

**Anawim**  
Birmingham's Centre for Women

The   
**JABBS**  
Foundation



# BRIDGING THE GAP:

**DAWN HOUSE – THE FIRST FIVE YEARS**

Establishing a trauma-responsive women's residential service for successful prison to community transitions

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Anawim – Birmingham’s Centre for Women  
228 Mary Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, B12 9RJ  
[enquiries@anawim.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@anawim.co.uk)

&

The JABBS Foundation  
PO Box 16067, Birmingham, B32 9GP  
[admin@thejabbsfoundation.co.uk](mailto:admin@thejabbsfoundation.co.uk)

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**Author:** Chloé Geoghegan, The JABBS Foundation, with significant contributions by independent consultant Katy Swaine Williams, Joy Doal and Gina Graham at Anawim, and the whole Anawim and JABBS Teams.

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## CHAIR'S REMARKS

**Family philanthropy offers opportunities to try out approaches that often seem obvious but which attach too high a risk of failure or disruption for statutory agencies or which are seen as just too expensive to contemplate.**

It was just such an opportunity that came to mind as The JABBS Foundation and Anawim reflected on the experience of women leaving prison to return to Birmingham. We felt that a house for women who would otherwise be homeless, located next to the wonderful support offered by Anawim's women's centre, with attentive staff on hand to encourage and nurture women through a difficult transition, would be of huge benefit to the women who passed through its doors, to their families, and to society.

We are so pleased and grateful that the wonderful leadership at Anawim embraced the opportunity to offer a better solution and took on the challenges of trying to build and run Dawn House successfully with few precedents to guide them.

Everyone involved knew that this would be tough and this report is an honest reflection on five years of endeavour, based on the hard work and dedication of

the fabulous staff who have worked in Dawn House and Anawim and to the deserving women who have passed through its doors.

Despite all the challenges, Dawn House is a place of safety, care, compassion, and structured support that many women have been able to use as a platform to continue their journey of recovery and to rebuild their lives.

We hope that the report is helpful to those who are planning similar centres, that it challenges funders and the Government to be braver and to innovate, and that it is an encouragement to those who want to see genuine change in a broken and inadequate system that change is possible, in spite of the odds.

**Robin Daniels**, Chair of Trustees  
The JABBS Foundation



# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Despite representing 51%<sup>1</sup> of the total population, women account for only 4%<sup>2</sup> of the prisoners in England and Wales. These figures, at first glance, might suggest a more favourable experience of the justice system for this cohort. However, once you dig into the drivers of offending behaviour, it becomes clear that women are being let down by a system which fails to address their multiple and complex needs and the trauma they are subjected to in their daily lives.

Women were sent to prison in England and Wales on 4,932 occasions in the year to March 2022, either on remand or to serve a sentence, mostly for non-violent offences.<sup>3</sup> A disproportionate number of whom are Black and racially minoritised who face double disadvantage in the criminal justice system owing to the intersection of their race and gender.

In 2021, the Government predicted that the number of women in prison would rise by a third by 2025, despite government policy which specifically aims to reduce women's imprisonment.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 56% of women released from prison reoffend within a year (compared with 26% of those sentenced to a community order).<sup>5</sup>

There is a substantial evidence base linking women's offending behaviour and past experience of trauma, victimisation, and multiple and intersecting disadvantage. Independent, community-based, women-specific services like Anawim – Birmingham's Centre for Women (Anawim) offer a safe, non-stigmatising setting and relationship-based approach to allow women to address issues that often drive their offending, such as socio-economic inequality, domestic abuse, problematic substance use, and mental health needs. These services exist in many parts of the country and, despite under-investment in the sector, have proven essential in order to divert women from the criminal justice system wherever possible, to provide more effective, community-based alternatives to harmful prison sentences, and to help women to rebuild their lives after release from prison.<sup>6</sup>

Anawim is nationally recognised as a leading provider of holistic, trauma-responsive services to women in contact with the criminal justice system. Through its 'one-stop shop' women's centre in Birmingham, Anawim supports women with unmet needs including those prior to any contact with the criminal justice system, those who are diverted at the point of arrest, those undertaking a community sentence, as well as women preparing to leave prison and those resettling back into the community post-release.

Five years ago, Anawim established Dawn House, a residential centre for women leaving prison, with support from The JABBS Foundation (JABBS). Dawn House was designed to fill a gap in safe accommodation and support for women on short sentences leaving prison. It achieves this by providing a safe, trauma-responsive home with built-in, wrap-around support, allowing women to rebuild their lives and supporting them in moving on to more permanent accommodation. The first five years of this pioneering project have confirmed the belief that outstanding residential services like Dawn House can have an important role to play in improving outcomes for women leaving prison. The experience has also brought to light the huge challenges involved in successfully establishing such a service, and how some of these may be overcome. In this report, Anawim and JABBS will share what we have learned so far, to inform policy and practice both locally and nationally in the development of women's residential services. We do so in the hope that we can improve outcomes for women leaving prison around the country and end the revolving door of incarceration which harms instead of helps women with significant experience of trauma and marginalisation.

<sup>1</sup>Office for National Statistics, Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, 2021, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>.

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Justice, Prison Population Projections 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-figures-2022>.

<sup>3</sup>Prison Reform Trust, Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment? England and Wales, 2022, <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Why-women-2022-briefing.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup>Ministry of Justice, Prison Population Projections 2021 to 2026, England, and Wales, 2021, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1035682/Prison\\_Population\\_Projections\\_2021\\_to\\_2026.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1035682/Prison_Population_Projections_2021_to_2026.pdf).

<sup>5</sup>Prison Reform Trust, Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment? England and Wales, 2022, p.8 <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Why-women-2022-briefing.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup>Women's Budget Group, The case for sustainable funding for women's centres, 2020, <https://wbq.org.uk/analysis/the-case-for-sustainable-funding-for-womens-centres/>.

## WOMEN IN PRISON AND ON RELEASE

Women in prisons in England and Wales are more likely than men to: report mental health issues; be diagnosed with anxiety and/or depression; report experience of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse as a child; enter prison with substance use issues; commit the offence for which they are imprisoned to support another's drug use; be in prison for their first offence; be imprisoned for a non-violent offence; and suffer a higher rate of self-harm and suicide when in prison.<sup>7</sup>

Women's hardships do not end at the completion of their custodial sentence, nor even once their sentence in the community is complete post-release. In many cases – in particular for the women whose lives are deemed to be most 'chaotic' – their release marks the beginning of escalating needs owing to a confluence of factors, including: an insufficient and inflexible social welfare system; siloed and disjointed statutory services; violence against women and girls, including sexual exploitation; pervasive socio-economic inequality; and the persisting acute and chronic housing crisis, which consigns many women to street homelessness the moment of their release.

## THE CORSTON REPORT

Baroness Jean Corston's seminal report "Women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system" asserted that for too long "Women have been marginalised within a system largely designed by men for men" and argued for "the need for a distinct, radically different, visibility-led, strategic, proportionate, holistic, woman-centred integrated approach".<sup>8</sup> The report – commissioned by the Government following a series of suicides by female prisoners at HMP Styal – resulted in a "sea change" in the Government's approach to, and focus on, women involved in the criminal justice system.<sup>9</sup> Whilst it is arguable that prisons, though built by men were not built with men's needs in mind either, the reality remains that women experience significant and distinct adversity and suffering whilst imprisoned at higher rates than their male counterparts.

In the years following the publication of the Corston Report, its forty-three recommendations have become the roadmap and rallying call for gender- and trauma-responsive and person-centred criminal justice reform, spearheaded by the tireless efforts of civil society. Notable, was the Government's initial investment in the expansion of women's centres – a 'one stop shop' for women presenting with multiple and complex needs who benefit from accessibility to a range of services housed under one roof.<sup>10</sup> The blueprint developed by Baroness Corston in Chapter 8 of her report laid out the need for visible leadership and national structures accountable for the provision of services for justice-involved and 'at-risk' women; the extension of a network of women's community centres, including some residential centres, to provide holistic, person-centred interventions; and the setting up of smaller local custodial units to – over time – replace prisons.<sup>11</sup>

## THE FEMALE OFFENDER STRATEGY

There has been some progress towards realising Baroness Corston's recommendations, in particular through the publication of the Female Offender Strategy (2018) (the Strategy) and The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System (2020). The priorities of the Strategy include:

- **FEWER WOMEN COMING INTO CONTACT WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**  
Including recognition of the need to both prevent and interrupt cycles of offending;
- **FEWER WOMEN IN CUSTODY (ESPECIALLY ON SHORT-TERM SENTENCES) AND A GREATER PROPORTION OF WOMEN MANAGED IN THE COMMUNITY SUCCESSFULLY**  
By shifting the emphasis from prison to community solutions; and
- **BETTER CONDITIONS FOR THOSE IN CUSTODY**  
With a focus on rehabilitation and successful transitions back into the community for women post-release.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Prison Reform Trust, Why Focus on Reducing Women's Imprisonment? England and Wales, 2021, <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Women/Why%20women%202021%20briefing%20FINAL.pdf> and Prison Reform Trust, Why Focus on Reducing Women's Imprisonment? England and Wales, 2022, <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Women/Why%20women%202021%20briefing%20FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Baroness Jean Corston, The Corston Report, 2006, p.2 and front page, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130128112038/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> House of Commons Justice Committee, Women Offenders: After the Corston Report: Second Report of Session 2013-14, p. 12,

<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/Justice/Women-offenders.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Baroness Jean Corston, The Corston Report, 2006, p.66, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130128112038/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.79.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Justice, Female Offender Strategy, 2018, pp.6-7, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/719819/female-offender-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719819/female-offender-strategy.pdf).

The lack of progress in implementing the Strategy in the four years since it was first published has been widely criticised both by civil society and, more recently, by reports from the National Audit Office<sup>13</sup> and the Public Accounts Committee.<sup>14</sup> Criticisms largely focus on a lack of investment in community women's services to deliver on the vision of the strategy, as well as significant delays to the five promised residential women's centres. A new delivery plan is expected to be published in 2022 outlining clearer metrics for success for the implementation of the Strategy.

### DAWN HOUSE – THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

Baroness Corston named accommodation as “women's greatest resettlement concern...in need of speedy, fundamental gender specific reform.” She argued that “more supported accommodation should be provided for women on release to break the cycle of repeat offending and custody.”<sup>15</sup> Anawim and JABBS established Dawn House, a residential unit for women being resettled from prisons back into the community in the West Midlands, with this purpose very much in mind, aiming to interrupt cycles of adversity that can drive women back into offending behaviour post-release.

The setting up of Dawn House in 2017 was an ambitious endeavour from the start, undertaken in an inhospitable funding climate and amid often unsympathetic public attitudes towards law-and-order issues. With the advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, just over halfway through the service's initial five-year grant period, alongside Birmingham's intensifying housing crisis, there have been multiple challenges that Anawim, its staff, and the women residing at Dawn House have had to contend with and find creative ways to overcome. Yet, in the midst of so much upheaval, Dawn House has yielded clear wins for both women and for Anawim. The experience of running the residential centre has deepened Anawim's knowledge

and understanding of how to achieve better outcomes with women, bringing them closer to women going through the transition from prison, and this has been channelled into a change in the practice model for both its residential and community day services.

Approaches have been pivoted, new models tried, tested, and overhauled, and tough decisions made throughout these first five years. This has all been in service to the belief that women deserve and have a right to safe, secure, and loving transitions back into the community post-release. In this report, summarising learnings from the first five years of Dawn House, we endeavour to share not only our successes and recommendations on what works but – just as importantly – we will share what we have found did not work, what we would not recommend, where we had to adapt our thinking and challenge our assumptions. We do so in commitment to the notion that by embracing failure as a teacher, we all move towards the solutions that will transform our world and ourselves along with it.

**What we found is that innovation requires a mindset that rejects the fear of failure and replaces that fear of failure with the joy of exploration and experimental learning. As one innovation leader stated: “we celebrate success; we console failure; and we get rid of those who are afraid to try.”<sup>16</sup>**

- Edward D. Hess, Professor Emeritus of Business Administration, Darden School of Business, The University of Virginia

<sup>13</sup> National Audit Office, Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system Ministry of Justice, 2022, <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Improving-outcomes-for-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system Fifty-First Report of Session 2021–22, <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22032/documents/164507/default/>.

<sup>15</sup> Baroness Jean Corston, The Corston Report, 2006, p.7, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukqwa/20130128112038/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Edward D. Hess, Forbes, Creating An Innovation Culture: Accepting Failure is Necessary, 20th June 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/darden/2012/06/20/creating-an-innovation-culture-accepting-failure-is-necessary/>.



# PART ONE:

PARTNERING TO BRIDGE THE GAP

## ANAWIM AND THE JABBS FOUNDATION

Anawim is a multi-service charity holistically meeting the needs of Birmingham's women. Anawim was founded by two pioneering nuns, Sister Magdalene Matthews and Sister Maisie Nevin, who moved into Birmingham's red-light district, Balsall Heath. They decided to open their home as a drop-in centre for women in the local community involved in sex work and who were, therefore, vulnerable to exploitation. The Sisters were struck by the difference it made for the women to have a safe space, a warm drink, and a listening ear. A place they could go without fear of judgement, to meet other women who cared deeply about their wellbeing. Motivated by an appreciation of the value of every person and a commitment to helping people to live life to the full, the Sisters' mission lives on at the heart of Anawim's approach.

**Anawim's vision is a world where women and girls are safe, free, valued and empowered members of society.**

Anawim operates a non-judgemental space for women dealing with emotional, practical, domestic and personal problems to access advice and casework support. Anawim specialises in supporting women who have been caught up in the criminal justice system and offer open services such as counselling, creative activities, probation support, and confidence building for all women. Anawim recognises the need for community support for women trying to adjust to life after prison and are committed to making sure that access to suitable support is available.

All of the women Anawim work with have multiple and complex needs; needs which are addressed through a wide variety of holistic programmes, delivered by trauma-responsive caseworkers with extensive frontline experience. On average women present to Anawim with at least five defined needs at the point of

referral, and often, during the course of their Anawim journey, women will disclose more needs as trust is built. Providing 'wrap-around' support, Anawim ensures that each and every woman receives a package of care tailored to her specific needs. Whilst other organisations in Birmingham deliver services for women, Anawim is able to address the multiplicity of women's needs in one location, based on Baroness Jean Corston's model of a 'one-stop shop' approach, reducing barriers to access and giving women the best chance of success.

Dawn House is Anawim's residential facility for women transitioning back into the community after serving a prison sentence. Dawn House has the capacity to house and resettle up to 6 women at a time. With 12 weeks identified as the ideal intervention length, this means up to 24 women a year are estimated to be able to benefit from a place at Dawn House. The centre is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Women are offered multiple forms of emotional and practical support including counselling, personal development courses (such as Stop and Think and The Freedom Programme), accompaniment to probation meetings, life skills development, and more. Each woman's individual case is now assessed by Anawim using the Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) tool and a casework plan is created and tailored according to her needs.<sup>17</sup> Dawn House is therefore a much-needed, free resource for women made vulnerable by their contact with the justice system. The centre enables women transitioning back into their communities to circumvent severe problems such as homelessness, substance and offending relapses, and the risk of re-exploitation, re-traumatisation, and harm that the majority of women face when released from prison.

The JABBS Foundation was set up in 2009 to channel a Birmingham family's philanthropic giving. Focus on women in contact or at-risk of contact with the justice system is a response to one family member's previous experience as a magistrate. Having seen the levels of injustice woven into the fabric of the system, in particular for women presenting in court with multiple disadvantage and undeniable trauma, priorities for the Foundation were developed targeted at supporting work which diverts women away from the justice system and towards the type of holistic, wrap-around support articulated in the Corston Report. JABBS approached Anawim to propose a funding partnership owing to the latter's long history of providing services for justice-involved and 'at-risk' women in line with the Corstonian model in Birmingham.

<sup>17</sup> University of Birmingham, Trauma, Health and Social Harm: The WRNA Validation Study, 2022, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-sociology-criminology/research/projects/trauma-health-and-social-harm.aspx>.

## WOMEN'S GREATEST RESETTLEMENT CONCERN

In 2020, the Prison Reform Trust reported that almost six out of ten women had no fixed address when leaving prison, the majority of whom become street homeless upon release.<sup>18</sup> A recent report from HMP Bronzefield indicates that this dire situation only worsened during the coronavirus pandemic, with 65% of women being released without safe and stable accommodation. Recent months has seen improvements, however, with this figure dropping to 53% of women leaving prison without settled accommodation in the year to March 2022.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the fact that more than half of women start their resettlement journey homeless is a huge barrier to successful transitions. Lack of accommodation has significant knock-on effects, as women are not then able to sign up to their local GP practice, are unable to access substance misuse treatment pathways, or secure employment, all of which increase their vulnerability and increase their likelihood of reoffending.<sup>20</sup>

This is, in part, due to the fact that more women than men lose their tenancies when entering prison.<sup>21</sup> It is also an indicator of Britain's chronic dearth of social housing stock, especially for individuals with complex needs. The centrality of secure housing in successful resettlement is clear, with the Female Offender Strategy itself noting that lack of safe accommodation is one of the two main drivers of recall to prison. The Strategy further asserts that stable accommodation and access to holistic services are the mechanisms through which to break cycles of female offending and are the pathways towards productive citizenry.<sup>22</sup>

Dawn House has its roots in an initial three-year grant provided by JABBS to Anawim. This funded a Prison In-Reach Worker who was able to extend Anawim's engagement with local prisons, developing relationships with HMP Drake Hall and HMP Foston Hall, on top of their existing relationship with HMP Eastwood Park. The funding enabled Anawim to establish itself in these prisons and grew its reputation via through the gate and resettlement services that

Anawim provided. Once Anawim's centrality to the delivery of resettlement services in these prisons had been secured, JABBS expressed a desire to fund a substantial and meaningful project to ensure Anawim's building reflected the needs of the organisation and the women who access services there.

A feasibility study was undertaken to assess options of how to best develop Anawim's site in Balsall Heath, Birmingham. In 2015, after the study was complete, Anawim identified the need to prioritise space for improved accommodation options for women transitioning from prison into the community, owing to the 50% rate of reoffending for women within a year of release and the fact that 40% of women at the time were leaving prison with no fixed or temporary accommodation in place.<sup>23</sup>

From here, a plan for Dawn House was developed and **£909,706** of JABBS funding was used by Anawim in the construction of the Dawn House building on the site of Anawim's women's centre in Balsall Heath. Capital contributions from a number of other funders – including the Garfield Weston Foundation and The Clothworkers' Foundation – totalling **£265,500** enabled the full scale of the vision to be realised.<sup>24</sup> The new building not only created a residential unit with living and sleeping quarters for six women but it also provided Anawim with additional office, meeting, and activity space, greatly increasing the capacity of Anawim to operate as a 'one-stop-shop.' With building activity complete, in 2017 JABBS partnered with Anawim for an initial grant period of three years to fund the running costs of Dawn House that were not covered by other funding streams Anawim was working to secure for the centre, including accessing Housing Benefit for its residents. The grant period was later extended by two years – to 2022 – owing to underspend in the first three years of operation. This means in total, over the first five years JABBS provided funds totalling **£1,070,294** to support the running costs of Dawn House.

<sup>18</sup> Prison Reform Trust, No Safe Home for Women Leaving Prison, 2020, p.1

<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Safe%20Homes%20Initiative%20briefing%20FINALUPDATE.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Justice, Accommodation at Release, Community performance annual: update to March 2022, Table 4, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-performance-annual-update-to-march-2022>.

<sup>20</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Ending homelessness for women on release is vital to cut cycle of reoffending, 2022, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/2022/05/ending-homelessness-for-women-on-release-is-vital-to-cut-cycle-of-reoffending/>.

<sup>21</sup> Prison Reform Trust, Lack of housing traps women in cycle of offending, 2018,

<https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/lack-of-housing-traps-women-in-cycle-of-offending/>.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Justice, Female Offender Strategy, 2018, pp.6-7, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/719819/female-offender-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719819/female-offender-strategy.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Anawim, Justification for Residential Accommodation Report, January 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Capital contributions were also made from: The 29th May 1961 Charity; Quaker Housing Trust; The Joseph Rank Trust; Knowle Parish Church; St. Augustine's Church; The CB & HH Taylor 1984 Trust; The Offroaders / Wolf Run Team; Gowling WLG; CDI; and IBIT.



# PART TWO:

THE CONSTRAINTS OF  
EXTERNAL CRISES

**The first five years of Dawn House saw three major contextual challenges that had an impact on the outcomes Anawim were able to achieve with women using the service. These included:**

- Birmingham's chronic and acute housing crisis, that the current benefits system exacerbates;
- The lack of gender-responsive substance misuse services in the West Midlands, especially a lack of detox and recovery centres; and
- The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic and its far-reaching impact on all aspects of society.

## BIRMINGHAM'S HOUSING CRISIS AND A THREADBARE BENEFITS SYSTEM

**Exempted Accommodation Crisis – Disinvestment and Deregulation:** Exempt Accommodation is a form of housing provided by a charity, housing association, or county council which includes care, support, and supervision for residents. It is generally transitional in nature, designed for residents deemed 'vulnerable.' Gaining Exempt Accommodation status means the rules that normally limit the amount of rent covered by a benefit award do not apply.<sup>25</sup>

From 2016/17 to 2020/21 the number of applications by providers in Birmingham for Exempt Accommodation doubled from 11,455 to 22,017. Nationally, only Sheffield had a comparable rate of growth (though from a much lower initial baseline). Birmingham City Council's report into the matter concluded that growth could be "traced back to divestment and dysregulation." This included the reduction in budgets and removal of ringfenced funds for groups labelled as 'vulnerable' e.g. those with substance use and mental health issues and those in contact with the justice system. At the same time, reductions in regulatory powers in the housing sector enabled providers to enter the market by meeting only the most minimum of standards. Another factor cited by the Council was a dwindling stock of safe social housing, exacerbated by the proliferation of homes being converted to Houses of Multiple Occupancy – which are often unsafe for women, especially those with histories of abuse and complex trauma.<sup>26</sup> Recent efforts to respond to the crisis by the Council and to crack down on so-called 'dodgy landlords,' have instead resulted in the remaining better providers closing their doors in response to the weight of the unnecessarily complex new reporting requirements, which though designed to weed out the worst providers has seemingly resulted in the opposite.

**Exempt Status – The Illusive Enhanced Rate:** It took two years, and a huge burden of evidence, for Anawim to achieve Exempt Accommodation status for Dawn House.<sup>27</sup> Yet even now, Anawim only receives the standard exempt status payment, and has not been able to qualify to claim the enhanced level of Housing Benefit.

In the financial year 2022-2023, the projected cost per week of housing one woman at Dawn House is **£837.52**. Standard exempt status Housing Benefit payments to Anawim cover only **£243.69** per week for those categorised as 'vulnerable' and **£117.39** for residents without this categorisation. These figures are specific to Anawim and rates to other organisations may vary. Even if Anawim were to qualify to claim the enhanced level of Housing Benefit, this would only equate to an estimated **£350** per week per resident (this figure is often referenced at forums Anawim has attended on this topic but there is no evidence to confirm its validity).

Even if Anawim were able to secure the enhanced level for their residents, which they have failed to do so for even one resident, despite recently applying a policy of contesting every rejection, this contributions equals, less than half the true cost of housing and supporting Dawn House residents.

The gap between Housing Benefit and full cost recovery becomes clearer when you consider the annual costs of running Dawn House, which total **£261,305**, whether or not the facility is fully occupied. At **80%** occupancy (the target from their feasibility study), standard exempt status Housing Benefit payments cover **£60,825** per annum, and at full occupancy **£76,031** per annum – leaving the vast majority of funding for Dawn House's running costs needing to be found elsewhere.

It is impossible to find any online guidance on exempt status Housing Benefit figures or how allocations are made, Anawim themselves were told by Birmingham City Council they were not able to apply to cover the full costs of their residential service but were not explicitly told by the Council which costs were being rejected. It was only through submitting multiple revised, guess-work proposals and then through word of mouth that Anawim were able to identify what costs were deemed eligible and what costs, such as water bills and therapeutic support, were not funded. The opaque nature of Exempt Accommodation and a lack of clarity from Birmingham City Council has created an enormous burden of administration for Anawim and has exacerbated Dawn House's long-term financial instability.

<sup>25</sup> Supported Exempt Accommodation (England), House of Commons Library, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9362/>.

<sup>26</sup> Birmingham City Council, Exempt Accommodation: A Report from Overview & Scrutiny, 2021, [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/21309/exempt\\_accommodation\\_report](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/21309/exempt_accommodation_report).

<sup>27</sup> BBC, Universal Credit failing millions of people, say peers, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-53599763>.

### **Universal Credit – A Blunt Entitlements Instrument:**

The centralisation of Housing Benefit and other entitlements into the much criticised design of Universal Credit means residents first need to claim Universal Credit before Anawim can even apply for Housing Benefit to contribute towards the running costs of Dawn House. These applications can only be made the day residents leave prison owing to a lack of joined up working with the Department of Work and Pensions that, if improved, could allow women to start the benefits claims process when nearing their release date. Receiving Universal Credit also means that the women at Dawn House cannot work more than 16 hours a week, otherwise their entitlement to Housing Benefit is removed. This restricts the way Anawim can work with women towards their resettlement goals and adds to the difficulty in securing move-on accommodation in Birmingham's squeezed housing market.

### **No Recourse to Public Funds – Marginalising the Already Marginalised:**

Owing to limitations and exclusions in the current benefits system, those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) – that is those subject to immigration controls such as asylum seekers – are not able to receive Housing Benefit. This means Dawn House is unable to accept women with NRPF, as not only can Anawim not secure funding for these women they are also near impossible to find move-on accommodation for once their transitional period at Dawn House is complete, owing to their lack of government entitlements. Women exiting prison with NRPF are exceptionally vulnerable to exploitation, many of whom are already survivors of trafficking who were wrongfully ushered into the criminal justice system in the first place through failures to recognise their status as victims.<sup>28</sup> These women face multiple disadvantages, as immigration status, ethnicity, language barriers, and social stigma converge and intersect, preventing the rehabilitation and reintegration of women who were never given the opportunity to be habilitated and integrated to begin with.

## **DEARTH OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE RECOVERY AND DETOX SERVICES AND AN UNREALISED WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH**

Substance use support needs are the most common reason women have been refused a place at Dawn House. Even for women entering incarceration without

substance misuse problems, many exit battling addictions owing to the prevalence of drugs within prisons. In her independent Review of Drugs, Dame Carole Black criticises NHS England's "often arm's-length approach" to commissioning substance misuse services in prisons, reporting a decline in recovery-orientated services. There is a further lack of continuity of care for those who do receive help, with 66% of people who engage in drug treatment in prison not going on to receive services in the community upon release.<sup>29</sup>

During Austerity, budgets for substance use services were slashed contributing to the escalating crisis. Despite the welcome news at the end of 2021, that the Government would be reinvesting in detox and recovery services to recuperate the losses the previous funding cuts had created, the reality remains that years of chronic funding shortfalls have resulted in a lack of quality, gender-responsive substance use service provision for women in the West Midlands and nationally. Issues have included poor access to scripts on release, six week waits for initial appointments, over reliance on group work, lack of one-to-one sessions, and limited access to detox facilities. There is no stabilising service for women in the area to detox at post-release from prison and only one women's specific substance misuse service in Birmingham, itself dealing with stretched caseloads. As a result, only the most complex cases are referred to the women's specific service, with all other women only able to access the generic offer, usually male-dominated group-work.

Research from "We Are With You" summarised by Russell Webster confirms that "for women with experience of domestic abuse, male-dominated services were often intimidating to engage with. Men make up around three quarters of the drug treatment population in England...With much of the treatment system taken up by male long-term opiate users, the capacity to develop expertise and services to meet the needs of women, and the diversity of needs within the female population is limited."<sup>30</sup>

The location of Dawn House – in a residential area where access to drugs and alcohol is readily available – has made it more difficult for women with substance dependency to move towards recovery during their stay. In particular, because they have not had access to appropriate detox services before their resettlement into Dawn House. It has also resulted, at times, in drug

<sup>28</sup> The Independent, Female trafficking victims unlawfully held in UK jails due to 'disturbing' failure to identify exploitation, finds report, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/human-trafficking-women-uk-victims-prisons-jail-modern-slavery-prison-reform-trust-hibiscus-a8534726.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Dame Carol Black, Independent report: Review of drugs part two: prevention, treatment, and recovery, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-two-report/review-of-drugs-part-two-prevention-treatment-and-recovery>.

<sup>30</sup> Russell Webster, Understanding The Barriers Women Face In Accessing Drug Treatment, <https://mailchi.mp/russellwebster/understanding-the-barriers-women-face-in-accessing-drug-treatment?e=1ba19620ca>.

dealers operating near the property. These occurrences have caused problems with the local community, a risk for Anawim's reputation, and Anawim's ability to deliver services successfully – both at Dawn House and within their wider women's centre work. As such, in 2022, Anawim decided to adopt an abstinence policy at Dawn House, requiring women to commit to not using drugs or alcohol during their time at the residence.

The clear gaps in adequate substance use provision are part of a wider issue in the West Midlands, which has fallen behind Manchester in the realisation of a Whole System Approach for women in contact or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. This, in part, owing to the limitations of devolution in the region. Therefore, Birmingham's invitation to join the Trailblazer Devolution Deal, as part of plans announced in the Levelling-Up White Paper, and the West Midlands Combined Authority's proposal to place a Whole System Approach for women at the heart of this work is welcome news. As is Birmingham's successful bid for Ministry of Justice funding to launch a pilot problem-solving court for women in the city and the announced funding from the Ministry of Justice to support the development of Whole System Approaches for women in regions around the country.

## OPERATING SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND FOLLOWING ECONOMIC CRISES

The emergence of a novel coronavirus, leading to the first global pandemic of the twenty-first century exerted an international and far-reaching impact on all areas of society. Frontline and community-based services have been under the joint pressures of needing to adapt and evolve services in response to the lockdowns that were implemented to tackle the spread of the virus, whilst also having to respond to the dramatic increases in need and complexity of need in the communities they support. This pushed many community services to the brink of survival. With the advent of a number of economic shocks in 2022, as a result of international conflict and government policy, the precariousness of these services has only been exacerbated, as need within their communities also skyrockets.

From March 2020, Anawim's Prison In-Reach Team were prevented from even entering prisons and were only able to secure a full return two years later. Contact with prisoners was, therefore, heavily impacted. Owing

to the abrupt end of physical presence in the prisons, Anawim were no longer able to proactively identify potential Dawn House residents. This meant they were required to rely on referrals made by other services for women, referrals which often did not match Anawim's own selection criteria for Dawn House residents. During this time, women with some of the most complex needs, who were near impossible to place elsewhere, were being pushed towards Dawn House despite it not being a suitable residence for these women.

Without access to prisons, none of the usual preparatory work conducted with women was possible. This work is vital to ensure women understand what to expect from Dawn House and what it expected from them as a resident. Consequently, difficult transitions ensued, owing to the gap between women's expectations of what was required of them as a Dawn House resident and what their actual responsibilities were during their stay. The inability to conduct preparatory work also had a knock-on impact on data collection on women's strengths and needs. Such data collection enables Anawim to design an individually tailored plan for women when they arrive at Dawn House, ensuring women can get the most out of their transitional period. Owing to their participation in an ongoing validation study funded by JABBS, and delivered by the University of Birmingham, Anawim have adopted the WRNA, a gender-responsive assessment and case management tool, to use with incoming women. The WRNA provides a comprehensive assessment of needs and strengths across all aspects of the lives of criminal justice involved women. Dawn House caseworkers can, therefore, utilise the data and analysis the WRNA provides to work with women to identify priorities and goals during their time at Dawn House.

Most importantly, Anawim's lack of access to prison meant that trust building was not able to start before the women were released from prison. As such, this trust-building work could only commence once women had entered Dawn House, which had an impact on the progress women made whilst at the residence. With trust a key component of the women's centre model and often cited by women themselves as the reason women's centres work,<sup>31</sup> it was a challenging blow. There was not a clear way to adapt the Dawn House model to respond to the limits on trust-building the pandemic created, as so much of this work rests on contact with the women in prison, pre-release, which Anawim simply were not able to secure.

<sup>31</sup> The National Lottery Community Fund's Women and Girls Initiative, Why Women's Centres Work: An Evidence Briefing, 2019,

[https://www.tavinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Women-and-Girls-Briefing-Report-Final\\_web.pdf](https://www.tavinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Women-and-Girls-Briefing-Report-Final_web.pdf).

"If I could sum up Anawim in one word it would be **INSPIRATIONAL**. If I could sum up Dawn House in one word it would be **SAFE**. I needed these two things because I've never had them in my life before. Anawim has given me the **CONFIDENCE** to become a facilitator for Positive Peace, Positive Women and the Confidence course, to interview a member of staff, to get a cleaning job, and finally to branch out on my own to get my own accommodation so I can have my own **PIECE OF SECURITY** and independence. Dawn House has helped me **BUILD FRIENDSHIPS** and **TRUST** other human beings again. I will be forever grateful for the time I spent here. It will forever be a blessing."

– Dawn House leaver

# **PART THREE:**

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEARNINGS FROM THE FIRST FIVE YEARS**

## OUTCOMES FROM THE FIRST FIVE YEARS



### Reoffending and Recall

Of the **56** women who have resided at Dawn House :

**11%** women were recalled to prison from Dawn House.

Only **one** of these women were recalled due to offending, **a rate of less than 2%**. This is substantially less than the **10%** reoffending rate the feasibility study had targeted.

The other **remaining women** were recalled for non-compliance, a rate of **9%**.

National figures evidence a reoffending rate of **56%**<sup>32</sup> for women released from prison.

This means Dawn House's reoffending rate is **54% better the national average**.



### Accommodation

**39%** of women were transitioned from homelessness to temporary or permanent accommodation.

**24%** were living independently after leaving Dawn House. This number is below the **75%** target in the feasibility study for women securing long term tenancies after leaving Dawn House, though is of course symptomatic of the housing crisis in Birmingham.



### Education, Training, and Employment

**8%** gained employment

**8%** improved IT skills



### Attitudes and Skills:

- **85%** feel more listened to
- **74%** have a more positive outlook
- **74%** are better able to trust
- **53%** have increased their confidence
- **45%** have built healthier relationships
- **39%** improved their family relationships
- **37%** feel supported
- **34%** are better managing their mental health
- **32%** have improved their social skills
- **16%** have improved boundaries



### Finance

**18%** of women were successful in applications for grant funding

**13%** were able to access benefits after successful application



### Substance Misuse\*:

**18%** maintained abstinence from alcohol

**13%** maintained abstinence from drugs

**8%** achieved goal of treatment plan

\*Figures collected prior to Dawn House abstinence policy.

<sup>32</sup> Prison Reform Trust, Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment? England and Wales, 2022, p.8 <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Why-women-2022-briefing.pdf>.

## "A BIG WORLD UNDER ONE ROOF": WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF DAWN HOUSE

The residents of Dawn House have shared with Anawim what Dawn House has meant for them :

"I've learnt a lot about forgiveness. I was angry all the time. Now I'm at peace."

"The courses give you the skills to go forward."

"I was in prison and the first place I came to live was Dawn House. When I came to Dawn House, you have staff on call all the time and they're qualified to support my mental health."

"It's always a 'we,' not a 'you.'"

"It saved me, this place."

**"Staying clean and being able to be the woman I know I am."**

"It's fantastic. It's literally saved my life."

"Didn't know how much they hold for people. It's like a little world under one roof."

"You're never judged when you're here."

**"I will be an alcohol support worker."**

"They're absolutely brilliant for any housing needs you have."

"[I've] never felt so safe."

**"It's amazing there."**

"It's like gold. Everyone wants to get in there."

"You're not there to go downhill, you're there to go uphill."

"If you're experiencing problems, you can knock on the bedroom door at 4am in the morning. It's not a problem."

"There's always someone to talk to."

"If I hadn't got a place at Dawn House, I would have drank. I am an alcoholic. I've been sober 8 years thanks to Dawn House".

"If you get in there, you're good."

### Reaching the Previously Unreached

Dawn House has helped women often seen as 'hard to reach' to defy expectations and achieve positive outcomes, like Shanice<sup>33</sup>. As Shanice explains, being at Dawn House helped her stay abstinent, something she was not confident of doing before her arrival.

<sup>33</sup> Name changed to protect identity.

From my RESPECTIVE  
In the beginning ANAWIM was a place that I feared coming to. A place that I of my licence. Now I would encourage any women to come to ANAWIM because since I've been there staff have totally supported me in everything that arises. When I left jail clean there was a big chance I'd use again, but having the support from ANAWIM has helped me stay abstinent. I've been so impressed with what I've witnessed with what I'm now learning to become an @mbossidie ↓

## STRUCTURE LIBERATES

When testing any innovative solution, it can be tempting to avoid putting in too many structures, processes, and codifications whilst trying to identify what works. But in the end, structure and process serve to provide the solid basis needed to combat challenges that undoubtedly arise.

From how decisions are made, to how terminology is interpreted, to the onboarding of new staff, without a clear and explicit consensus, there is possibility for different assumptions, approaches, and beliefs to be held that can work against one another and result in inconsistencies that impact the delivery of a model and the measurement of impact.

Making the implicit explicit functions not just to avoid misunderstandings but also as a tool through which active learning can be generated. Yet structures, processes, manuals, and definitions only remain effective if they are regularly reviewed, discussed, and assessed for their continued value and comprehension and when they are updated where they are found to be lacking or in need of evolution. Structure liberates but structures that do not evolve with learning stagnate.

### Staffing Structure

Initially, Anawim did not build into their budget the costings needed to provide sufficient cover for staff at Dawn House. The initial model meant that the Dawn House Manager was on call during the weekends, should any emergencies arise, on top of working full-time during the week. This resulted in successive Dawn House Managers feeling as though they were working a seven-day week – often actually having to do so also when needs arose. This lack of rest and ability to relax took a mental and physical toll on staff and was in large part responsible for the high management turnover at the start of the grant.

This pattern was also repeated as Anawim had not budgeted enough cover for other Dawn House staff during required annual leave and inevitable sickness periods. Though originally designed to keep the costs of running Dawn House down, this shoestring budgeting actually resulted in the opposite as Anawim regularly needed to pay overtime and provide time off in lieu to staff who were required to step in to fill the gaps.

Budgeting decisions were taken in part as a result of a scarcity mindset which has impacted the wider women's sector. Women's centres have been critically underfunded for so long and much of their funding insecure, short-term, and fluctuating. They have been forced to run on such tight budgets across their services just to survive. This, at least in part, a result of the race to the bottom to compete against generic providers for contracts that do not provide full cost recovery leaves women's centres feeling unable to ask for the true costs of a project from funders who, themselves, rarely provide the funds to achieve it. As they fear that doing so will damage these key relationships or else that they might lose out on funding entirely should they ask for what they need to deliver the work in full. Funders must work together to provide women's centres with the reassurance and clarity needed to adopt full cost recovery budgeting. JABBS has successfully supported Anawim with this transition in providing funding to match the true costs of Dawn House, alongside a core costs grant to enable Anawim to strengthen its operational team and nurture key staffing roles. As a result, Anawim are now able to identify the true costs of their projects and have since been able to budget more effectively for Dawn House, reducing the need to pay for costly over-time and temporary workers.

### Game Changers:

- Scarcity mindset and shoestring budgeting can be more costly and inefficient in the long-term. Identifying the true costs of the project and ensuring funding is in place to enable best practice is the key to unlocking progress.
- Funders must play a leading role in assessing whether they are exacerbating the race to the bottom by not accepting or encouraging applications for full cost recovery funding.

**"It is really good to hear that Shanice has settled in well and is engaging positively as she was one of our most difficult prisoners who just needed the right foundations to make positive change."**

- Reducing Reoffending Governor,  
HMP Drake Hall



### Selection Criteria and Decision Panel

In the first few years of operation, Anawim contended with a number of women who were difficult to move-on from Dawn House. This included a woman who stayed for 73 weeks owing to the complexities and restrictions related to her crime, with 12 weeks identified as the ideal length of stay for more women. Similar issues were confronted housing women without Leave to Remain who were unable to qualify for Housing Benefit. In response, Anawim developed a more defined and rigorous selection criteria and a strong decision-making framework for resident selection.

The selection criteria collated a list of what Anawim had learned did and did not work for successful transition in and out of Dawn House. The move towards instating a formalised and standing selection panel for all referrals helped shift the needle on Anawim's ability to select women who would benefit most from residential support. The move from reactive to proactive review and decisions provided the structure needed for Anawim to make informed and effective decisions and to reflect on the commonalities in the type of women who were not achieving good outcomes through Dawn House (through which they could continue to refine the selection criteria).

When standing panel meetings arise where no candidates have been put forward, Dawn House staff instead use this time for reflective practice, a vital tool that the sector does often not get to implement enough owing to stretched caseloads. Central to success has been ensuring a broad set of skills and knowledge are represented at panels, enabling Anawim to make effective decisions taking the whole view of a person into account. For example, the attendance of their Housing Specialist at these panels means they are able to flag potential move-on problems for candidates in rent arrears or those unable to access relevant benefits. This helped reduce the number of long-term residents Dawn House was supporting, allowing more women to be helped. In addition, formalising these processes enabled Anawim to provide a clear decision-making framework from which to refuse unsuitable referrals, where prior they had found it harder to substantiate their decisions.

### Game Changers:

- Identify who the solution works for and why (and who it does not work for and why) and then embed that learning into decision making frameworks and definitions that are reviewed and updated when new learning emerges.
- Ensure there is a mechanism to include multi-disciplinary input into the selection of residents. Carve out time for joint deliberation and reflection to take place, which helps to formalise processes and provides teams with the space needed to identify and articulate evolutions to ways of working.

### THE DAWN HOUSE SELECTION CRITERIA:

- 1 Must be a prison leaver, unless bed is funded by domestic abuse or substance misuse services or is used as respite for a current Anawim woman.
- 2 Must have recourse to public funds.
- 3 Must have leave to remain.
- 4 Must exhibit readiness to engage and change.
- 5 Must have some local connections to enable move-on accommodation to be secured.
- 6 Must be willing to be abstinent from all substances and willing to take regular tests.
- 7 Their offence must not be of a nature that would mean move-on would be too high risk or difficult i.e. some sexual offences or high profile cases.



### Readiness for Change

The 'readiness' of a woman to embrace change has proved to be by far the most consistently useful assessment tool indicating whether woman will achieve good outcomes whilst at Dawn House. This should not be surprising when considering that much of the academic literature on psychotherapy and motivational interviewing evidence that higher readiness to change is positively correlated with better outcomes.<sup>34</sup>

At present, Anawim depend on the knowledge and experience of their Dawn House staff to assess this subjective quality. Though as part of the next phase of learning for Dawn House, Anawim are working with Dawn House staff to define what readiness to change looks and sounds like and how to identify this change-readiness in women based on Anawim's definition of this key quality. This will better inform their assessment of women's suitability for Dawn House within their current decision-making process. Doing so will future proof Dawn House against staff turnover and will provide a shared framework for decision making, again strengthening Anawim's confidence in selecting the right women who can benefit from Dawn House.

### Game Changers:

- Work to make what is implicit, explicit, what is intangible, tangible. Define what has not yet been defined to create clarity and consensus. Agree definitions where useful, in particular where subjective qualities are used as part of decision-making frameworks.
- Tap into the expertise of your staff team to agree these definitions and allow joint understanding to be the framework for decision making.

### The Right Mix of Women

After Dawn House opened, Anawim identified that women with shorter sentences were able to move on from Dawn House more quickly, owing both to less constraining move-on issues related to their crimes but also because these women experienced less institutionalisation than women who had served longer sentences. Yet at the same time, it became evident that housing too many of the most complex needs women (those usually serving short sentences) escalated risks to an unacceptable level.

In response, Anawim completed a risk assessment to determine what level of instability they could realistically manage to help inform and affect their discussions at decision panel meetings. It is a delicate balance bringing together women at different stages of their rehabilitation, resettlement, and healing journeys, as women making good progress were found to be destabilised by the presence of women exhibiting more chaotic behaviours.

Anawim realised that when selecting women for Dawn House it was important not only to assess a referral against the selection criteria but, crucially, the needs and behaviours of new referrals needed to be managed alongside who was already resident within Dawn House and how personalities would mix or clash to spur or impede progress. This of course is more of an art than a science, as judgements such as these are subjective. Yet through experience of housing different combinations of women – alongside the enormous experience Anawim have in providing wrap-around support to complex-needs women in the community – the Dawn House selection panel were able to determine how assessments could be made to determine whether new referrals would be accommodated within the risk assessment. Again, the Team are in the process of codifying how to define what this 'right mix' looks like and how to assess it, so that effective decisions can continue to be made even as the staff teams rotates.

### Game Changers:

- People do not exist or heal in isolation; at a residential centre one woman's journey will impact others.
- Selection criteria are useful for new referrals but decisions about overall suitability need to be taken balancing the safety of the existing residents.
- Trust in the expertise of staff. Flexibility in the selection criteria can be tolerated if by doing so benefits residence dynamics as a whole.

<sup>34</sup> Krampe et al., Readiness to change and therapy outcomes of an innovative psychotherapy program for surgical patients: results from a randomized controlled trial, PubMed, 2017, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29284443/>.



## HUMAN CENTRED DESIGN

### Recognising the Need for Choice in Layout Decision

Although every effort was made to design Dawn House with the needs of its residents in mind, there are some learnings emerging that Anawim have identified they would utilise in the planning of future residential sites for women.

This ranges from the small – for example not having a door from the residential centre leading straight into Anawim’s office, which resulted in numerous interruptions of office staff from residents seeking company – to more fundamental changes – Anawim have reflected that it would have been useful to have more than one communal space for the women to occupy. As, for those women more easily overwhelmed by the presence of other residents, the binary choice between being alone in their room or together with five other women has been restraining.

Layout, in this regard, is also important; at Dawn House, a number of the bedrooms open up within sight of the communal area. This has, at times, contributed to residents feeling either stuck in their rooms or else pulled into communal spaces when they would rather spend time alone, especially for those whose rooms open up in front of a glass wall in the communal space. It has also, at points, contributed to tensions between residents, as it is difficult for women to fully withdraw away from those that they are having trouble with when their rooms are so close to the communal areas. Additional communal and socialising spaces would not only serve a function in providing women with a place to “have a time out” when tensions rise between residents but also could serve as spaces where women were encouraged to engage in creative activities and skills development. Anawim have utilised a dead space in Dawn House’s hallway to create a crafting corner, providing women a third space in which to reside.

Women themselves have told Anawim they would have appreciated a bath being available to use (in addition to their showers in their ensuites). These small details help women deinstitutionalise, take care of themselves, and transition back into their lives.

### Game Changers:

- Design spaces to respond to the needs of people who move through the world differently and which provide those using the spaces with genuine choice rather than either/or options which replicate experiences of prison.
- When the current design of a space is not working, get creative – repurpose dead spaces or allocate budget to changes that can be made within existing structures.

### Healing Environments

An easy to overlook but fundamental part of Dawn House’s model is the way in which the centre has been decorated and furnished to meet women’s holistic needs. A careful and intentional approach has been taken to ensure that Dawn House is a place where women can feel at home and deserving of the care and support that they receive throughout their stay. Though Anawim were mindful that a unit decorated to a standard too far away from women’s experience could create dissonance for women moving on into less desirable accommodation, care was taken to ensure that Dawn House is spacious, tastefully decorated, warm and homely. The staff team have been thoughtful to include comforting touches that provide the foundations needed for women to continue their healing journey. From cushions on their beds for them to hug to motivational artwork in their rooms crafted for them by the previous resident of their room, which subtly communicates to all women that there is hope for them for life outside of prison and beyond Dawn House.

Every aspect of Dawn House has been created to instil a sense of worthiness in women who have been brought up in systems which have, at best, overlooked and, at worst, actively harmed them, convincing them of their lack of worth. Many rehabilitation models recognise the centrality of building self-worth and disrupting negative self-view to the recovery process. Studies have even indicated that household disrepair is positively associated with recent symptoms of psychological distress, and current, unfit housing conditions are linked to current poor mental health, self-blame and low self-worth.<sup>35</sup> By providing a safe, comfortable, and clean home for women, Dawn House not only disrupts the cycles of harm which unsuitable housing perpetuates but actually helps women to begin to rewire thought processes which had previously made them feel they were not deserving of comfort and safety.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3042082/> and [https://research.shu.ac.uk/cresr/living-through-change/documents/RP7\\_SelfEsteem.pdf](https://research.shu.ac.uk/cresr/living-through-change/documents/RP7_SelfEsteem.pdf).



This is a process that Dawn House staff support women to work through, as new residents often verbalise their feelings of being undeserving of Dawn House. With time, residents begin to imbibe a sense of deservingness as a result of feeling worthy of their place at the residence. This approach is rooted within Emotional Resilience Theory and is a key difference between a centre like Dawn House and approved premises, where many women end up post-release, which have not been built or designed with trauma- and gender-responsive principles in mind. Moreover, a homely residence encourages women to spend time at Dawn House, which then minimises women's exposure to locations that compromise pro-social behaviour and that expose women to contact with the criminal justice system.

#### Game Changers:

- Building self-worth is the critical first step. Do not underestimate the importance of the "small stuff". When people are made to feel deserving and loved, they can begin to believe they are deserving and loved.
- Our internal world reflects our external world; the spaces we inhabit can help us thrive or create the conditions where we fail to do so.

#### The Pitfalls and Importance of Community

One aspect of the building that has been more difficult to manage, however, has been the location of Dawn House. It is housed next to Anawim's women's centre, which was already located within a residential area of Birmingham. As a result, women with substance use issues are able to readily access drugs and alcohol without too much difficulty, impeding their recovery journey. Proximity to temptation is the reason so many detox services, including women-specific provision, are situated in remote, countryside locations, where the reach of drug dealers does not extend so easily and where alcohol is less readily accessed.

In her Review of drugs part two, Dame Carol Black noted that "it is clear that efforts to address drug misuse in custody are consistently undermined by the widespread availability across the prison estate of illicit drugs."<sup>36</sup> This statement reflects the reality that many of the women otherwise eligible for a place at Dawn House leave prison with either current or past substance use disorders. The difficulties Anawim have experienced with substance-using behaviour from residents has been exacerbated by failings and gaps with substance use provision in the region. Whilst the decision to appoint a Substance Use Specialist has certainly

enabled Anawim to better navigate the services available locally and provide more tailored support for women with substance use issues at Dawn House, it did not solve the problem. Anawim have identified the need for a detox pathway into Dawn House post-release, where women with substance use issues are provided access to gender- and trauma-responsive residential recovery support before their transition into Dawn House. This model would provide women with the tailored support they needed to build resilience during their recovery journey. Whilst Anawim awaits the impact of the increased funding associated with the Government's Drugs Plan, they have moved to Dawn House adopting an abstinence policy for the residence, where women have to commit to not using substances during their residency at the centre.

Whilst proximity to offending behaviours has been difficult for women and Anawim to contend with, at the same time Dawn House being where it is means women's proximity to Anawim is constant. The community on offer there – beyond the lifespan of the transitional tenancies at Dawn House – provides women with the ability to put down roots and find belonging, a core need that helps to counteract offending behaviour. In Anawim's new operating model, they leverage their ability to create lasting relationships by providing women with the opportunity to give back, participate, and lead in the delivery of Anawim's services as Champions. Services are done with and by them and not to them, this builds agency that has ripple effects on their lives beyond Dawn House and Anawim.

#### Game Changers:

- Accept that no location is ideal, where there are pitfalls there also lies power. Interrogate what location makes easier and what it makes harder and put in place plans to maximise the benefits and minimise the drawbacks.
- Identify partners that can help plug gaps and provide greater wrap-around support, specialist staff members can help bridge these gaps.



<sup>36</sup> Dame Carol Black, Independent report: Review of drugs part two: prevention, treatment, and recovery, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-two-report/review-of-drugs-part-two-prevention-treatment-and-recovery>.

## POWER DYNAMICS ARE ALWAYS AT PLAY

Anawim conceded that early on in the grant they felt under pressure to maintain full occupancy at Dawn House and for residents to be identified from women with the most chaotic and complex needs, usually women who have received sentences of six months and under. This was the cohort the initial feasibility study had identified as in most need of transitional housing and resettlement support post prison and was, therefore, the cohort JABBS was most keen to channel funding towards. Yet, over the course of operating Dawn House, it became apparent to Anawim that these women were some of the most difficult to secure outcomes with at the residence and were those who most often posed a risk to good progress for other, less chaotic women and to the residential centre and Anawim in general.

Though JABBS felt it had made its position clear – that Anawim were encouraged to use Dawn House in the best way they saw fit to deliver services and achieve good outcomes for women – the traditional grantee-funder power dynamics appeared to bleed into the Anawim-JABBS relationship. Anawim staff have expressed feelings of being unheard when initially suggesting that Dawn House functions best when a mix of women with various levels of needs are housed there to create a strong balance, instead of solely focusing on the most complex needs women. In fact, one team member conceded that the fact JABBS is a family foundation made the pressure all the greater, as they felt a stronger sense of responsibility to succeed and to succeed in line with the original vision knowing those from whom the money was ultimately coming from. As a result, Anawim ended up accepting women into Dawn House who they knew did not fit their evolving selection criteria and who were likely to cause issues during their tenancy.

However, once JABBS asked Anawim to really consider whether they wanted to persevere with the residential unit during a difficult period in the project, it provided the transparency and space Anawim needed to be more vocal about their learnings. This was a pivotal moment for Dawn House and the grant partnership and provided Anawim with the mandate they needed to reflect and propose a new model for the centre based upon what the emerging evidence showed would work. It is clear, therefore, that even with very strong, existing funding relationships, the need to keep power dynamics in mind and create spaces for open reflection and dialogue is key for the learning process.

### Game Changers:

- Acknowledge that power is always in operation and that power dynamics are keenly felt in grantee-funder relationships. It is on funders of all kinds to shake up traditional processes in order to achieve greater equity in grant partnerships. Without this, trust and transparency are difficult to achieve, learnings are lost, and impact diminished.
- Create mechanisms and spaces where honesty and difficult conversations are rewarded and where assumptions can be routinely questioned when the evidence indicates a need to do so. Be open to pivoting the approach if new data emerges leading in that direction.

## DEFINING AND REDEFINING THE CASEWORK MODEL

All of this learning has culminated in Anawim proposing a new casework model not solely for Dawn House but for the organisation as a whole. The new model brings all staff and programmes together under one service and is built upon the principles of the Self-Realisation Model. The new model involves three distinct stages of intervention:

- **Stage One: crisis intervention and stabilisation**  
Securing women's basic needs.
- **Stage Two: in depth support**  
Women accessing specialist casework support in response to their multiple, complex, and emerging needs.
- **Stage Three: move on, giving back**  
Women developing skills, utilising their talent, pursuing their interests, and asserting more agency in the delivery of Anawim's services.

Inherent to the new model is the recruitment of nine specialist roles across key pathways. This creates capacity as caseworkers, who had previously struggled to navigate the vast array of expertise and services needed to work with women exiting prison, can work alongside specialists to share the load. This frees caseworkers up to work directly with women, in a more person-centred way. It also provides valuable routes for progression for Anawim staff. This will enable Anawim to retain more talent and avoid brain-drain, crucial at a time of great socio-economic upheaval post-pandemic

<sup>37</sup> BBC, Why workers just won't stop quitting, 2022.

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220817-why-workers-just-wont-stop-quitting>.

and during the so-called 'Great Resignation', where people have begun leaving their jobs "en-masse" since early 2021.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the addition of Stage Three embeds the importance of purpose in women's journeys, reduces social isolation, and creates a pipeline for lived-experience leadership within Anawim.

During the first phase of funding for Dawn House, Anawim evidenced the effectiveness of these specialist roles. Creating a specialist post focused on housing transformed Anawim's ability to successfully transition Dawn House residents into move-on accommodation. Prior to setting up Dawn House, Anawim were told that there were 16,000 available beds for move-on support from Birmingham City Council. Yet their experience has been only a small fraction of this number are safe, appropriate, and suitable for the needs of Dawn House residents, many of whom are women coping with complex trauma. The system of move-on accommodation operating in Birmingham has been designed without responding to the needs of small, specialist services and the communities they work with, as such, a small handful of large, generic providers are able to monopolise the region. In February 2021, 73% of all exempt accommodation residents (16,267) lived in properties managed or leased by seven housing associations.<sup>38</sup>

With a dedicated specialist, Anawim has had the capacity needed to identify and build relationships with the good providers, meaning women are able to be transitioned into safe and suitable accommodation. As a result of the additional capacity this role creates for Anawim to engage with other accommodation providers, Anawim was able to identify early on when Birmingham City Council's recent efforts to crack down on poor providers was actually resulting in some of the better providers closing. This has enabled Anawim to open dialogue with the Council on the issue, whilst also giving them time to proactively search for other appropriate move-on housing providers to replace those that have been lost. As the accommodation crisis in Birmingham deepens, this role is likely to be ever more central to Anawim's ability to successfully run Dawn House.

This newest addition of a Substance Misuse Specialist has been a huge help for Anawim, as substance use problems have been a major challenge to manage at Dawn House. In their first

month, the new specialist had already collected a Directory of Services – agencies, charities, treatment providers, and drug teams – in the area for Anawim to call upon. Whilst building the directory, the specialist introduced Anawim's services, building partnerships with these providers. This has enabled Anawim to build a relationship with Change Grow Live (CGL), who hold the substance misuses service contracts for the city and has created a direct referral route for Dawn House residents, and Anawim's clients more broadly, to access medical interventions more efficiently. Eventually the desire is to be able to co-locate CGL Nurses and Health Care Assistants at Anawim – true to the 'one-stop-shop' model first outlined by Baroness Corston. These nurses will be able to offer check-ups and testing and to explore other mechanisms Anawim could adopt in implementing a harm-reduction approach to services.

#### Game Changers:

- Trial ideas but don't be wedded to the first iteration of any of them.
- Identify roadblocks in the model which are creating inefficiencies and problem solve how best to adapt and evolve to overcome them. This will often involve matters of resourcing, do not shy away when it does.
- Reframe failure as valuable learning and the pre-requisite for identifying what works.

**We spend most of our time breaking things and trying to prove that we're wrong. That's it. That's the secret. Run at all the hardest parts of the problem first... Discovering a major flaw in a project doesn't always mean it ends the project, sometimes it actually gets us onto a more productive path.<sup>39</sup>**

– Astro Teller, Chief Executive Officer of X – the moonshot factory

<sup>38</sup> Inside Housing, The story explained: What is exempt accommodation, 2021, <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/the-story-explained-what-is-exempt-accommodation-73541#:~:text=A%20registered%20provider%20is%20able,its%20own%20housing%20benefit%20fund.>

<sup>39</sup> Astro Teller, TED, The Unexpected Benefit of Celebrating Failure, February 2016, [https://www.ted.com/talks/astro-teller\\_the\\_unexpected\\_benefit\\_of\\_celebrating\\_failure?referrer=playlist-the\\_benefits\\_of\\_failure&autoplay=true.](https://www.ted.com/talks/astro-teller_the_unexpected_benefit_of_celebrating_failure?referrer=playlist-the_benefits_of_failure&autoplay=true)



# IMPACT STUDIES

## ANAWIM'S HOUSING SPECIALIST

As I started my role as Housing Specialist at Dawn House in November 2019, the residence had been open for two years but was still not classed as Exempt Accommodation and, therefore, was not entitled to any funding through Housing Benefit applications for residents.

My Specialist role ensured Anawim was able to develop expertise and build the necessary relationships to gain a full understanding of the Exempt Accommodation sector in and around Birmingham. I also had the capacity to coordinate our application for exempt status. This involved form filling, meetings with Birmingham City Council, and collating the required data – activities that the Dawn House Team did not have capacity to navigate on top of their other responsibilities.

Achieving exempt status for Dawn House opened up a new funding stream for Dawn House and supported our aim of becoming financially sustainable. Though ongoing difficulties securing the enhanced status means that Anawim only receives a fraction of the true cost of accommodating each resident from Housing Benefit. Work to access the higher rate of payment – which we believe Dawn House meets the requirements for – continues to ensure we are accessing the maximum funding we are entitled to and moving closer to sustainable full cost recovery for our work with Dawn House women.

Once exempt status was secure for Dawn House, I focused my time on understanding Housing Benefit applications, appeals, and backdated payment requests were impacting outcomes for our residents. I have since supported the Dawn House Coordinator with understanding the processes that need to be undertaken and have created a Housing Benefit guide so that all Dawn House staff can support clients with these applications moving forward.

The Housing Crisis continues to worsen and our ability to secure self-contained units for our women has not improved since Covid-19 and the lockdown. This means that the women are being moved on to accommodation that, though not entirely unsuitable and unsafe, does not meet their full needs. A priority going forward for the specialist role will be continuing to network with local Housing Associations and property owners who can support us with accessing self-contained move-on units.

**The building and the staffing – it's a fantastic facility. Had the residents not stayed with us they would have ended up in inadequate accommodation. Only such a small number recalled is a huge achievement.**

- Megan , Housing Specialist

**They believed in Anawim, responded to the needs of women coming out of prison, [it] makes such a difference. When women arrive, they are worried, scared, and apprehensive. Example - residents meeting where a woman says they are feeling normal for the first time. Even those who come for a short time, they take it away with them, things they have learnt like self-care, later in life they will remember things they have learnt. If it wasn't for JABBS we would not have had that experience, the staff learn from the women, so much.**

- Samantha, Support Worker



**“We offer hope. Someone has their corner; someone listens to them”  
“Dawn House gives them purpose and focus. Trust is built, when all falls apart, they know who to come to”**

- Bernie, Support Worker

## A WOMEN'S JOURNEY THROUGH DAWN HOUSE

Whilst in prison, Anna<sup>40</sup> was referred to Anawim through the Offenders Management Unit, and her case was assessed by Probation. Having no fixed place to stay post-release, Anna's case was considered by Dawn House's weekly decisions panel, who approved her place at Dawn House.

Prior to moving in, she was peripherally aware of Anawim but knew little of the services that Anawim offered.

After moving into Dawn House, Anna was enrolled onto our courses, including Stop and Think, which helps women find practical solutions to their problems; the Freedom Programme, supporting those with experience of domestic violence; and counselling.

Whilst she initially found the counselling challenging, Anna was subsequently able to start building her confidence and emotional resilience. Additionally, Anna was able to sit down and discuss any worries or problems she had with her caseworker or members of staff at Dawn House.

As a result of being at Dawn House, Anna's caseworker has noted a major confidence boost in her. Anna, herself, has felt extremely positive and supported through her transition from prison to Dawn House, and is excited about the next steps in her future.

Anna's lack of a support network prior to prison had made her somewhat apprehensive. However, she has described her experience of Dawn House being “a big world under one roof” where she has “never felt so safe.”

Furthermore, being at Dawn House has provided Anna with the framework to build stronger personal relationships – she has been able to engage with her children unsupervised due to the progress she has made working alongside the Dawn House Team. Contact with her children has had a positive impact on Anna. She is looking forward to moving in with family and staying in touch with Anawim to access ongoing, long-term support after she leaves Dawn House.

It is clear that the support network available within a residential rehabilitation facility such as Dawn House has far-reaching implications for women leaving prison. Anna's case in particular highlights that someone with little experience of a support network prior to leaving prison is able to thrive and progress under the care, concern, and guidance provided by Anawim.

<sup>40</sup> Name changed to protect identity.

## THE TRUE COSTS OF WOMEN'S RESIDENTIAL CENTRES

JABBS has invested **£2,025,000** into Dawn House over five years covering both the building of the residential centre and associated office space, along with the feasibility study, pre contract costs (**£954,706**), and ongoing operational costs (**£1,070,294**). With **56** women having been supported by Dawn House in this period, this represents a cost of **£36,160** per woman.

Whilst the building costs equate to **45%** of the grant total, this has produced other tangible benefits for Anawim – with the new office and community spaces created. Dawn House would remain a usable asset should it no longer provide residential support. Excluding these capital costs an investment of **£19,112** per woman has been made for the first five years of Dawn House.

The most recent annual budget projections to run Dawn House amount to **£261,305** (Anawim budget to 31 March 2023). This shows a considerable increase (**69%**) on the original projected running costs of **£154,368** from the feasibility study. It should be noted that the feasibility study was conducted in early 2015 and the many revisions to identify the correct staffing structure for operating Dawn House has since revealed the true cost of the residential service. This figure excludes the wider costs of operating Anawim's women's centre model, work which has had an undeniable impact on achieving better outcomes for Dawn House residents, in particular the transformative impact of the specialist roles.

Owing to the unforeseen impacts of the pandemic the average occupancy rates have varied widely during the first five years, from as high as **93%** pre-pandemic to a low of **43%** during the height of the pandemic. In the first six months of the new three year grant, Dawn House has seen an average occupancy rate of **57%**. If Anawim were to achieve occupancy of **80%**, as per the feasibility study, and to run Dawn House on their ideal

length of stay (three months) **19 women** would benefit from resettlement to Dawn House each year at a cost of **£13,753** per woman – falling to **£10,888** with full occupancy of **24 women**.

These costs can be compared with the direct costs of keeping one woman in prison for a year of **£52,151**<sup>41</sup> against those of one bed (housing up to four women) at Dawn House of **£43,551** – a saving of over **16%**. With the overall reoffending rate for women released from prison at **56%**<sup>42</sup> and Dawn House's rate standing at only **2%** the saving is further increased. By addressing women's holistic needs, Dawn House breaks the revolving door cycle which sees so many women re-entering prison, often on short-term sentences, when funds are better used in responding to the root causes of their offending behaviour.

Yet, residential women's centres are undeniably more costly than working with women at women's centres. A recent report from Women in Prison, who worked alongside Alma Economics, evidenced that the same investment of **£261,305** per year would provide enough funding to support approximately **169** women at their local women's centre.<sup>43</sup> This would mean an additional **145** women supported each year than would be the case at maximum occupancy for Dawn House. This comparison does not take account of differing reoffending rates between Dawn House and women's centres generally or of the public benefit that can be applied to investment in these interventions.

For the Ministry of Justice to realise the full vision of its Female Offender Strategy, it must invest adequate resources into existing women's centre services. These community resources are able to both break cycles of offending but, more importantly, prevent women ever being swept into the justice system. This is vital, as the current incarceration paradigm is failing to address women's unmet needs, the very needs which put them in contact with the criminal justice system in the first place.

<sup>41</sup> Women's Budget Group, The case for sustainable funding for women's centres, 2020, <https://wbq.org.uk/analysis/the-case-for-sustainable-funding-for-womens-centres/>.

<sup>42</sup> Prison Reform Trust, Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment? England and Wales, 2022, p.8 <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Why-women-2022-briefing.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Women in Prison, The value of Women's Centres, October 2022, p.24, <https://womeninprison.org.uk/media/downloads/The-value-of-Womens-Centres-report.pdf>.



Whilst the **£24 million** investment into women's services and whole system approaches from 2022 until 2025 is a welcome ramp up in provision,<sup>44</sup> it pales in comparison to the estimated **£200 million** the Government has committed to spending on an additional **500 prison places** for women,<sup>45</sup> expenditure which flies in the face of its very own Strategy. A strategy that seeks to reduce the number of women in contact with the criminal justice system and in custody on short sentences, which the overwhelming number of women in prison are given. This funding also does not bridge the gap in funding for the five-planned women's residential centres outlined in the Strategy, none of which have yet opened their doors four years after the launch of the Strategy.

Learnings from the first five years of Dawn House evidence that for residential women's centres to work they must be well-funded to ensure the realisation of a gender- and trauma-responsive approach. They also clearly benefit from co-location with existing women's community services, which have deep roots in their communities and the established trust with women needed to effect change. The figures, thus far, show that whilst working with women at residential

centres is expensive, especially in contrast to the cost of working with women in the community, they are still more economical than the costs of keeping a woman in prison. When the reduction in reoffending rates and other societal benefits from women's improved outcomes are taken into account the reality of the costs saved are likely to be dramatically higher.

During the next three years of funding, Anawim will need to assess how best Dawn House can be used to maximise outcomes for the greatest number of women and this will include the need to interrogate the costs-benefits analysis of running Dawn House against that of their women's centre and the impact they are able to achieve in these areas. This will involve frank reflection on whether the residential women's centre model is plugging the gap created by the overuse of prison in a broken criminal justice system. In doing so, Anawim and JABBS hope to be able to shed light on not merely the effectiveness of residential women's centres but, crucially, their place in women's justice initiatives and the Female Offender Strategy.



<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Justice, Millions invested to support female offenders, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-invested-to-support-female-offenders>.

<sup>45</sup> Women in Prison, Women in Prison responds to new National Audit Office report, 2021, <https://womeninprison.org.uk/news/press-release-women-in-prison-responds-to-national-audit-office-report>.



# **PART FOUR:**

**THE ROAD AHEAD IN  
DEFINING WHAT WORKS**

## THE EXPANSION OF RESIDENTIAL WOMEN'S CENTRES

In May 2022, the Government announced that the first of its five planned Residential Women's Centres would open in Swansea, Wales. The new twelve bed unit is scheduled to open in 2024 and the Government expects it to support 48 justice-involved women a year who otherwise would have received a short-term prison sentence. As such, it contrasts to Dawn House in that it aims to divert women away from routes into prison, instead of bridging the gap between incarceration and community resettlement.

Though any diversion of women away from prison is welcome news, the Government will need to ensure that women who would have otherwise received sentences in the community do not see themselves falling under more restrictive orders than they otherwise would have and that the harms experienced by women in prison are not merely replicated in the residential setting. Key to success will be how well the Probation Service – who are responsible for running the new unit – are able to adopt a gender- and trauma-responsive model of care, as has been articulated by Baroness Corston in her seminal report and as already demonstrated by the network of community-based women's centres ran by women's specialist charities across the nation. This Residential Women's Centre and those yet to come from the Ministry of Justice cannot be so in just name only and so it is critical for the Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice to take every effort to learn from existing, effective models as demonstrated by women's centres that have successfully worked with women around the country for decades.

Prior to this, the opening of One Small Thing's Hope Street is expected in 2023. Hope Street – a residential community for women and their children in Hampshire – aims to be a community-based alternative to women receiving short custodial sentences, being unnecessarily imprisoned on remand, or released to homelessness. The main Hub will accommodate up to 24 women and their children with an additional 100 intended to be housed in move-on accommodation across Hampshire. Hope Street's decision to accommodate women at a number of different points across women's possible contact with the justice system and their ability to host children will likely enable them to achieve higher occupancy levels owing to the flexibility of their approach. In addition, their work to create a network of Hope Houses – their move on accommodation – across the region will enable the centre to circumvent

many of the initial and ongoing problems Anawim has experienced with securing safe and stable long-term tenancies for Dawn House leavers.<sup>46</sup> Anawim intends to keep track of the learnings established at Hope Street in an effort to maximise Dawn Houses' impact during the next stage of the work.

## THE FUTURE OF DAWN HOUSE

The first five years were incredibly hard – harder than expected – and with unexpected challenges, such as the difficulty of filling spaces at Dawn House. At times Anawim and JABBS considered whether the project was going to succeed and whether it was sensible to continue, particularly given the scale of external challenges and Anawim's other vital work with women at the day centre. However, through this very tough process Anawim and JABBS have gained invaluable learning which has now been put into practice. Having done so, Anawim is starting to achieve the outcomes that had been hoped for with women in the residential service, whilst at the same time enhancing the non-residential service through the new casework model. In particular, through the impact of the new specialist roles in overcoming hurdles and building organisational expertise.

As JABBS has a commitment to both building the evidence base for the effectiveness of women's centres as well as to ensuring effective provision of gender-responsive services for justice-involved women in the West Midlands, it seemed clear that Phase II funding for Dawn House would provide Anawim with the time needed to evidence the effectiveness of their new model and the impact of transitional, residential housing for women exiting prison.

As such, JABBS has agreed a new three-year grant to cover both the running costs of Dawn House – not met by Housing Benefit and other funding – whilst also providing additional financial support to ensure Anawim can more quickly transition to the full breadth of their ambitious new operating model by funding two additional specialist roles which enhance both their residential and day services. During this time, Anawim will be focusing on codifying their learnings and identifying and communicating the impact of Dawn House. In doing so, both partners hope that the renewed funding will function to enable Anawim to better evidence why their model works. In doing so, the new grant not only functions to support Anawim to transition to best practice and to better demonstrate their impact but will provide critical data and insights related to the specific and acute needs of women transitioning from prison back into the community.

<sup>46</sup> One Small Thing, Hope Street: Frequently Asked Questions, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b2920c1a9e028ee9c2eb7b5/t/62ffa19848b7b1787c46b6b2/1660920217184/Hope%2BStreet%2BFAQs+updated.pdf>.

This is not to say that the road ahead will be easy. Staff retention is still an issue for Dawn House – as vicarious trauma and the intensity of a 24-hour intervention model undoubtedly impact staff’s wellbeing. This is true for all women’s centre work, where the extent to which women have been let down and left behind by the systems that all too often work against and not for them cannot fail to impact people on a human level. The looming cost-of-living crisis which has dovetailed the move from pandemic to endemic coronavirus is already exerting a horrifying impact on those with existing vulnerabilities and is likely to increase the strain on all community-based services. Research from Changing Lives reveals:

- Over 80% of their services have seen an increase in the number of people who are no longer able to make ends meet.
- In the vast majority – 90% – of their services they are seeing more people with experiences of poor mental and physical health, including self-harm, loneliness and harmful substance use.
- It is becoming ever more difficult to help people move on from homelessness services because it is simply unaffordable for them to live independently.<sup>47</sup>

Anawim and JABBS are acutely aware of the need to continue to learn together when it comes to the future of Dawn House. In the first meeting between Anawim and JABBS of the new grant, Anawim were quick to raise their fears around the energy needed to keep Dawn House staffed and how the emerging crisis will exacerbate existing struggles for women, for staff, and for the organisation. That such an open reflection was brought into this meeting at the very start of the new grant is testament to the decision to prioritise learning over success in this partnership. At the end of that meeting, both partners agreed that when it comes to the future of Dawn House nothing is off the table and JABBS will need to be led by Anawim on how they best see the building and their time serving their community when the current grant funding ends. As such, Anawim are looking at possible hybrid models to maximise the use of beds at Dawn House and to ensure funds are channelled to supporting the greatest number of women.

It would be a shame to lose such a unique resource for women deserving of successful resettlement from prison back into their community. Yet, in a political and funding climate where successive Governments have

**“[It was good] to know that someone’s always going to be there.”**

**“I know I can pick the phone up and call Anawim if I’m feeling down .”**

**“If you have a bit of a wobble, they’re there for you. It’s for warrior women, women who’ve survived a lot of bad things in their life.”**

Anawim has seen demand for their Drop-In Service – where women can access immediate support to fulfil their basic needs – skyrocket in recent weeks and the country is far from the peak of the crisis. On top of this, it is still not clear where Anawim will be able to secure the funds needed to bridge the gap between what Housing Benefit provides and the true cost of running a gender- and trauma-responsive residential centre for women transitioning from prison into the community when JABBS funding ends in 2025.

Yet, whilst Anawim are committed to Dawn House and the efficacy of their new operating model is proving evident, the reality remains that operating any residential centre is tough. Add to that the complexities of women’s trauma, institutionalisation, social marginalisation, and socio-economic crisis, both

repeatedly failed to adequately fund women’s centres and make good on the vision of the Female Offender Strategy and the Concordat on women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System, tough decisions will continue to be forced upon organisations with the vision and drive to deliver more for women and for society. In response to conversations about the future of Dawn House, one resident remarked “No doors closing in this place – we will open it back up!” Dawn House is a unique and pivotal resource for women seeking successful resettlement into their communities. Women are asking for this service to continue and it is up to those invested in the success of the Female Offender Strategy to design and deliver a funding model that meets this need.

<sup>47</sup> Changing Lives, Priced Out: The impact of the rising cost of living on people with multiple unmet needs, 2022, [https://changinglives.cdn.prismic.io/changinglives/35bfeddb2-d8d-43f0-830f-1b7d89f5d28b\\_Priced+Out\\_17+Aug+22.pdf](https://changinglives.cdn.prismic.io/changinglives/35bfeddb2-d8d-43f0-830f-1b7d89f5d28b_Priced+Out_17+Aug+22.pdf).

