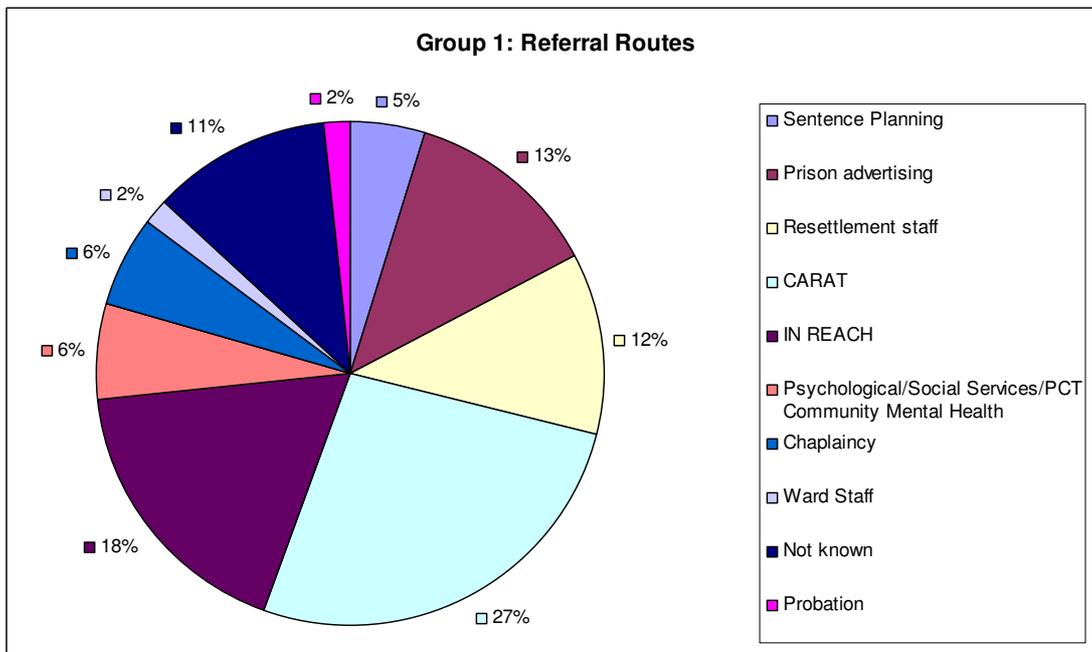
**Fig. 1.5 Reasons for Declining Service**



**Fig: 1.6 Sessions Attended**



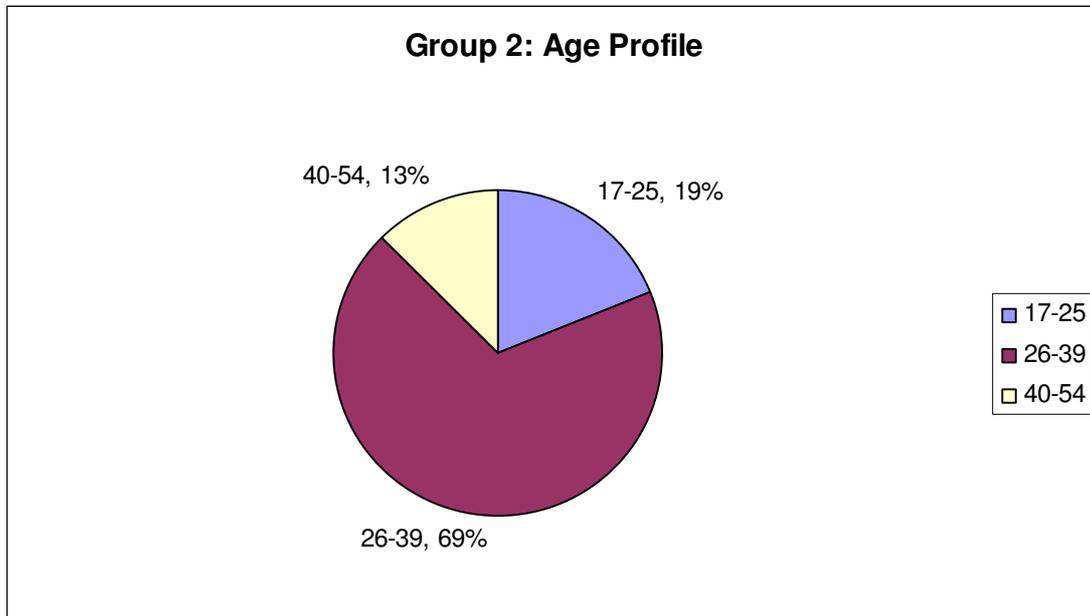
**Fig: 1.7 Referral Routes**



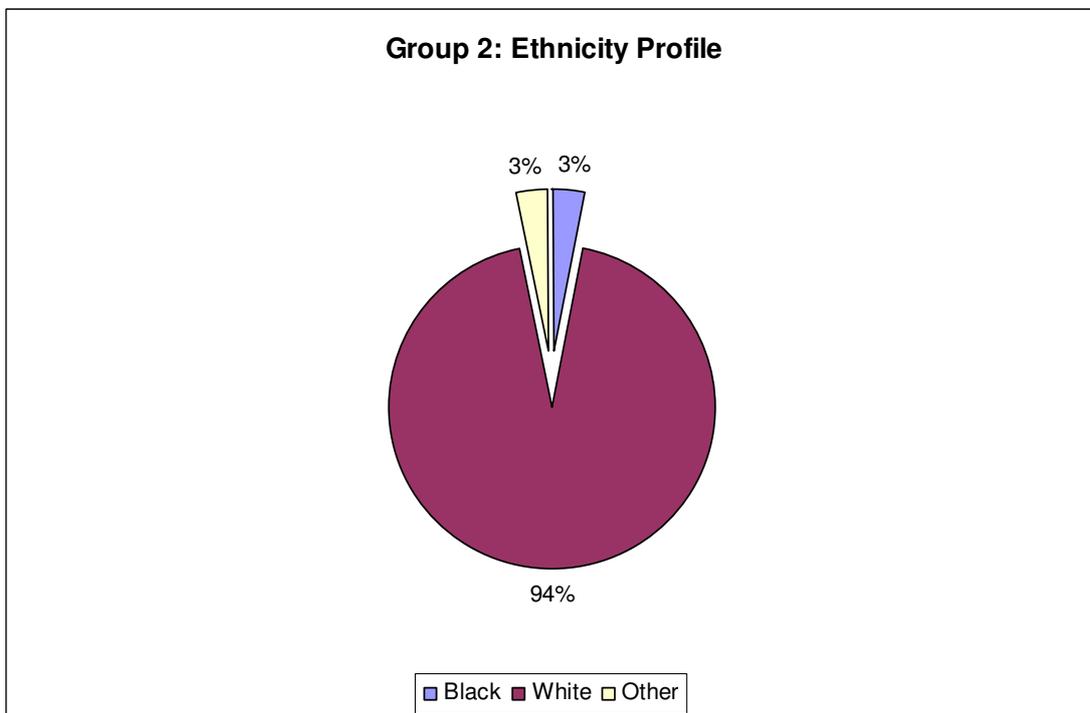
## Appendix 2: Group 2 Demographics

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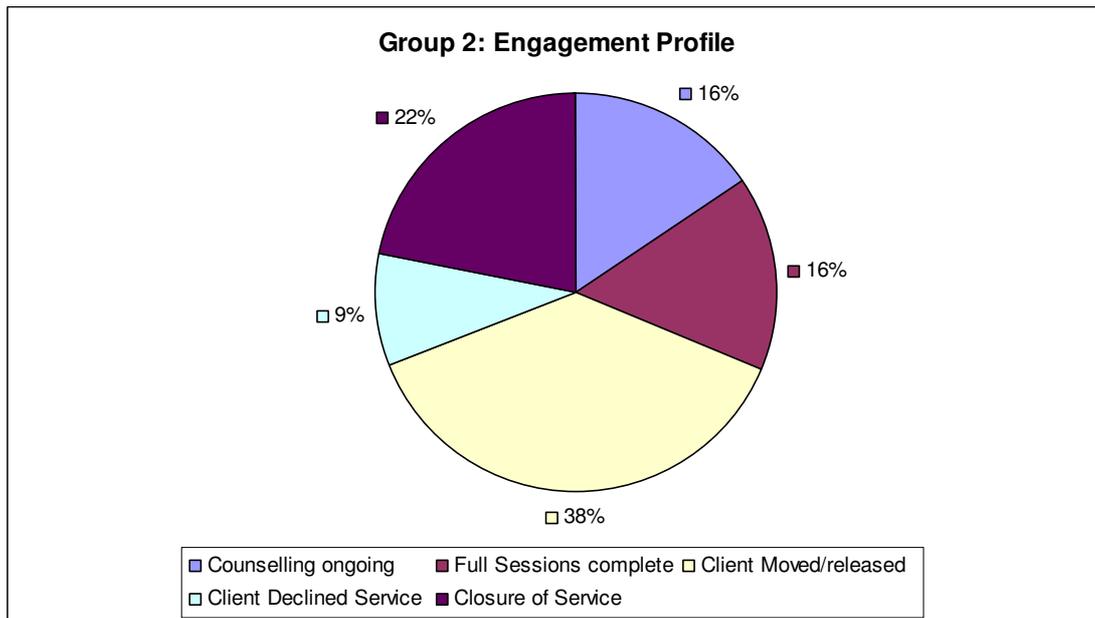
**Figure: 2.1 Age Profile**



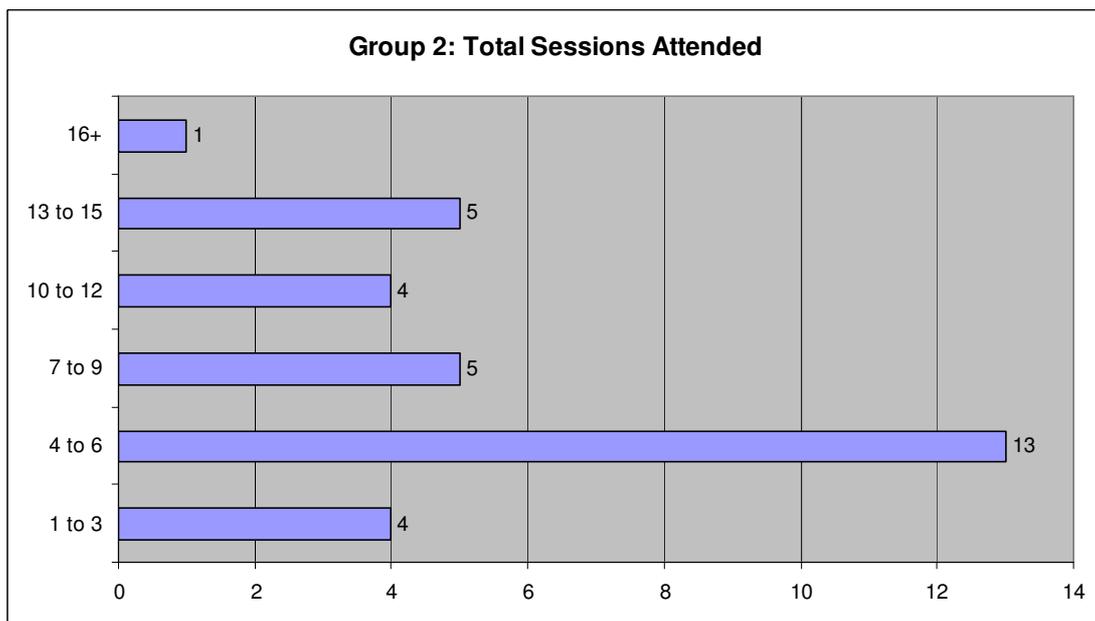
**Fig: 2.2 Ethnic Profile**



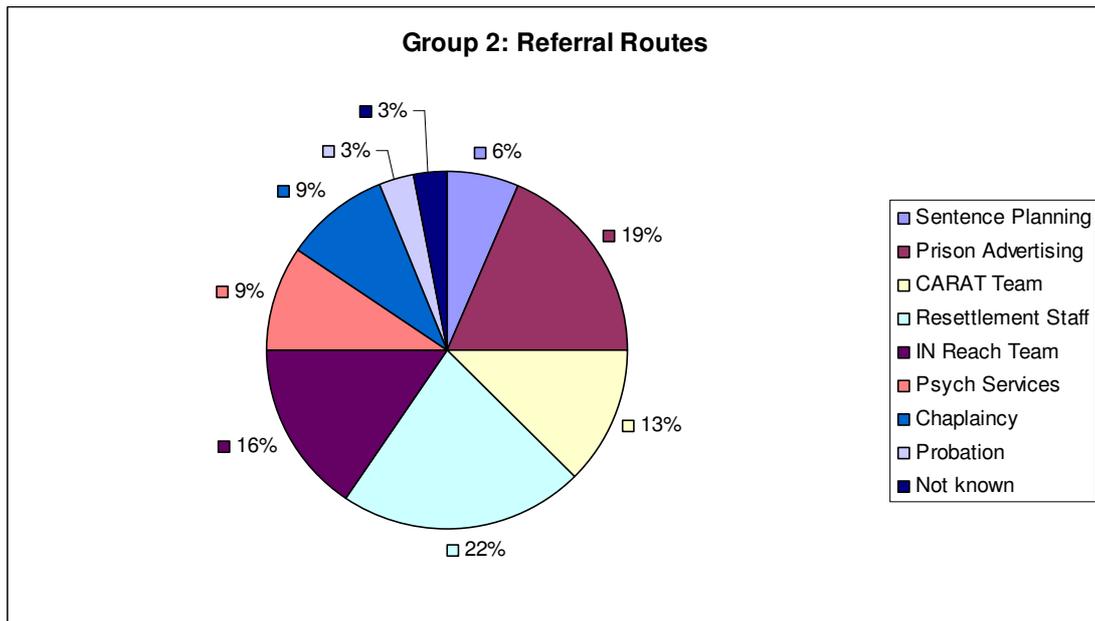
**Fig: 2.3 Engagement with DoVeS**



**Fig: 2.4 Sessions Attended**



**Fig: 2.5 Referral Routes**



# Appendix 3: Scale Data Sheet

ID No:

## Doncaster Prison Counselling Service (DoVeS) Evaluation Project

### Evaluation Sheet (to be completed on entry and exit from service)

Name: ..... ENTRY INT. Date:.....

..... EXIT INT. Date:.....

#### **Entry questions**

How did you find out about the counselling service?

How did you access the counselling service?

What do you expect/ hope to get out of it?

How many sessions have you had to date?

#### **Section One**

##### **1) I am happy**



##### **2) I respect myself**



##### **3) I think other people like me**



##### **4) I feel I do not have much to be proud of**



##### **5) I have a number of good qualities**



**6) Other people have a big influence on how I see myself**



**Section Two**

**7) If I have a problem I can make my views clear to other people**



**8) I can ask for help and support when I need it**



**9) The important people in my life are happy**



**10) I respect the important people in my life**



**11) Other people's expectations of me are pretty low**



**Section Three**

**12) I feel able to develop and progress in life**



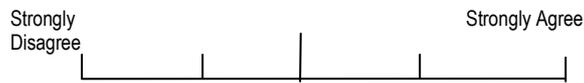
**13) I am confident in making decisions**



**14) I believe that I can succeed in life**



**15) I have control over my life**



**Section Four**

**16) I find it hard to talk about my feelings**



**17) I am more interested in the present than the future**



**18) I am confident that I can work through problems in my life**



**19) I can ask for help if I need it**



**20) I do things without thinking**



**Section Five**

**21) I see no reason to change my behaviour at this point in my life**



**22) I am thinking about a non-offending future**



### 23) I am responsible for my own criminal behaviour

Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree

## Exit Questions

### Life experience and relationships

- Do you think your experiences in early life have affected the choices you have made?
- If you were a time-traveller- what is the one piece of advice you would go back and give yourself about life?
- If you were asked to talk to a group of young men who were thinking about beginning a criminal career- What would you say to them?

### Expectations of counselling

- What were your 'ideas' about counselling before you attended DoVeS?
- Have these ideas changed since beginning counselling?
- Was the counselling service what you expected? In what ways was it different?
- Do you see the DoVeS counsellor as part of the Prison system or are they different?
- What is the best thing about attending counselling?
- What is the worst thing about attending counselling?
- Do any of your peers/ family know you are attending counselling? What has the reaction been like?
- Have the counselling sessions affected your confidence in your relationships with other people?
- How would you describe your relations with Prison staff? Has this been affected by attending counselling?
- Do you think attending counselling has helped you communicate more effectively?
- Would you say that receiving counselling has in any way either reduced or increased anxiety?

- Has the counselling revealed things about yourself and the way you do things that you didn't like/ didn't realise?

#### **Attributed to counselling?**

- At end of interview consider 'movement' (if any) in evaluation scale between entry and exit. To what extent do you feel these movements can be attributed to counselling and/or other factors?
- Do you think attending counselling has had an effect (or no effect) on your offending behaviour?
- Do you feel that the counselling you have received has been effective? In what way(s)?
- In what ways if any, would things have been different for you if you had not taken up the counselling service?

#### **Closure of the counselling service**

- Have you been informed about the fact that the service will be closing at the end of September?
- How do you feel about this?
- Does it affect your willingness to participate in the service?
- Would you feel confident about accessing another counselling service, if available, either inside or outside prison?

## About the authors

Paula Hamilton has been a senior lecturer in criminology at Sheffield Hallam University since September 2004 having previously been programme leader of the BA Community Justice at Manchester University. Before entering academia, Paula worked as a probation officer with Greater Manchester Probation Service, specialising in work with sex offenders and domestic violence perpetrators.

Paula has been involved with, and led, a number of research evaluation projects across a variety of areas including domestic violence and community safety.

Katherine Wilkinson gained her Doctorate in Philosophy (Sociology) at the University of Nottingham in 2006. Since joining Sheffield Hallam University as a researcher in 2005 Katherine has conducted much of her research and evaluation in prison settings.

Katherine is currently responsible for two other voluntary sector projects being delivered in the prison setting

- the delivery of a social enterprise program which aims to foster the spirit of innovation and enterprise amongst prison service staff
- the activities of the Prison Radio Association, which was established as an education and resettlement facility for offenders in custody and in the community

Linda Meadows joined the Hallam Centre for Community Justice in 2002 to implement the Community Justice Portal – a knowledge sharing and networking tool for the Criminal Justice sector ([www.cjp.org.uk](http://www.cjp.org.uk)). Appointed as senior lecturer in knowledge management in criminal justice in 2004, Linda has led a number of research projects across the sector. Prior to joining the Hallam Centre for Community Justice, Linda's career was largely spent in the City of London developing knowledge management strategies and solutions in the financial and professional services sectors.

## About the publisher

Under the direction of Professor Paul Senior, the Hallam Centre for Community Justice is part of the Faculty of Development and Society at Sheffield Hallam University.

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### For further information contact

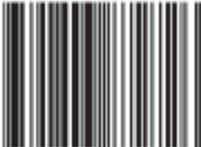
Phone 0114 225 5725

Fax 0114 225 5800

E-mail [hccj@shu.ac.uk](mailto:hccj@shu.ac.uk)

Web [www.shu.ac.uk/hccj](http://www.shu.ac.uk/hccj)

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HAMILTON, P. <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0044-0113>>, WILKINSON, K., MEADOWS, L. and CADET, N.

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