



Innovation – Nominee

Achieve North West Connect- Creative Art at HMP Styal



Achieve North West Connect has been running a bespoke creative arts group at HMP Styal. This particular area of the Achieve North West project pays attention to the needs of several 'sub groups'; offenders with mental health needs, offenders with significant alcohol or drug misuse and vulnerable women. The sub group work gives a group of female offenders at HMP Styal the opportunity, through a range of creative art sessions, to explore their issues and build upon their confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to move forward. The sessions are run on a weekly basis and work alongside HMP Styal's ethos of 'Decency being our Styal' along with the strong environmental focus they adopt within their culture and values at HMP Styal.

The project is greatly valued both the prison and also the women who take part in their workshops.

During the past six weeks women attending the sub group have been designing and making a patchwork cushion cover. The women were given a brief of creating a personalised patchwork cushion cover, for either a friend, family member or themselves. The cushion cover had to represent a time, person, friendships or special moment in their life that they held dear; and also reminded them of a positive time in their life. The women also faced the challenge of creating their cushion covers using recycled fabrics donated to the CFO3 project.

Many of the women who completed the project found the process both a creative and emotional outlet. One woman said, ' I find the session really relaxing, they give me time to calm down and realise that I am capable completing creative items, the session really helps me manage my mental health in a positive way '.



Intertwined into the art sessions are sessions from Salford Foundation, enabling the women to work through barriers and issues and so they are ready to take part in more mainstream parts of prison life and employment. These women are then more able to take part in the courses in prison and also look at the employment opportunities within the prison. Several of the women are now going out of the prison to work in areas such as catering and gardening.

This project has enabled women to work through their issues, give them a safe place to build their confidence and self-esteem and so that they can then take part in the programmes that are available in the prison to their best ability. When they go through the gate to the community case manager they are more ready to be able to cope with the transition and also to be ready to look for employment.

Quote from Head of Learning and Skills at HMP Styal.

"It has been great that Achieve North West Connect have been able to give the women the opportunity to explore their creative side and help them to express their feelings and emotions... It is noticeable to see the positive impact the sessions have had on the women engaging in regards to their confidence and positive energy.

"These sessions go a long way to enhancing women's self-worth and motivation; all contributing to improved mental wellbeing, something we are striving for at HMP/YOI Styal".

Quotes from sub-group participants.

"It helps stop me thinking about things that make me upset. I want to come to the group until I am released as it helps me deal with being inside"

"I enjoy coming to the group very much. I have a lot going on in my prison life and coming to the group is great. When I come to the group all my troubles seem like a million miles away. I don't feel like anyone in the group over judges me and I can talk to anyone. When I am in the group, I feel that I am able to smile again which I sometimes feel that I have forgotten to do. Before I came to the group, I felt like I was losing my social skills. But from coming to the group I feel like I am getting them back".