

Launch of Together's guide: 'A common sense approach to working with women with health and wellbeing needs in the criminal justice system'

*Presentation by Teresa Elwes, Grant Executive at the Bromley Trust,
26th February 2013*

The Bromley Trust is privileged to support the publication of the women's guide. Not only is mental health a key component in the profile of those at risk of entering into the criminal justice system, mental health and learning difficulties can lead to extremely traumatic experience of custody and are often misunderstood.

It is vital that everyone working within this sector understands what to look out for and how to provide, or access, the support that is needed, whether this is in the police station, the prison wing or the court.

Equality is recognising difference and ensuring that different needs are met. I am pleased that Together has produced a guide to support some of the specific mental health concerns that affect women- women who are often at the most vulnerable and difficult moment in their lives.

I am heartened by the easy language and common sense approach taken by this guide and (like the generic guide published two years ago) I know it will be widely used.

The Bromley Trust is a grant making foundation that is committed to human rights and criminal justice. Along with our colleagues, some of whom are here, we are part of the Corston Independent Funders Coalition, formed to support the implementation of the Corston Report. We are committed to the reduction of the use of custody for women when the consequences are not commensurate to the offence.

I am in no doubt that a greater understanding of mental health needs will not only reduce the prison population but reduce the trauma experienced by women at risk.

And finally, in agreement with Annie's excellent presentation earlier, if we begin to recognize some of the extraordinary strengths women have drawn on to survive their experiences- perhaps we really will be able to build a different way forward.