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Criminalised women and reintegration: Challenges and constraints faced by service providers

The research

- ▶ An honours project centred on the experiences of service providers supporting women who are or have been in prison
- ▶ Explored
 - ▶ What their experiences could tell us about the issues faced by disadvantaged, criminalised women
 - ▶ How the constraints faced by service providers (e.g. time and resources) had an impact on women's ability to reintegrate

Research Question

- ▶ What are the experiences of service providers in supporting women with a mental disorder who are or have been incarcerated?

Methodology

- ▶ In-depth interviews
- ▶ 7 service providers in Victoria, from a range of organisations
- ▶ Thematic analysis

SILOED SERVICES
TIE AND RESOURCE
CONSTRAINTS

Working in the Sector

Siloed Services

The siloed sector is very frustrating. [You have] homelessness support there, and family violence support somewhere else and sexual assault support somewhere else, you know? Mental health supports there and disability support elsewhere... **there's no one overarching case management support for people.** Because of funding, it's just a very **disparate and siloed** support sector, and an issue like mental health kind of underpins people's ability to access all of those supports (Interview with Louise, Social Worker).

Time and resource constraints

Engagement in general can be really challenging. Particularly women in prison. . . I think the biggest challenge is when you get a referral and they're being released the next week. So, if you don't get a chance to build up that rapport, **people will hit the community and be gone.** . . . Then I think, having the **capacity.** Currently my caseload is on 19 which is about **7 or 8 too many** (Interview with Sarah, Case Manager).

LESS SERVICES FOR
WOMEN

MISOGYNISTIC
ATTITUDES IN THE
SECTOR

Discrimination against criminalised women

Less services for women

- ▶ *Vivian*: With men, it's so fast to find post-release accommodation. For women, I can be on the phone for days.
- ▶ Me: Why is that?
- ▶ *Vivian*: **There's so much less for them.**

Misogynistic attitudes

- ▶ [There's an attitude that] women are **second best** (Interview with Amber, Social Worker).

...

- ▶ There's a lot of male nurses who don't understand, or **don't care to understand**, women's needs (Interview with Amber, Social Worker).

To conclude...

- ▶ Experiences of service providers supporting revealed a lot about the constraints faced by support staff
- ▶ These barriers and challenges are part of the reason why reintegration is such a huge challenge for criminalised women
- ▶ There are both individual challenges and structural barriers
- ▶ Service providers in this area need more support
- ▶ Future Research: Utilise service providers perspectives

Thank you!

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?