



Final grant report: Beyond Barbed Wire Mentoring Program

Project title	Beyond Barbed Wire Mentoring Program
Grant recipient	Barnardos Australia
Project manager	Jodi Burnstein
Position	Senior Manager, Barnardos Western NSW
Law and Justice Foundation awarded amount	\$35,000
Grant period	November 2013 – June 2015
Date of this report	2 June 2015

Description of the project

Describe the project in just enough detail so that anyone can understand it. What was the aim of the project, who was the intended audience and what strategies did you implement to achieve the aim.

The aim of this project is to pilot a mentoring program in the Wellington area for women (primarily Indigenous mothers) exiting prison, to reduce their social isolation and connect them with relevant support services in order to contribute to the reduction of re-offending.

The project – what happened?

How did the project come about?

Barnardos Western NSW has been working in the Wellington prison for the past five years facilitating a range of parenting and family violence awareness and prevention programs with female inmates who have children; e.g. Keeping Children Safe, Triple P, Out of the Dark, Mothering from a Distance. In 2012, we gained recognition as an approved workplace for inmates close to their parole and have since taken five prison work placements. We are also a registered WDO provider for the State Debt Recovery Office, which enables inmates participating in our programs to reduce their state debt.

Through our work with women exiting prison or caught up in the criminal justice system, we are very conscious of the histories of abuse and disadvantage experienced by inmates, alcohol and drug use, poor self esteem and mental health and the pattern of cycling in and out of prison on short sentences for relatively minor, non- violent offences and the need for support post release to break this cycle.

We approached and formally collaborated with the Women in Prison Advocacy Network (WIPAN) who agreed to support and advise Barnardos in the establishment of a post-release mentoring program.

We discussed the mentoring component of our program with Wellington Correctional Centre and obtained in principle support to develop the program and utilise the inmate television network to

promote the service. An Advisory Group was established between Barnardos and Corrective Services, with membership including men and women who are in custody.

We also sought advice and consulted with Gallangabang Traditional Owners Corporation, who provide valuable support and community networks.

Briefly set out the project stages and what happened in each stage.

During the start-up period from November 2013, a Project Co-ordinator was employed and the framework was developed for our Beyond Barbed Wire (BBW) mentoring program, as well as all administrative and operational policies and procedures. Valuable assistance in developing the framework and protocols for the program was received from the Women in Prison Advocacy Network (WIPAN), Barnardos Prison Advisory Group and Gallangabang Traditional Owners Corporation. Forbes TAFE Outreach Program provided the staffing and learning materials for the initial mentor training, while partnerships with specialist services such as Lyndon Community and Murdi Paaki have been central to the delivery of workshops, which have been a significant component of the on-going mentor training.

Stage	Activity/Output	Date completed	Comments on what happened and any challenges or unexpected outcomes
1	Project Co-ordinator position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approved job description • worker recruited • worker undertaken agency orientation and security training 	30/11/13	Employed Project Co-ordinator
2	Establish program eligibility and referral criteria	30/11/13	Clear eligibility guidelines established that are used in promotional material within the community as well as in Wellington Correctional Centre; awareness of the mentor program amongst inmates and staff at Wellington Correctional Centre and other organisations working with women post release.
3	Review WIPAN mentoring program guide, promotional materials. Outputs: comprehensive set of program policies consistent with Barnardos welfare policies and adapted where needed for rural context, manual for mentors, set of referral, assessment and program forms	30/11/13	Adaptation of WIPAN material to specifically target women leaving Wellington Correctional Centre to return to communities in rural/remote areas. Data collection tools and framework developed.

4	Finalise evaluation framework - plan data collection for evaluation in accordance with LJF grant conditions	30/11/13	Evaluation framework finalised - data collection ongoing
5	Secure ongoing mentor training and support through TAFE Outreach. TAFE to deliver on outreach basis from Forbes and Wellington using Barnardos venue	30/11/13 and ongoing	TAFE Outreach Forbes Campus has and continues to provide mentors with a National Recognised Training Course in Mentoring Groups and Individuals. This training is conducted in partnership with Barnardos. All Course materials have been adapted by the TAFE Outreach coordinator to suit the context of women with children, who are caught up in the criminal justice system. Virtual classrooms at the local Wellington TAFE campus, as well as face-to-face learning at Barnardos venue are being utilised.
6	Develop 2-day orientation and training program for new mentors including all training resources.	30/11/13	Ongoing mentor training modules secured for ongoing delivery to volunteer mentors. Training resources finalised, including Nationally Recognised Training, orientation and New Mentor Information packs.
7	Recruit, assess and train small pool of mentors	1/11/13 (initial) and ongoing	Appropriate training program delivered to volunteer mentors. Initial training delivered, with ongoing training workshops delivered throughout the year. Number mentor EOIS received: 21 Number of mentors assessed: 18 Number of mentors assessed as suitable: 15 Number of mentors in training: 3 Number of trained mentors: 12 (trained mentors still attending regular

			workshops)
8	Hold first 2-day training workshop for mentors	7-8 December 2013 - ongoing	Commenced and ongoing.
9	Promote program in Wellington Correctional Centre and throughout Western region	ongoing	<p>Commenced and ongoing.</p> <p>Program information and flyers distributed to Sector 2 Women's section by Barnardos staff when delivering parenting programs. Program information is displayed in the Sector 2 common room and also in the housing units. WIPAN DVD <i>Through the Tunnel and See the Light</i> is also used to promote the BBW mentoring program with women in custody. Ongoing distribution of flyers in Wellington Correctional Centre by Service and Programs Officers (SAPO).</p> <p>Program information, flyers, eligibility criteria and referrals distributed to staff (SAPO and custodial) at Wellington Correctional Centre and Regional Community Offender Services offices.</p>
10	<p>Commence taking and assessing mentee referrals.</p> <p>Commence mentee/mentor matching and delivery of program</p> <p>Conduct evaluation interviews at three monthly intervals.</p>	<p>1/11/13 and ongoing</p> <p>1/12/2013</p>	<p>Number of potential mentees referred to BBW mentoring program - 50. Number of mentees assessed as suitable - 42. 8 mentees have been assessed as unsuitable for the program. (Reasons for unsuitable status include, not in contact with criminal justice system, no children, underage).</p> <p>Of the 42 assessed as suitable for the program, 29 (69%) women were matched with a mentor. 13 women were not matched with a mentor (31%).The reasons for not matching women with a mentor include: women leaving the program prior to being matched because</p>

		<p>they had moved out of the area, were uncontactable, mentor not available in the geographical location, or women requiring a supported referral to a specialist service, such as residential withdrawal unit. Of the 13 women who were unmatched, six women were unmatched due to active drug dependency issues, which emerged soon after assessment.</p> <p>Total number of referrals to other services: 83.</p> <p>Referrals have been made to services including Uniting Care Burnside Doorways Program, Brighter Futures, Smart Recovery programs, DV Helpline, Department of Housing, Dubbo Women’s Housing Project, Lyndon Community, Lifeline Counselling Service, Barnardos FNSW Parenting Group, WIMLAH, Food for Life, St Vincent de Paul, Legal Aid NSW, Women’s Legal Services NSW, NALAG, Salvation Army, Inspiration House, Compass Housing, Mission Australia HASI program, Neami Mental Health Service, Barnardos Families NSW Playgroup, Reconnect Services.</p> <p>Of the 29 mentees assessed and matched with a mentor, 100% have remained out of prison for at least 3 months, 98% have remained out of prison for at least six months, 98% remained out of prison for at least 9 months, 96% have remained out of prison for at least 12 months.</p> <p>Of the 10 mentees currently participating in BBW mentoring program, there are 28 children amongst them. 23 of the 28 children are Indigenous.</p> <p>6 of the mentees currently participating in BBW reported being the primary</p>
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		<p>carers of their children prior to incarceration.</p> <p>3 of these mentees have now resumed primary care of their children post release.</p> <p>It is worth noting that the first two mentees recruited and assessed as suitable, continue to be engaged in BBW mentoring program.</p> <p>All of the 29 mentees matched with a mentor have reported previous convictions. Five of the participants were 'First time in custody' (with previous recorded convictions). Only two of the participants have reported no previous (adult) convictions. There are two mentees who have not served a custodial sentence.</p> <p>23 participants report 1-5 previous convictions</p> <p>4 participants report 5+ previous convictions.</p> <p>2 participants report no previous convictions.</p> <p>Of the 10 mentees currently participating in the program, 7 identify as Aboriginal (70%). Of the 50 mentee referrals, 36 have been Aboriginal women (72%).</p> <p>8 mentees have participated in Work Development Orders to reduce their state debt (5 with Barnardos; 1 with Mission Australia; 1 with Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre and 1 with Lifeline).</p>
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If resource materials were produced as part of the project:

How were they distributed?

Program Flyers

Program flyers were distributed electronically through email networks, posted to locations including female Correctional Centres, transitional centres, Court Houses, Police Stations, as well as to specialised services such as tenancy advocacy services, domestic violence services, job network providers and Indigenous health clinics across Western NSW. Flyers were also made available in the local community through service expos (Wellington and Dubbo). Copies of both the mentor recruitment flyers and program information flyers are displayed in all Barnardos sites across Western New South Wales.

Information Pack for New Mentors

Information packs for new mentors were distributed to potential mentors who sent expressions of interest. Information packs for new mentors were also displayed at community service expos and information days in Dubbo and Wellington for professionals and interested members of the public.

What was the extent of the distribution?

200 mentor recruitment and 200 mentee information flyers were distributed through hardcopy post, as well as at community service expos and information days. The geographical area for postal distribution included Bathurst, Orange, Warren, Nyngan, Narromine, Dubbo, Gilgandra, Mudgee, Broken Hill, Dunedoo, Coonamble, Mumbil, Windsor, Emu Plains and Silverwater. Distribution of recruitment and information flyers was facilitated by staff attending service expos and information days in Dubbo and Wellington. Electronic versions were also sent regularly through email networks across the region. Mentee and mentor information flyers are also featured on Barnardos Australia website.

If applicable, at the time of this report, what has been the extent of online use of your publication?

Program Flyers

A narrative outlining the program as well as the Beyond Barbed Wire Program flyers have been promoted on the Barnardos Australia website. Barnardos Australia has also used their official website as a recruitment strategy to target potential mentors. In addition, the Beyond Barbed Wire program flyers have been shared on social media, through pages including Women in Prison Advocacy Network (WIPAN), Sisters Inside and Flat Out.

Now that the project has concluded, how did the implementation and/or the outcome differ from what was originally intended? Did anything surprise you? Were there any unintended outcomes?

Initially, it was intended that mentees would keep a journal to record their experiences. The journals were to provide an opportunity for mentees to reflect on the transition from custody to community. Each mentee was provided with materials to begin a scrapbooking journal. However, within the first month post release, a majority of the mentees reported not having time to complete their journals, preferring to reflect their thoughts face to face in monthly reviews or at weekly meetings with their mentor. Many of the women used the scrapbooking materials to make cards and other small craft items for their children, who remain in care. One mentee regularly brings handmade cards and items

such as reward charts to be sent to Children's Services caseworkers for her children. It is interesting to note that the mentees who continued to use their journals and scrapbooks have done so as an activity in local community parenting programs, which includes programs such as Out of the Dark, Kids in Focus and Dress for Success. The community programs are hosted by Barnardos, and facilitated or co-facilitated by the Beyond Barbed Wire program co-ordinator. Mentee participation in parenting programs and capacity building programs is encouraged, and at a local level, mentees (past and present) have utilised Barnardos programs to expand their social capital, becoming core members of several groups.

Evaluation

What questions did you ask to evaluate whether you had achieved your aim?

Mentor Questions:

- What do you like about being a mentor?
- What have you learnt from your experience as a mentor?
- Has the training and support provided been helpful to you?
- Do you think you have made a difference for your mentee and if so in what ways?
- What have been the challenges/barriers/frustrations of being a mentor?

We asked mentees to keep a journal recording their experiences of the mentoring program and asked them to answer these questions:

- How is your relationship with your mentor going? What do you like/dislike
- Is the mentor program helping you to cope with leaving jail and settling back into life outside?
- Is the mentoring program assisting you with your relationships?
 - with your children;
 - with your family;
 - with other people in the community
 - is the mentoring program helping you to get the support you need eg accessing services/resources in the community?

Did you achieve your aim? What did you find out?

Barnardos Beyond Barbed Wire Mentoring program did achieve its aim of establishing a mentoring program in the Wellington area for women (primarily Indigenous mothers) caught up in the criminal justice system and exiting prison. In the pilot period, Barnardos BBW mentoring program clearly demonstrates a reduction in the experience of social isolation of participants, increased participation and connections with relevant support services in local communities, which resulted in an overall reduction in re-offending and recidivism when compared to current statistics available from BOCSAR.

In the pilot period, Beyond Barbed Wire had 50 referrals, of which, 42 women were assessed as suitable for the program. Of the 42 women, who were assessed as suitable for the program, 29 mentees were matched with a mentor. 13 women were not matched with a mentor for a variety of reasons including having moved out of the area, becoming uncontactable after initial assessment, active drug and alcohol dependency, admission into residential treatment programs. 8 women were assessed as unsuitable for the program.

Of the 29 mentees who were matched with a mentor, only three returned to prison (10%). Of the three women who did return to prison, two mentees initiated contact with BBW upon their return to prison and one woman resumed contact with Beyond Barbed Wire upon release. One of the mentees who initiated contact with BBW whilst in prison also resumed a relationship with her mentor whilst in custody. This mentee continues to have regular visits with her mentor. It can be concluded that, despite returning to custody, the mentoring program had a positive impact, as each of the three mentees who did reoffend/return to custody sought to reconnect with the program.

During the pilot period, the average age of the mentees was 34 years old. 93% of mentees had been recidivists and serial recidivists, with all but two mentees reporting that their convictions were related to substance or alcohol abuse (93%). 20 of the 29 matched mentees identified as being Aboriginal (69%), 2 of the women referred came from CALD backgrounds (7%), while the remaining 7 women (24%) identified as non-indigenous Australians. All of the mentees reported being on government benefits and 26 (89%) reported also having outstanding debt post release, which included Centrelink, Housing NSW, Telecommunication providers and other debts with the SDRO incurred prior to imprisonment.

23 mentees reported serious mental health concerns with 96% comorbidity.

Nearly all mentees have experienced at least one form of early trauma; 20 mentees reported significant family breakdown (69%) and 14 mentees reporting childhood abuse and neglect (48%). 16 of the mentees reported they had experienced family violence (55%) and 82% of mentees reported having lived in at least one violent relationship as adult (24 reports).

Of the 29 mentees, 7 participants reported they were the primary carers of their children prior to coming into custody (24%). Of the 29 mentees, 6 participants resumed primary care of (some) of their children post release (21%).

Of the 10 mentees currently participating in BBW mentoring program, 6 of the mentees reported being the primary carers of their children prior to incarceration (60%). 3 of these mentees have now resumed primary care of their children post release (30%). However, 70% of mentees children remain in foster care/kin care.

Securing and maintaining permanent housing is a major issue for mentees with 21 (72%) on the waiting list for NSW Housing. 24 mentees reported they were living in shared accommodation with parents, extended family members, or friends (83%). 4 mentees reported living with a partner (14%). 1 mentee is verified as being released to temporary emergency accommodation (3%).

Accommodation arrangements have broken down for three mentees in the first month post release (10%). Interestingly, the 3 mentees for whom accommodation arrangements broke down are the three mentees that returned to custody.

The majority of mentees have reported an improvement in their sense of wellbeing and level of life satisfaction by participating in BBW mentoring program. All of the mentees felt positive about staying out of jail. One mentee reported *'I feel good about myself right now. I know I have people to talk to that actually believe in me'* (Mentee comment). All 29 of the matched mentees said that they were happy with their mentor, and wanted the match to continue.

22 mentees reported that having someone who was non-judgemental to talk to had improved their self esteem (76%). *One mentee reported 'I like my mentor. I think she can really help me. She is open and easy to talk to'. (Mentee review 10.3.2014). Another mentee reported 'Staying out of jail has been hard work. But I have a lot of people I can talk to now, and I feel good about myself' (Mentee review July 2014).*

9 mentees said their relationship with their child(ren) had improved (31%). One mentee reported she felt more capable about dealing with her children's caseworker as a result of having a good relationship with her mentor. 6 mentees reported that attending parenting programs in the community had helped them to make new friends and get involved in community activities (21%). Of the 29 mentees who were accepted into the program, 26 reported that being connected with BBW has helped them access other services in their community (90%). During the pilot period, 15 mentees reported having attended a parenting in the community or whilst in custody (52%).

During the pilot period, Barnardos BBW mentoring program received 21 EOI's from potential mentors. Of the 21, 18 potential mentors were interviewed and assessed. 15 were assessed as suitable. To date, 12 mentors have completed training, attaining a TAFE Certificate II Mentoring in the Community. 7 of the 12 trained mentors identify as Aboriginal (58%). 3 new mentors are currently undergoing training. All 3 new mentors identify as Aboriginal (100%). Once the 3 new mentors complete their training, of the 15 BBW mentors, 66% will be Aboriginal.

Five 2-day training workshops were delivered by Barnardos in partnership with TAFE NSW, Lyndon Community and Murdi Paaki. The first training workshop for mentors focussed on orientation and team building with Barnardos staff and Management, providing an opportunity for mentors to become familiar with Barnardos BBW policies and procedures. Three of the four TAFE modules were delivered via connected classroom, which allowed mentors in training to work through assessment tasks in a supported adult learning environment. The fourth TAFE module, Identify and Respond to the Risk of Harm was delivered face to face by TAFE Outreach lecturer, Anna Caskey.

One mentor said:

what I actually enjoyed about the last training session was that we were all able to get together and share experience and views through group discussion. Everyone was connected and we all valued each other's opinions. I loved the fact that the facilitator was so passionate, and was able to tell us about her own experiences, both professional and personal. I honestly think that through being

involved in the workshops and training, each of us will grow to be a stronger person, which means we are better able to mentor vulnerable women. For me, mentoring has been a journey, which has allowed me to develop a different worldview. Mentoring has changed my awareness of the barriers faced by women who are caught up in the criminal justice system.

Two of the mentor training workshops have been delivered by specialist services. Lyndon Community delivered a Drug and Alcohol First Aid and Awareness workshop, while Murdi Paaki delivered Mental Health from an Aboriginal Perspective.

All of the mentors have said the training has been helpful. 5 of the trained mentors said they felt they would benefit from more training opportunities (42%). Of the 5 mentors who indicated they would benefit from having more training, 3 expressed interest in attending training related to domestic/family violence. The remaining 2 mentors were unsure what training they would like to attend. However, 8 of the trained mentors also reported it was sometimes difficult to make time to attend training workshops/supervision (66%).

The mentors range in age from 26 to 68. Of the twelve trained mentors, 11 reported that they felt they were having a positive impact on their mentee (92%). All of the trained mentors believed they helped their mentee by being available to listen to the challenges faced by their mentee and sharing their own life experience. One mentor reported in review *'My lady has grown beautifully. The match is good, and I can see a change happening'* (Mentor review 31.5.2014)

Half of the trained mentors reported that they struggled with their mentees being late or not turning up at all for planned meetings. Three of the mentors reported not knowing how to respond when their mentee relapsed. One mentor said in supervision, *'I feel like I have failed as a mentor. I should have been able to stop it (drug use) from happening'* (Mentor comment, December 2014). However, in group supervision it was reiterated that it is the role of the program coordinator to monitor the expectations of both parties and to make clear where the mentor's role starts and ends. There have been times when the coordinator has stepped in to deal with complex issues requiring professional help that are not within the scope of the mentor/mentee relationship.

The activities that were most common for mentors to do with their mentees included having coffee, shopping and attending community events and going to the park. Four mentors also report giving practical assistance to their mentees such as helping with filling out paperwork, attending appointments at Centrelink, and assisting with transport.

Conclusion and recommendations

What is your conclusion?

Overall, the Beyond Barbed Wire mentoring program has empowered women to make significant change and improvement in their lives through the experience of a caring mentoring relationship. The mentoring relationship improves a mentee's self esteem and capacity to successfully transition back into the community by reducing the experience of stigmatisation and social isolation.

BBW mentoring program is a cost effective program that has a demonstrated capacity to reduce the reoffending and recidivism rates of one women exiting prison, or caught up in the criminal justice system.

What are your recommendations for improvements both for the intended audience of your project, and for the strategy you used to achieve your aim? What would you do differently next time?

One area for improved service delivery would be to foster stronger partnerships with mental health services and drug treatment programs to ensure women exiting prison, or caught up in the criminal justice system are given priority placement into residential programs if required.

Another key recommendation is that to be effective, mentoring programmes should not operate in isolation. They need to be integrated within and complementary to an organisation's pre-existing interventions. The success of this type of service integration is evidenced by the number of mentees who have chosen to engage in community based parenting programs and other early interventions such as Brighter Futures, which are delivered by Barnardos.