



# Brighter Futures

Working together to reduce women's offending

The work of the Prison Reform Trust is aimed at creating a just, humane and effective penal system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing Parliament, government, and officials towards reform.

#### Programme to reduce women's imprisonment

The Prison Reform Trust's three year programme (2012-2015) to reduce the imprisonment of women in the UK is supported by the Pilgrim Trust. It builds on the work of the Women's Justice Taskforce, which recognises that many of the solutions to women's offending lie outside the criminal justice system, and on the Out of Trouble programme which saw a substantial and sustained reduction in youth custody. The economic analysis in the Taskforce report (2011) demonstrates "*an overall net advantage for society from community based intervention for women offenders*". We believe there are opportunities now to influence and accelerate the reform agenda which include promoting the development nationally of early interventions that divert women out of the criminal justice system. We are working alongside civil society organisations including the National Council of Women and the Soroptimists, whose Action Pack on Reducing Women's Imprisonment can be found on the PRT website. For regular updates on our women's strategy you can subscribe to the Prison Reform Trust monthly newsletter.

Written by Jenny Earle, Rebecca Nadin and Jessica Jacobson

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We would especially like to thank each of the schemes who shared information about their services and the women they work with - we hope that profiling them will encourage the development of similar initiatives nationwide:

Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Trust and Eden House Women's Centre; the Hull police women's triage pathfinder; the Manchester pilot women's triage scheme; Darlington and Durham's IOMU Gateway to Change project; IOM Cymru women's pathfinder; Bedfordshire IOM's Exit programme; Together for Mental Wellbeing's women court liaison and outreach project; the Beth Centre in Lambeth; the Advance Minerva/London Tri-Borough project; and the Inspire Liaison and Diversion service in Sussex.

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## Foreword

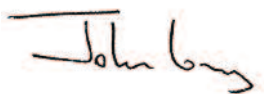
I am very pleased to have been asked to contribute to this Prison Reform Trust briefing, which has been produced with the support of the Pilgrim Trust. As the police national lead for Integrated Offender Management (IOM) and women offenders, I have always believed that the police have a significant contribution to make towards improving interventions for women in contact with the criminal justice system.

As long ago as 2007, the Corston Report called for a “*proportionate, holistic, woman-centred, integrated approach*” to women’s offending. This was followed, in 2011, by *Reforming Women’s Justice*, the report of the Women’s Justice Taskforce, which further highlighted the improvements needed and the challenges that existed in delivering effective criminal justice solutions for women offenders. As a member of the Taskforce, Chief Constable Steve Otter, then leading the police national Equalities Portfolio, was instrumental in making the case for IOM as a way to improve outcomes for women offenders.

The disproportionate impact of incarceration on female offenders is well documented, as is the reality that a significant proportion of women in the criminal justice system are, or have been, victims of crime themselves. Having chaired a youth offending board for a number of years, I know that children who have been separated from their mothers, or taken into care, as a result of her offending or imprisonment are at increased risk of offending or having poor educational, health and other outcomes themselves. Approaches aimed at reducing these harmful consequences must surely be supported. Policing is focused on keeping the peace, reducing crime and protecting vulnerable persons and communities. These objectives align seamlessly with approaches aimed at tackling offending and diverting women away from prison. Breaking the cycle of women’s offending and its multigenerational impacts may be complex and involve longer timescales, but is no less important than other accepted offender management approaches.

In recent years I have had the privilege of working with the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office, the College of Policing and the Prison Reform Trust, to develop a number of diversionary approaches to women’s offending which have been implemented by police, probation and voluntary sector partners. Not least of these is a multi-agency training and awareness programme for frontline staff, to help them understand at the very first point of contact the factors that can contribute towards more effective outcomes for women who offend, beyond just police custody or prison. These approaches offer a very real opportunity to reduce the number of women entering the criminal justice system.

Looking to the future, and to implementation of the government’s Transforming Rehabilitation programme, partners will have to ensure that all opportunities are seized if we are to deliver positive results for female offenders. Practical, intelligent and innovative approaches to managing the complex needs of women will help ensure that communities are protected, crime is reduced and vulnerable women are not victimised or unnecessarily imprisoned. I commend this briefing and am determined to ensure that the police remain committed to achieving its aims.



John Long QPM  
Deputy Chief Constable  
Police National IOM Lead



## Introduction

*Careful investment in women's services has the potential to make significant 'whole system' improvement...to provide earlier intervention to address the inter-generational nature of offending and to stem the flow of girls and women into the criminal justice system.*

House of Commons Justice Committee (2013)

This briefing is intended to:

- Raise awareness among justice, community and health service providers and commissioners about the characteristics and needs of women who come into contact with the criminal justice system, and their obligations to meet those needs.
- Provide an overview of multi-agency approaches, such as Liaison and Diversion services and Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements, and illustrate improved outcomes for women and their families as a result of effective local partnerships.
- Ensure women-specific provision is included in the commissioning of Liaison and Diversion and other early intervention services.
- Inform and encourage the development of alternatives to prosecution where these are proportionate and effective responses to women who offend.
- Provide examples of good practice where women are enabled to take responsibility for their lives, and continue caring for their children and other dependants wherever possible.
- Help inform current practice and encourage agencies to continue to develop services and approaches that meet the needs of women, and build a robust evidence base on what works.
- Encourage the development of co-ordinated local strategies and services to support women with multiple needs, including those being supervised in the community.

Women account for a minority of all those coming into contact with criminal justice agencies, and their specific circumstances and needs are often overlooked or misunderstood by a system which has largely developed in response to men's offending profile and behaviour. Most women who enter custody under sentence serve short prison sentences for petty but sometimes persistent offending, and many have themselves been victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup> Many are mothers so the consequences of criminal sanctions rebound on their children. Some have been trafficked and coerced into offending but not identified as victims of trafficking and given the help to which they are entitled.<sup>2</sup>

The briefing highlights the specific needs of women, profiles existing initiatives and partnerships that seek to deal more effectively with women's offending, and provides links to other useful resources. It should be of interest to those with policy, funding, commissioning and service delivery responsibilities.

***A key lesson still to be learnt is that tackling women's offending is not just a matter for the justice system.***

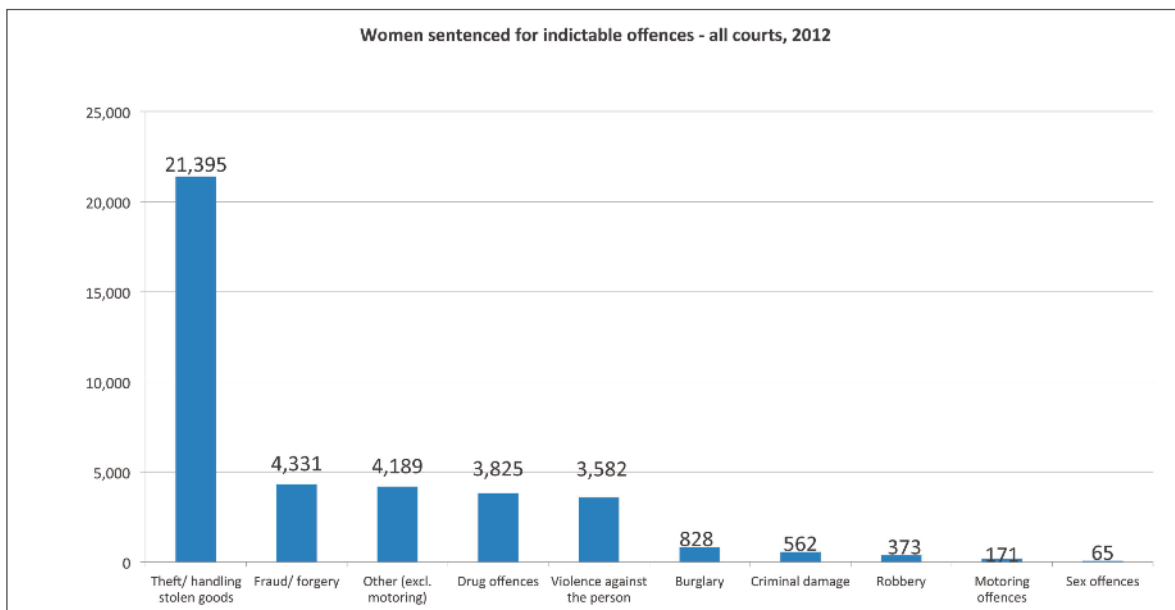
House of Commons Justice Committee (2013)

This briefing is intended for:

- Clinical Commissioning Groups
- Community Rehabilitation Companies
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Local authorities including lead members and directors of adult social services
- Directors of Public Health
- Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Integrated Offender Management arrangements
- Local Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards
- Members of the Judiciary
- National Probation Service
- NHS England Local Area Team commissioners for health and justice, Local Health Boards in Wales and regional NHS Boards in Scotland
- Other commissioners and providers of justice services
- Police Chief Constables
- Police and Crime Commissioners

### **The case for providing routes out of trouble for women**

Many people who enter the criminal justice system have significant unmet psychological, social care and health needs, and this is especially true of women. Women suspects and offenders are a minority within the criminal justice system, accounting for 13% of those arrested, 24% of those sentenced by the courts, 15% of those supervised by probation and 5% of the prison population.<sup>3</sup> In 2011-12, for example, 162,000 women were arrested in England and Wales, whilst in the 12 months ending June 2013, 287,000 women were sentenced in the courts.<sup>4/5</sup> Theft and handling offences account for 30% of women's arrests and 41% of all custodial sentences given to women.<sup>6</sup>



Source: Table A5.5, Ministry of Justice (2013) *Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly – December 2012*



There are significant differences between women and men who offend, including:

- *their patterns of offending*: women are more likely to commit acquisitive crimes and less likely to commit serious and violent offences
- *the social and economic contexts of their lives*: women are more likely to experience poverty and be primary carers of dependent children, including as lone parents; many women are victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse, and their offending is more likely than men's to be linked to their relationships<sup>7</sup>
- *patterns of substance use*: women in prison report higher rates of opiate use (e.g. heroin and crack cocaine) and use of (legally or illegally obtained) prescription drugs<sup>8</sup>
- *health inequalities*: women have higher rates of self-harm and eating disorders, their rates of depression and anxiety are twice as high as those for men, they are more likely to have symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and are more likely than men to have a mental illness<sup>9</sup>
- *the impact of human trafficking*: women are vulnerable both to sexual exploitation and to coercion into criminal activity.<sup>10</sup>

***The experience of female offenders is different in a number of ways, whether that concerns the abuse that they might have suffered before committing offences or the rate at which anxiety and depression are suffered.***

Justice Minister Jeremy Wright MP, House of Commons, 14th January 2014

Proportionate, informed and timely interventions designed to meet the needs of women, at key points of entry into the criminal justice system, can help prevent offending and reoffending. Evidence increasingly shows that these can be cost-effective in providing positive outcomes for women, their families and their communities. Local partnerships between criminal justice, health and social care services are essential for achieving this.

### **Opportunities to innovate in a changing landscape**

The way services are funded is changing rapidly across justice, policing, health and social care, creating opportunities to look afresh at how services are designed and delivered. The elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are commissioning services to reduce crime and support victims of crime, based on local needs and priorities.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the Department of Health is funding Liaison and Diversion services across England, including ten sites that will be trialling a standard model of provision. Based in police stations and courts, these are commissioned by NHS England “so that people with mental health conditions and substance misuse problems get the right treatment as quickly as possible with the aim to help reduce reoffending.” These services will be evaluated and, if successful, extended to the rest of the country by 2017.<sup>12</sup> In Wales revised Criminal Justice Policy Implementation Guidance has been developed to enhance and improve the Criminal Justice Liaison Service (CJLS). In addition, pooling budgets across departments and agencies (through, for example, Whole Place and Our Place community budgets) supports more integrated provision for people with complex needs.<sup>13</sup>

Chief Police Officers nationally, together with the College of Policing and the Home Office, have led the development of specific approaches to reducing women's offending, using the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) framework. This drive to deliver an approach to women offenders which is consistent with the public sector equality duty has been instrumental in the development of much of the innovative practice profiled in this briefing.

A review of the 42 police and crime plans in England and Wales found that, while few of them yet acknowledge the distinct needs of women suspects and offenders, most of them are committed to improving responses to domestic violence. This is a helpful foothold for developing greater recognition of the needs of women in the criminal justice system.<sup>14</sup> The Police Inspectorate's identification of crime prevention as "*a major part of HMIC's inspection programme*" is a further incentive for the development of effective gender-sensitive responses to women.<sup>15</sup> The Inspectorate's thematic review of police responses to domestic violence will also contribute to this endeavour.<sup>16</sup>

***Things affect us in different ways. I felt that some services did not understand I was a victim too. I didn't take drugs for fun, I took them to self-medicate and hide from myself.***

St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives

Despite pressure on local budgets, there are a number of initiatives being rolled out that can make a positive difference to outcomes for women who come into contact with the criminal justice system, including the Troubled Families programme in England and the Families First programme in Wales. In addition, the Transforming Rehabilitation programme introduces "*some specific requirements that the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies will need to meet in relation to the management of female offenders*", so delivery agencies must provide "*specific rehabilitation and supervision activities that are intended to meet the particular needs of female offenders.*"<sup>17</sup>

The Target Operating Model for Transforming Rehabilitation sets out how the new system of supervision and rehabilitation will operate. It makes clear that "*providers [of probation services] will...achieve best results by working in partnership with local authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and other services to bring together the full range of support, be it in housing, employment advice, drug treatment or mental health services.*" Co-commissioning is identified as one way of creating "*the most holistic and integrated rehabilitation services.*"<sup>18</sup> With recognition that services to reduce reoffending should include "*housing, healthcare, substance misuse treatment services, employment and education, benefits and debt etc*", it will be imperative that the needs of women are reflected in local partnerships and commissioning arrangements.

***We will engage with police, sentencers, and probation staff, to raise awareness of the different needs of female offenders, so that these can be properly considered at key points in the criminal justice system.***

Government response to the Justice Committee's Second Report of Session 2013-14 – Female offenders

## Recommendations

Improved and cost-effective outcomes for women require co-operative working between criminal justice, health and social care and local community services. Local leadership is necessary to implement this, which can come from a range of different individuals and organisations including, for example, Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables; Directors of Adult Social Services and Directors of Public Health; Health and Wellbeing Boards; the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies; Clinical Commissioning Groups; NHS England Health and Justice leads, Welsh Government Offender Health leads and Community Safety Partnerships. Many of the recommendations below are designed to encourage collaborative funding of, and partnership working between, these services.

### 1. Funding for women's services:

- Central government should fund a national network of women's centres, projects and services as these are critical to improved outcomes for women in contact with the criminal justice system.
- The funding framework or formula for these centres must be sufficiently flexible to avoid the criminal justice system being the primary gateway through which vulnerable women can access appropriate support.

### 2. Mapping local needs:

- Criminal justice, health and social care agencies should ensure that data concerning the particular needs of women offenders and women at risk of offending are reflected in their local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and given sufficient prominence in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other local plans and commissioning strategies, such as the Police and Crime Plan and Community Safety Plan.
- Local strategies should take account of women's housing needs, parenting support needs and the needs of children whose mothers are in the criminal justice system.
- The link that frequently exists between women's experiences of domestic violence and sexual abuse and their offending behaviour, should be taken into account when designing local service provision for women victims and offenders.
- All agencies should ensure good coordination and gender monitoring, analysis and evaluation.

### 3. Screening and assessment of individual needs:

- The particular needs of women, and the needs of their children and other dependants, should be routinely screened for and, where appropriate, assessed, at key points of entry to the criminal justice system.
- Local partners (e.g. health, police, probation and women's services) should agree a common screening tool to facilitate information sharing and service planning and delivery.
- Protocols and good practice should ensure that as far as possible a woman only has to provide key information or give an account of her experience and needs once.

#### **4. Pooled budgets:**

- Aligned or pooled budgets, for example through the Whole Place Community Budgets programme in England and through Local Service Boards in Wales, and co-commissioning should be used to develop specific provision for women.
- Pooled budgets are key to ensuring such provision can focus on prevention as well as support for women offenders, whether offered on a voluntary basis or as part of the terms of a conditional caution or a court order.

#### **5. Liaison and Diversion services:**

- The particular needs of women suspects and offenders should form part of the training for all Liaison and Diversion staff.
- Liaison and Diversion services should routinely offer women-specific provision, and build links with local women's service providers.
- Outcomes for women in the ten trial sites should be carefully evaluated to ensure that the resulting standard service specification is gender-sensitive.

#### **6. Triage and Integrated Offender Management (IOM):**

- Building on the success of pathfinders, every police force should consider developing a triage scheme specifically for women and every IOM partnership should consider developing women-specific approaches.
- Outcomes for women should be monitored and evaluated.
- Liaison and Diversion services, police triage and Integrated Offender Management arrangements operating in the same geographical area should work co-operatively to ensure the most appropriate response to women.

#### **7. Probation services and local criminal justice partnerships:**

- The particular needs of women offenders, and the two women-specific pathways to reducing reoffending, should form part of the training for National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company staff.
- A women's lead officer/ champion should be appointed within each National Probation Service region and Community Rehabilitation Company.
- Probation services and local criminal justice partnerships should ensure that relevant data on women, including that gathered by Liaison and Diversion services and police triage and IOM arrangements, informs local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies, and integrated local commissioning.
- Sentencers and court legal advisors should be regularly briefed on the availability of women's services and interventions in the local community.
- Information on outcomes for women sentenced to community orders which include women-specific requirements, such as attendance at a women's centre, should be shared at court user group meetings.

## A profile of women in the criminal justice system<sup>19</sup>

Unless otherwise cited, these figures can be found in the *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile Autumn 2013, Prison Reform Trust*.

- Many women in the criminal justice system are themselves **victims of violence**
  - More than half of women in prison report having suffered domestic violence
  - A WomenCentre survey of 44 women receiving intensive support found that three quarters of them were recent victims of domestic violence and 8 had been raped<sup>20</sup>
  - One in three women in prison report having experienced sexual abuse
- Women in prison exhibit worse **physical health** than women in the general population
  - Two thirds of women in HMP Holloway responding to a prison inspectorate survey said they were currently taking medication<sup>21</sup>
  - More than eight in ten women in prison report having a longstanding illness, compared to 32% of women in the general population – amongst women surveyed, prevalence of asthma was 37%, migraine and headache 33% and epilepsy 12%<sup>22</sup>
  - Prior to imprisonment, they are less likely to have been registered with a GP and more likely to have made use of hospital services than the general population

*I've always wanted to go to rehab but have never been funded. It's just jail, jail, jail.*  
HMP Holloway roundtable, Prison Reform Trust and Big Lottery, January 2014

- **Drug and alcohol misuse and dependency** are common and often integrally linked to offending
  - 52% of 135 women surveyed in custody said they had used heroin, crack or cocaine in the four weeks before entering prison
  - More than a third (36%) of women in prison said they had used unprescribed tranquilisers, whilst one in four (27%) had used unprescribed methadone<sup>23</sup>
  - 70% of women entering prison require clinical detoxification
  - Nearly half of women prisoners (48%) report having committed offences to support someone else's drug use<sup>24</sup>
- Many women in the criminal justice system have been **involved in prostitution**
  - 21% of women in one prison said they had been involved in prostitution, most linking it to drug addiction (74%) and over a quarter (26%) to having been abused<sup>25</sup>
  - In 2011-12, 723 women referred to women's centres and assessed against the nine pathways to reducing reoffending were identified as needing support because of their involvement in prostitution<sup>26</sup>
- Rates of **clinically significant mental health conditions** are higher amongst women in prison than men
  - 30% of women, and 10% of men, have had a psychiatric admission prior to entering prison
  - One in seven sentenced women, and one in fourteen sentenced men, in prison has a psychotic disorder

- 65% of women in prison are indicated as suffering from depression, compared with 37% of men<sup>27</sup>
- 46% of women prisoners, compared to 21% of male prisoners, report having ever attempted suicide<sup>28</sup>
- Women in prison are thought to have higher rates of **learning disability** than men
  - 8% of women in prison have an IQ below 70 and 32% are borderline learning disabled compared to 7% and 24% of men respectively<sup>29</sup>
  - This disability often goes unrecognised and its prevalence is under-researched<sup>30</sup>
- Women are more likely to be **primary or sole carers of children**
  - OASys (Offender Assessment System) data found that women were six times more likely to be carers than men and twice as likely to live in a house with children<sup>31</sup>
  - Over 17,000 children were separated from their mothers by imprisonment in 2010
  - Only 9% of children whose mothers are in prison are cared for by their fathers
  - It is estimated that two babies are born to women prisoners in England each week

*It's very hard for a woman to ask for support. To say to a keyworker or probation officer, I've got a drug problem, can you help me? They think, if I share my truth, they are going to come and take my kids off me. So a lot of women don't say. They're scared.*

St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives

- Women's offending is frequently prompted by their **relationships or financial concerns**
  - More women than men who were supervised by probation had a relationships need (62% v. 40%) and identified finance as an issue contributing to their offending (28% v. 21%)<sup>32</sup>
  - 35% of women offenders had a criminal partner compared to 6% of men at the time of their first assessment by probation<sup>33</sup>
  - A Cabinet Office study found that 28% of women offenders' crimes were financially motivated, compared to 20% of men's
  - 38% of mothers in custody attributed their offending to 'a need to support their children', single mothers being more likely to cite a lack of money as the cause of their offending than those who were married
- Some women end up in the criminal justice system or in custody as a result of having been **trafficked or coerced**<sup>34</sup>
  - Interviews with foreign national women in prison found evidence that four in ten were victims of trafficking, many of whom had been coerced into offending.<sup>35</sup>

*It's a total spiral; women ending up homeless, sofa surfing, re-offending. You need to recognise what the root causes are. There's always more to the story than meets the eye. I believe in second chances, but you need to support people to get in touch with what they are running from.*

St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives

## Specialist justice services for women – the policy context

***To achieve equitable outcomes for male and female offenders, different approaches need to be taken.***

Equal but different? Criminal Justice Joint Inspection thematic report (2011)

There has long been a lack of both specific provision for women in the justice system and knowledge and skills on work with women among criminal justice practitioners. According to the Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorate “*very few offending behaviour programmes are designed with [women’s] particular needs or learning styles in mind*”.<sup>36</sup> However, following a series of inquiries and influential reports, there is now both popular and cross-party support for the development of specialist services for women in the criminal justice system.<sup>37</sup>

As the Justice Committee report on women offenders says:

***...this is not about treating women more favourably or implying that they are less culpable. Rather it is about recognising that women face very different hurdles from men in their journey to a law abiding life...***<sup>38</sup>

Interventions that address offending behaviour by women whilst meeting their underlying needs can help to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. For example, many women who offend experience multiple needs such as poor mental health, substance misuse, debt, unemployment, domestic violence, insecure housing and parenting responsibilities.

***Housing - without it you don’t have a chance.***

HMP Holloway roundtable, Prison Reform Trust and Big Lottery, January 2014

There is public support for taking a distinct approach to low level offending by women. For example, an ICM poll showed that 80% of 1,000 adults surveyed strongly agreed that local women’s centres, where women address the root causes of their crime and do compulsory work in the community, should be available.<sup>39</sup> In another ICM poll, 73% of those surveyed did not think mothers (particularly of young children) who commit non-violent crime should be locked up,<sup>40</sup> whilst a YouGov poll in November 2012 revealed strong backing for public health measures to tackle women’s offending, including treatment for drug addiction, help to stop alcohol misuse, and mental health care.<sup>41</sup>

Recognition of the importance of women-specific services in the justice system is reflected in Section 10 of the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*, which requires the Secretary of State for Justice to ensure that contracts with supervision and rehabilitation services consider and identify services to address the particular needs of women in accordance with the equality duty.<sup>42</sup> This has been introduced in response to “*evidence...that how one approaches rehabilitation for female offenders must be materially different...from how one approaches it for male offenders*.”<sup>43</sup> The equality duty requires public bodies, and private or voluntary sector bodies where they are exercising ‘public functions’ or contracted to deliver public services, to eliminate discrimination and advance equality.<sup>44</sup> This does not mean treating all groups exactly the same. Where women-only or women-specific services are known to be more effective they should be provided<sup>45</sup> – for example women-only hostels or support groups for women who have experienced domestic abuse.<sup>46</sup>

The United Nations rules on the treatment of women offenders (the Bangkok Rules) require “*diversionary measures and pretrial and sentencing alternatives...taking account of the history of victimisation of many women offenders and their caretaking responsibilities*”.<sup>47</sup> The United Nations committee against torture has recommended that the UK government “*pay attention to the...recommendations...contained in the Corston Report and...ensure effective diversion from the criminal justice system for petty, non-violent [female] offenders.*”<sup>48</sup>

In March 2013, the Ministry of Justice published its *Strategic objectives for female offenders*, which include “*ensuring the provision of services in the community that recognise and address the specific needs of female offenders, where these are different from those of male offenders*”. A Minister-led Advisory Board on Female Offenders was established to oversee implementation, with the following work streams:<sup>49</sup>

- Enhanced provision in the community for female offenders
- Transforming Rehabilitation for female offenders
- Review of the women’s prison estate
- Whole system approach.

A whole system approach means achieving coherence between policy, commissioning and service delivery across and between criminal justice, health and social care, welfare, children’s and other community services, and collaboration between the statutory and non-statutory sectors both within and outside the criminal justice system. At the local level, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs) can provide coordinated support to vulnerable women and redress their traditional invisibility in mainstream services. Aligned or pooled budgets can be used to underpin partnership arrangements and achieve better value for money as the good practice profiled in this briefing demonstrates.



## Ensuring effective responses to women

Effective responses to women when they come into contact with the criminal justice system include the features outlined below. They aim to ensure that individual support needs are identified and referrals made to appropriate services.

- **Located in the police station** to enable assessment and referral to external services at the first point of contact, with supplementary court-based provision to provide additional support and engage those not previously seen. Primary aims are to:
  - facilitate diversion out of the criminal justice system to avoid unnecessary prosecution
  - facilitate rapid access to help or support - especially in a crisis situation (e.g. acute episode of mental illness; urgent need for childcare)
- **Wide-ranging in scope and informed by service users**, taking account of the prevalence of multiple and overlapping needs which cannot be treated in isolation, and the fact that women may not perceive their needs through a mental health lens, or may fear the stigma associated with mental health problems. Screening/assessment and referral should address the range of vulnerabilities which women in the criminal justice system may present, including:
  - mental and emotional health problems
  - learning disabilities and difficulties
  - substance misuse
  - domestic violence, sexual abuse and coercive relationships
  - histories of involvement in prostitution
  - the possibility of having been trafficked
  - childcare and other family responsibilities
- **Integrated and engaged with other services** to ensure referral pathways into statutory and voluntary services. Key aspects of work could include:
  - encouraging use of pre-court disposals in appropriate circumstances
  - providing access to bail support, and information to inform bail decisions
  - facilitating and expediting court reports
  - ensuring that pre-sentence reports are accurate, and sentence recommendations realistic and proportionate
  - raising awareness among sentencers of effective local alternatives to custody for women
  - utilising women's community services through referral and sentence planning
- **Skilled female staff** who can communicate and engage in a professional and practical but also supportive, empathetic and non-judgemental manner, identify the specific needs of women and respond through onward referrals where appropriate. Staff need to be responsive to factors such as age, sexual orientation and ethnicity, all of which may affect women's individual needs and their use of services
- **Women-only spaces or time-slots**, in recognition of the proportion of women in contact with the criminal justice system who have been or are victims of physical or sexual violence and affected by abusive and coercive relationships.



## Liaison and Diversion services

A major role for Liaison and Diversion services in England, and criminal justice liaison services in Wales, is to assist police custody and court staff in identifying suspects and defendants with mental health needs, learning disabilities and substance misuse problems, and ensure they get the help they need. While some of these individuals will be diverted away from criminal justice and into, for example, health services for treatment and care, others will continue through the criminal justice system with the appropriate support.

*‘Liaison and Diversion’ is a process whereby people of all ages passing through the criminal justice system are assessed and those with mental health, learning disability, substance misuse and other vulnerabilities are identified as soon as possible in the offender pathway. Once identified, they are provided with access to appropriate services. Information gained from assessment is used to inform decisions on diversion, charging, case management and sentencing. Offenders can be diverted ‘out of’ and within the criminal justice system.<sup>50</sup>*

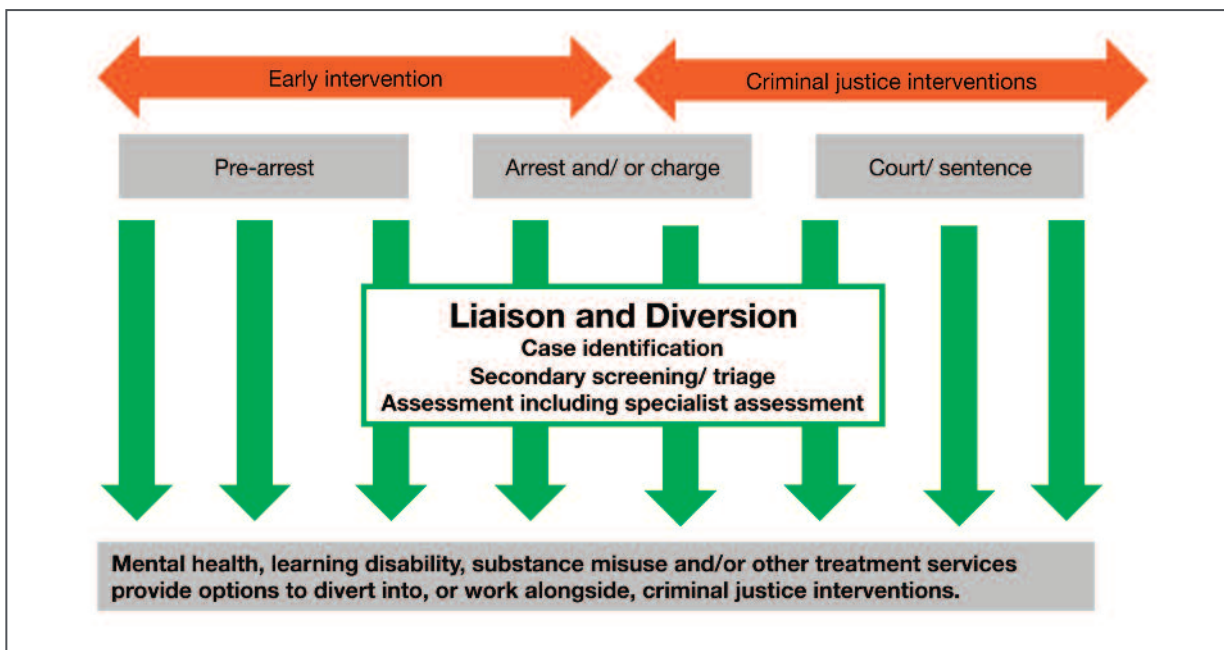


Figure 1: The NHS England Liaison and Diversion process in outline<sup>51</sup>

The establishment of Liaison and Diversion services for vulnerable suspects and defendants was recommended by the Reed Review (1992) and Lord Bradley’s review in 2009. While some good progress has since been made, service provision remains patchy, particularly for women. The Justice Committee raised concerns that “*the lessons of the Bradley Report have not filtered through... Liaison and Diversion schemes are not yet developed sufficiently to impact systematically on the treatment of women offenders*” (2013).<sup>52</sup>

In 2009, the government made a commitment to roll out national Liaison and Diversion services, accessible to every police station and criminal court in England by 2014.<sup>53</sup> This was welcomed by the Women’s Justice Taskforce, which recommended, in light of evidence of the particular needs and vulnerabilities of women in contact with the criminal justice system that:<sup>54</sup>

- women be a designated group in all Liaison and Diversion services, with a specific response required as part of national standards
- all Liaison and Diversion services should explicitly include women with learning disabilities and difficulties

- national standards for Liaison and Diversion services should be developed in consultation with professionals and practitioners from criminal justice, health and social care, local services such as housing, and those working with women with mental health problems and learning disabilities.<sup>55</sup>

Department of Health guidance on mental health services advocates a “*gender specific approach...to meet the needs of women offenders and those with mental health care needs*” to ensure “*equality of outcomes for men and women*”. The Department recommended an early intervention approach which would entail “*establishing comprehensive packages of care and support*”. It called for a multi-agency forum tasked, for example with increasing awareness amongst criminal justice agencies of local facilities and services, such as women’s community services, and creating a system for “*providing earlier and more detailed mental health assessments for women e.g. at the point of arrest, following arrest, at the pre-sentencing report stage*”.<sup>56</sup>

An evaluation of provision for women offenders delivered through generic Liaison and Diversion services found that women service users were “*generally positive*” about the service they received, and benefited from the help and support they were then able to access from other agencies. However, the lack of monitoring and data collection at the time meant it was difficult to assess how effective overall these services were at diverting women. The report said that “*the ideal composition of single sex in-patient and community-based mental health and support services does not exist*”.<sup>57</sup> There was little women-specific provision at the point of contact, and appropriate training was rarely offered to staff.

A recent review of the use of police cells as a place of safety for individuals detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act concluded that the numbers being taken into police custody are still too high. Of custody records analysed, 30% were for women.<sup>58</sup> An earlier criminal justice joint inspection raised concerns over the availability and quality of mental health service provision for women in the criminal justice system, despite high levels of need amongst the women whose cases were examined.<sup>59</sup>

The operating model developed by NHS England for commissioning the new Liaison and Diversion trial sites, states:

*The scheme should ensure that it meets the needs of all groups with protected characteristics...providing choice in the range of referrals, including to gender-specific...agencies and organisations/services.*

*All schemes should have an equalities plan and should monitor and analyse activity and referrals against protected characteristics.*<sup>60</sup>

*From a child I had ADHD and dyspraxia and it turned into a personality disorder and schizophrenia now. I am not a dangerous schizophrenic. I’m on medication for it. But if that had got sorted when I was a child, instead of putting me here putting me there, things might not have escalated.*

Women’s Breakout (2014) Experts by experience: The collective voice of women in criminal justice

## **An operating model that works for women**

The draft service specification confirms that assessments must “*reflect...gender needs*”. It identifies those most likely to benefit from Liaison and Diversion services as individuals with:

- complex emotional difficulties
- substance misuse issues
- at risk of domestic violence.

The number of referrals into voluntary and other support services, broken down by gender and type, are performance indicators for the trial sites. This will help ensure services are paying due attention to the needs of women. Analysis of this data will inform the final service specification and operating model before the wider rollout of Liaison and Diversion services.<sup>61</sup> The government has confirmed that “*commissioners will require services providers...to demonstrate that they are responding appropriately to meet women’s needs.*”<sup>62</sup>

Partnership working is key to ensuring that Liaison and Diversion service providers have the necessary information and expertise to identify the specific needs of women and to link them up with services in the community.

Two examples of such partnership working involving the women’s community sector are Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Trust with Eden House in Bristol, and the Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Service in Sussex with the Inspire project in Brighton.

### **Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Trust and Eden House Women’s Centre<sup>i</sup>**

Avon and Wiltshire’s Liaison and Diversion service, delivered through the court assessment and referral service (CARS), has been in operation since 2007-08. Mental health nurses and social workers, based in police stations and courts across Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare (as of December 2013), Swindon and Wiltshire, provide timely and comprehensive mental health assessments, reports for sentencers, liaison with treatment providers and diversion in appropriate circumstances. CARS is provided by Avon and Wiltshire mental health partnership NHS Trust.

In 2009-10, a four month pilot at Bristol Magistrates’ Court saw a women’s support worker seconded to the CARS team in an effort to address low levels of engagement with the service by female defendants, who were three times more likely than male defendants to decline assessments. The pilot scheme found evidence of high levels of mental health need which were not being addressed, alongside other needs relating to physical health, domestic abuse, benefits and financial management. Over the course of the four months, women were referred to more than 60 services, including statutory and voluntary agencies. An evaluation concluded that women were more ready to engage with the women’s support worker and access the women’s support service because their multiple needs were addressed, and they were referred to appropriate women-specific (and generic) services in the community.

In 2012, a women-specific component of the Liaison and Diversion service was launched in partnership with Eden House women’s centre in Bristol, funded by Eden House via the Department of Health. Two part-time mental health nurses are employed by CARS and divide their time between custody suites and courts, undertaking assessments and running group work sessions at Eden House, some of the best-attended of the groups on offer at the centre. They also support the centre’s staff to develop their work with women with mental health needs. The CARS nurses act as the women’s lead for the Liaison and Diversion service, and provide advice and support to other practitioners.

In the first 12 months, 126 women were assessed in police custody and courts, almost half (64) of whom were eligible for referral to Eden House. Women who do not live within the centre’s catchment area can be referred on to primary and secondary-level mental health services.

In addition to supporting women who have been referred following assessment at the police station or court, Eden House also work with women who have been sentenced to attend by the court as part of a women-only specified activity requirement. This means that information on engagement with the centre at the pre-court stage can be included in reports to the court to inform sentencing decisions.

### Laura's story\*

Laura appeared at Bristol Magistrates Court having been charged with common assault and criminal damage. Her solicitor referred her to the Liaison and Diversion service (CARS) for a mental health assessment and because CARS are based at the court, Laura was assessed on the same day. The assessment concluded that Laura would benefit from support in many areas including mental health. With Laura's permission, a summary of the assessment was shared with magistrates to aid their decision making, alongside a recommendation that Eden House be considered as part of the sentence. The magistrates agreed, and Laura was sentenced to a community order with a requirement to attend Eden House as part of a 7 day female offender specified activity requirement (FOSAR).

Laura subsequently attended Eden House where she met the mental health practitioners once again and received support in a number of areas. After completing the initial 7 day statutory attendance, Laura decided to continue attending on a voluntary basis and continue her work with the mental health practitioners and staff at Eden House.

\*Not her real name

*For further information email [awp.CARSteam@nhs.net](mailto:awp.CARSteam@nhs.net)*

Early costings for Liaison and Diversion services outlined in the operating model developed by NHS England put the estimated salary costs of delivering a service in an urban setting with a population of 500,000, at between £640,000 and £728,250, depending on whether staff such as speech and language therapists, psychiatrists and substance misuse workers are already provided locally or would require additional funding.<sup>63</sup> Investing upfront in these services should deliver long term savings to the criminal justice system, through, for example, reductions in court appearances and fewer people in prison.

In January 2014, the government announced a further £25 million funding to test and evaluate the commissioning of a standard service specification for Liaison and Diversion in police stations and criminal courts in England in ten trial sites *“so that people with mental health and substance misuse problems get the right treatment as quickly as possible, which helps reduce reoffending.”*<sup>64</sup> Women-specific provision will form an integral element of the trial.

Roll-out of services across England by 2017 will be subject to outcomes achieved by the trial sites and the approval of a full business case by HM Treasury in 2015. Delivery against this commitment is overseen by a cross-government Liaison and Diversion Programme Board, led by the Department of Health. The *Care not Custody* coalition, led by the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Prison Reform Trust, is closely monitoring progress in this area, including outcomes for women.<sup>65</sup>

## Diversity of approaches

In addition to Liaison and Diversion services, a range of initiatives are being developed, piloted and evaluated for their effectiveness in providing women with routes out of offending and into services that will support them in getting their lives on track. A number of police forces have driven innovation in responses to women at their first point of entry in to the criminal justice system, enabling police officers to think *'referral or arrest?'*

### Ipswich-Suffolk's multi-agency strategy to support women to exit prostitution<sup>ii</sup>

Supporting women who have been involved in prostitution is a recognised pathway to reduced reoffending and improved outcomes for vulnerable women. Following the murder of several women working as prostitutes in Ipswich in 2006, a five year strategy was developed to help women in the area leave prostitution, prevent young people at risk of sexual exploitation from being drawn into it, and identify and assist victims of trafficking. Targeted interventions, which drew on needs assessments carried out by social care practitioners, were delivered by the multi-agency Make A Change team with the aim of providing support across all aspects of an individual's life to facilitate long-term change.

A comprehensive, independent evaluation by the University of East Anglia concluded that the support provided to women, particularly fast-track access to safe and stable housing and drug services, was successful in reducing arrests, prosecutions and time spent in prison. The strategy was successful in removing prostitution from the streets and eliminating kerb-crawling. An economic analysis of the programme found that it reduced criminal-justice related costs by about 55%, and evidenced savings of £2 for every £1 spent within the strategy.

The Suffolk Constabulary played a key role in developing and driving the initiative, and worked with the following partners in a systematic way to resource and manage it:

- Suffolk Primary Care Trust (Deputy Director, Public Health)
- Norfolk and Suffolk Probation Trust (Assistant Chief Officer)
- Ipswich Borough Council (Director, and Head of Community Safety)
- Suffolk County Council (Assistant Director, Social Inclusion and Diversity; Strategic Planning and Development Manager; Drug and Alcohol Team Co-ordinator)
- UK Border Agency
- Child protection services including the Suffolk Local Authority Safeguarding Children's Board
- Women's, housing and other voluntary organisations

*"It was housing, I have to say that started it all off you know. As soon as I'd got somewhere stable and warm I can take care of myself."* (Alice)

*"I was only working for drugs and now I'm not really using...I couldn't do it now."* (Becky)

For further information email [makeachangeteam@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:makeachangeteam@suffolk.gov.uk)

## Police-based triage

Several police forces have established triage schemes to assess individuals at the first point of entry to the criminal justice system, targeting, for example, drug or alcohol problems. The main aims of a triage scheme are:

- to avoid unnecessarily criminalising vulnerable people
- to ensure that prosecution is focused on relatively serious offences
- to increase the use of restorative justice, where appropriate.<sup>66</sup>

Triage schemes have proved effective in dealing with young people who offend<sup>67</sup> and are now being applied to adult women in some police force areas. Collaborative working and decision-making between dedicated triage workers (from local youth offending teams), the police and the Crown Prosecution Service is at the heart of these schemes, as are the partnerships between police and local women's services.

Triage schemes seek to address offending behaviour by:

- redirecting those who have committed low-level offending away from formal prosecution
- where appropriate, directing women into restorative justice or supportive interventions where they have evident needs (for example drug and alcohol problems) and/or meet specified criteria (for instance, it is a first offence, or shoplifting of goods below a certain value)
- expediting prosecution in cases where it is deemed necessary
- extending and improving collaborative decision-making between statutory partners.

*In my Police and Crime Plan, I said I wanted to see a renewed effort to refer low level offenders to appropriate treatment services, diverting them out of the criminal justice system and giving them the opportunity to change their behaviour.*

*I'm delighted the early results of the women's triage show this system is working as effectively as the youth triage introduced earlier. This means we will have less victims of crime in the future and I am working with the force to expand screening in police custody for all detainees.*

Matthew Grove, Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner<sup>68</sup>



### Hull's women's triage pathfinder<sup>iii</sup>

The Hull adult female triage pathfinder project was developed as part of the national Integrated Offender Management programme. It is delivered by a community safety partnership between Humberside Police, Hull Youth Justice Service, local drug services and the local women's centre run by Hull Together Women Project (TWP).

The programme aspires to assess all women in police custody and raise awareness of the scheme and the Together Women Project. Assessments address the nature of, and drivers to, each woman's offending, with the aim of identifying support needs and diversion opportunities. During this process an informal assessment is also made as to their suitability for diversion from the criminal justice system. Women who admit committing offences that have a gravity score of 1 or 2 (meaning that the offences are of a low level of seriousness; for example, criminal damage, drunk and disorderly, and theft up to a value of £100) are likely to be eligible. The scheme has recently been expanded to deal with female offenders outside custody suites with the aim of offering the same opportunities for support whilst reducing unnecessary detention.

This approach is based on the success of – and utilises the same staff as - the local youth justice triage scheme. Further support is provided by drug workers who conduct assessments alongside their core duties relating to substance misuse. All women brought into custody are given information about the Together Women Project, and those assessed as suitable are referred for tailored support. Women who don't meet the criteria for a triage disposal are offered voluntary referrals to Together Women. The emphasis is on providing resources and encouragement to women to take responsibility for their offending. Work is ongoing to expand the restorative element of the scheme, which is intended to dovetail with, and support, other restorative initiatives within the city of Hull.

Some early local media coverage of the project prompted criticism that it was discriminating against male offenders. The police response is to explain that their approach is based on evidence of women's particular vulnerabilities and the characteristics of their offending, and that they intend to expand the project to vulnerable men if its effectiveness is demonstrated. Early signs are that the project is having a positive impact, with fewer women being charged and a very low reoffending rate.

Between December 2012 and November 2013, 493 women were assessed, accounting for 36% of all women entering the custody suite. Of those who were eligible for an out of court disposal, more than half (135) were referred to TWP. A further 36 women were deemed unsuitable for triage and were prosecuted but attended TWP voluntarily. Engagement rates were high, with more than three quarters (98) of women attending the service as required, and only two further offences committed during the period. The scheme is subject to performance management which demonstrates significant and continuous improvement. An independent evaluation has been commissioned from Hull University.

*For further information email [Paul.Cunningham@humberside.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Paul.Cunningham@humberside.pnn.police.uk)*

### **Manchester pilot women's triage scheme<sup>iv</sup>**

A pilot triage scheme for women arrested and detained at three custody suites in Manchester was launched in November 2012, as a new way of dealing with adult women suspects. It utilises police bail to allow gender-specific needs assessments to be undertaken by women's community projects (WomenMATTA, Together Women Project and Eve's Space).

All women who are suitable for bail, have admitted the offence and are being considered for charge or a conditional caution fall within the scope of the pilot. Assessments are undertaken at the relevant community project wherever possible or at other premises as agreed. Where neither of these is possible, assessment can be undertaken at the police custody suite or in the cells prior to a court appearance.

The assessment covers the range of women's problems that are potentially linked to offending and risk of re-offending. The results of an assessment are intended, in the first instance, to inform the police decision on disposal. For first-time and low-level offenders, the outcome is likely to be a voluntary referral to appropriate treatment or support services, and/or the imposition of a simple caution or conditional caution. If the latter, the assessment will influence the conditions attached to the caution. Where prosecution is unavoidable because of the seriousness of the offence, the assessment is intended to help inform the subsequent sentencing decision, as well as the support that the woman thereafter receives in the community or in custody.

Over the period November 2012 to February 2013 the scheme made a total of 51 referrals, of which 22 were on a voluntary basis.

Building on the success of the scheme, a Greater Manchester-wide pathfinder project has been established, with the support of the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Probation Officer, as well as the courts and local authorities. Working across all local criminal justice agencies, the project will develop and test a gender-specific approach at all points of the criminal justice system, from the point of entry to post-sentence.

*For further information email [Katie@womeninprison.org.uk](mailto:Katie@womeninprison.org.uk)*

## Out of court disposals

*Out of court disposals are a valuable tool that the police use in dealing with low level offending.*

Rt Hon Damian Green MP, Minister of State for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims (2013)

Women-specific approaches or conditions in the delivery of out of court disposals have been shown to be effective.

Police can issue a conditional caution as an alternative to formal prosecution. Conditional cautions are a statutory disposal introduced for adults by the Criminal Justice Act 2003. The youth conditional caution was introduced by the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 and became nationally available following amendments made by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. A conditional caution is an out of court disposal with specific conditions attached to it – for example, to undertake restorative work or to engage with treatment or support services. The offender must comply or face arrest and may be prosecuted for the original offence. It should be noted that a caution appears on a person's criminal record and there are some concerns that individuals accepting a caution frequently do not receive any legal advice and may not fully understand the implications.

### Women specific conditional cautions

The women specific condition (WSC), developed as part of the conditional caution scheme by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in conjunction with the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), was piloted in 2008-09 in West Yorkshire and Merseyside. Women involved in the pilot were given a conditional caution with a rehabilitative condition requiring them to attend an assessment appointment at local Together Women (TWP) community centres in Leeds, Bradford or Liverpool. In complex cases this could take up to eight hours and involve several visits to the centre/project.<sup>69</sup> Following completion of the condition women offenders could attend the centre/project on a voluntary basis to engage in a programme and access courses and support aimed at preventing further offending. An evaluation of the pilot found evidence that women who engaged with the women's centres experienced a range of positive outcomes, such as improved self-esteem, money management and accommodation and reduced drinking. Three-quarters of women referred during the pilot period were *"considered by the police to have complied"*. However, there was a potential for net-widening as some women who were given the conditional caution might otherwise have received a simple caution with the option of self-referral to Together Women (TWP). In addition, conditions of compliance differed across the centres. One of the centres, for example, required women to engage with support beyond the initial assessment or face non-compliance procedures.<sup>70</sup>

The WSC is still an option for use by local police in partnership with women's services in their areas. Since November 2013, for example, Lancashire Police have operated a pilot in Blackburn which sees women whose offences meet the conditional caution criteria, and who agree to the scheme, attending an initial assessment and specified follow up interventions at the local women's centre. To ensure those whose offending precludes them from the WSC are also able to access the services provided at the women's centre, a voluntary referral process has been developed. Whilst this is currently limited to Blackburn, the intention is to expand the scheme to cover Lancashire as a whole.

## Fixed penalty notice

In addition to the conditional caution, other out of court disposals can facilitate access to support services for women who commit low-level minor offences. The Fixed Penalty Notice Fee Waiver Scheme, for instance, can be adapted to meet local need, though it is dependent on referral processes and local service provision. In partnership with NHS Yorkshire, for example, South Yorkshire Police have developed a scheme to address a variety of behaviour, including alcohol-related offences. Offenders issued with a notice who volunteer to attend and successfully complete an alcohol awareness session and a follow-up session with local alcohol services within 28 days of receiving it, have the fine waived.<sup>71</sup> A women-specific waiver scheme has been developed for use in Sheffield which sees women who have committed theft and criminal damage attending two sessions at the Together Women Project (TWP) (comprising an initial needs assessment with a key worker and a follow-up to draft a support and action plan). In 2011-12, 33 women were referred to Sheffield TWP as part of this scheme. All of the women successfully completed their two sessions and had their fine waived. Following formal completion, 80% of the women continued to engage voluntarily or have returned to the service since for further support.<sup>72</sup>

Following the success of the scheme, Humberside Police are considering adapting the model as part of the women's triage scheme in operation in Hull. In addition, Lancashire Police are hoping to develop a Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND) educational course<sup>73</sup> pilot scheme to be run in conjunction with Lancashire Women's Centres.

## Integrated Offender Management (IOM) for women

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) is a partnership-based crime reduction approach that aims to achieve maximum impact by tackling those offenders who commit the most crimes in a local area, or whose offending causes most damage to the local community. IOM provides an overarching framework for the identification, targeting and management of offenders. There is no one model of IOM and local arrangements will reflect local circumstances and priorities. Key partners include police, probation, local authorities, drug and alcohol services, youth offending services, prisons and the voluntary sector. Partners target resources by co-ordinating and sequencing interventions and enforcement activity to ensure that no offender falls between the gaps of existing programmes and approaches. The focus of local IOM arrangements includes both enforcement to ensure that offenders face up to the consequences of criminal behaviour and rehabilitation to address their needs.

*I feel I have changed. I have learnt that I need to think before I act. I have had a lot of help to sort out my debts, which has relieved a lot of stress. Staff are encouraging and supportive. I still have my freedom and my family.*

Anawim (2010) Footsteps to the future - An evaluation of the work of Anawim: Women working together

Whilst approaches differ from area to area, IOM is based on a set of underlying principles:

- local partners (criminal justice and non-criminal justice agencies) encourage the development of a multi-agency problem-solving approach by focussing on offenders, not offences
- all relevant local partners are involved in strategic planning, decision-making and funding choices
- offenders are provided with a clear understanding of what is expected of them
- making better use of existing programmes and governance
- all offenders at high risk of causing serious harm and/or reoffending are "in scope".<sup>74</sup>

IOM evolved out of the Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPO) programme which had a strong focus on male offenders. However, local IOM arrangements are now broadening their approaches and bringing other groups of offenders into scope, including women. A stocktake of IOM arrangements for women offenders is due to be published by the College of Policing (the professional body for policing) in late 2014. Early findings indicate that whilst most arrangements (89%) manage women, they account for just 3% of all offenders within local IOM arrangements. Two-thirds of IOM schemes report taking a gender-specific approach to dealing with women who offend, but for many this is limited to specified activity requirements (SARs).<sup>75</sup>

The Home Office, College of Policing and the Police National Lead for IOM DCC John Long are keen to build the capacity of local partners involved in IOM arrangements to respond more effectively to women offenders, by providing advice, information and practical tools. The Women Offender Forum, jointly led by the College of Policing and Home Office, brings together partners from areas across England and Wales who are planning and delivering services for women offenders, with representatives from key government departments and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The Forum aims to encourage the sharing of effective practice and innovation. It includes seven pathfinder areas that are leading the way in delivering innovative IOM approaches for women in trouble with the law, responding to their specific offending behaviour and support needs, as well as to local policing priorities.<sup>76</sup> The following profiles of three pathfinders are examples of the different partnership approaches that have developed locally.

#### **Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru women's pathfinder<sup>v</sup>**

IOM Cymru women's pathfinder is currently in Phase 1: gathering information, developing the evidence base around female offenders in Wales and an outline operating model. Work undertaken so far includes a crime, reoffending and needs profile analysis and scoping and mapping service provision.

In 2014-15 the project will develop a whole-system approach to criminal justice service provision for women across Wales. This will build on initiatives already undertaken in Gwent, such as female-only reporting sessions, an intensive alternative to custody (IAC) and a women's specified activity requirement (SAR), which helped to achieve a 30% reduction in the number of women receiving short custodial sentences.

By applying IOM principles to enhance the use of existing service provision through the reconfiguration of key agency resources and improved coordination of organisational activity, the pathfinder aims to:

- reduce the number of women arrested/ charged/ remanded
- reduce short term custodial sentences
- improve service provision for those in the community and being released from custody
- reduce reoffending and support desistance.

A range of pilot activity, including evaluation, will take place across sites in Wales, in three key areas:

- women's triage focussed on diversion from the criminal justice system
- a court model, building on the success of the intensive alternative to custody (IAC), to reduce the number of short custodial sentences and improve appropriate, targeted community sentencing
- taking a coordinated integrated multi-agency case management approach to the delivery of resettlement and community services, bringing together a wide range of statutory and non-statutory partners.

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## **Darlington and Durham IOMU Women's Diversion Project – Gateway to Change<sup>vi</sup>**

With the support of the Durham Chief Constable and Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust, a scheme is being piloted that enables adult women who have been charged with a theft offence to be diverted out of the criminal justice system. An admission of guilt is a precondition, and if the woman wishes to take part in the scheme she is bailed for 8 weeks. During this time an experienced woman mentor conducts a comprehensive needs assessment and arranges for a range of support services to address the woman's problems – from drug/alcohol counselling to housing support, debt and welfare benefits advice and relationship problems. If the woman engages with these services the case is closed and recorded as a restorative disposal. If at any point the case-worker feels the woman has disengaged, for example by failing to keep appointments without reasonable excuse, then the matter is referred back for further police action. Outcomes and reoffending rates are being monitored and the effectiveness of the scheme will be evaluated. Since it began in April 2013, 36 women have completed the scheme, three quarters of whom (75%) have not reoffended.

### **Marie's story\***

Marie has been in prison several times over the past few years for shoplifting and breaching the terms of community orders. The last time, on a six week sentence, she found out she was pregnant. Marie was subsequently arrested in Darlington for stealing a joint of meat to sell on for cash. Her solicitor told her about the Gateway to Change project and she agreed to participate. She attended all the appointments that were set as bail conditions, and wrote a letter of apology to the store she stole from, and has now successfully completed the scheme.

Marie's offending was a result of her drug use which spiralled when her mum died. Finding out she was pregnant was the catalyst for getting herself off drugs and re-establishing contact with her family. She says the diversion opportunity came at just the right time as she was ready to engage with probation and other services and take the opportunity to get her life onto a more even keel. She has appreciated having "*someone to talk to*" and being helped to find a flat for herself and her baby.

Before she began using drugs, Marie worked as a carer for 5 years, a job she enjoyed. She knows that her criminal record means a return to the caring profession will be hard but she would like to go back to work at some point after her baby is born. Meanwhile Marie is rebuilding her relationship with her father and sisters, with the support of her skilled and dedicated woman mentor.

\*Not her real name

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## Bedfordshire Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Exit programme<sup>vii</sup>

Launched in October 2013 in response to concerns about the impact of street-based prostitution on the local community, the Exit programme is designed to manage and support a selected cohort of women known to be involved in on-street sex work, and wider criminality, in Luton.

Aimed at *“supporting women to leave sex work and lead crime-free, healthy and happy lives”* the programme utilises the existing IOM structure, partnerships and resources, and additional funding from Luton Health and Wellbeing Board, to proactively target women involved in prostitution who have been identified as a result of police-led operations targeting kerb crawlers.

Whilst the processes and team structure are similar to other IOM programmes (such as the Prolific and Priority Offender (PPO) scheme), and staff can access existing services that are co-located, or work closely with, IOM (including accommodation, education, training and employment, mental and physical health and mentoring) its delivery model has been tailored to meet the individual needs of female service users. Each woman is allocated a lead professional, a single point of contact who has responsibility for coordinating activity, assessments and work with wider partners. All IOM partners, who include police, probation, community safety partnership and local substance misuse services, can make referrals into the scheme, which works with 10-13 women at any one time.

The team includes professionals with substance misuse expertise and a police officer who leads on intelligence gathering, targeting those who exploit women, and crime prevention. A small crisis budget is available to support *“bespoke costs associated with recovery and exiting.”*

In recognition of the *“potential risks of managing women at a location where male prolific offenders report”* and to encourage engagement, the IOM team is primarily outreach-based, meeting women at home or other convenient locations. A sanction strategy agreed locally will give police the option of arresting women who continue to visibly sell on-street sex, though *“those managed through IOM will be given opportunities to engage with support offered.”*

*For further information email Jackie.Holmes@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk*

## Court-based schemes

Some projects are based in the magistrates' court and play a key role in referring women to appropriate services, informing court disposals and sentencing outcomes or diverting them from court altogether.<sup>77</sup>

### **Together for Mental Wellbeing's women court liaison and outreach project, London<sup>viii</sup>**

The national mental health charity Together for Mental Wellbeing run a specialist service for male and female offenders with mental health and multiple needs operating in nine London magistrates' courts. As part of this service, they deliver a women-specific court liaison and outreach project, in partnership with London Probation Trust, the local NHS Mental Health Trusts and St Mungo's, at Thames, Westminster and Camberwell Green magistrates' courts. The project *"supports women offenders to access and engage with services in the community, as an alternative to custody, to improve their health, address their social care needs and reduce the risk of reoffending."*

The service undertakes screening of women appearing at court, liaises with agencies, provides reports and recommendations to the court and makes referrals to appropriate services, such as housing. It undertakes initial mental health assessments which identify whether further medical assessment is required, identifies unmet housing needs and provides referrals to bail accommodation to prevent unnecessary remands to custody and supports probation at the pre-sentence report stage to ensure that community sentences both address offending behaviour and health needs. The service also seeks to maintain a close relationship with members of the judiciary.

The project was initially based in Thames magistrates' court only, delivering a 5-day-a-week service at an annual cost of £55,000. In its first year of operation (2009-10) 112 women were assessed, with 57 being either bailed, released, or given a community disposal or hospital order following the recommendation of the practitioner. This work appeared to contribute to a significant reduction in the number of women from the local borough (Tower Hamlets) being received into HMP Holloway.

To date, 855 women have been assessed across the three courts, with six in ten identified as having a mental health need. One in eleven women assessed in court have been referred for further psychiatric assessment.

The project is regarded as best practice and has informed a published guide to working with women with health and wellbeing needs in the criminal justice system. An independent evaluation will be published in 2014.

In January 2014 it was announced that Together for Mental Wellbeing, working in partnership with three local health trusts, will lead the Liaison and Diversion trial in London which will operate across three magistrate's courts and a number of police stations. The trial will have a particular focus on reaching women.

*For further information email [eva-roussou@together-uk.org](mailto:eva-roussou@together-uk.org)*



## The role of women's community services<sup>78</sup>

***Community provision for women offers a route for diverting vulnerable women from crime and tackling the root causes of offending.***

House of Commons Justice Select Committee (2013)

Women's community services are mostly delivered by local voluntary organisations, with funding from a variety of local and central government and charitable sources. They often take the form of one-stop-shops offering a range of practical and emotional support and supervision to women (who may have been referred by other agencies, have self-referred, or attend as part of court orders) in women-only spaces. Such one-stop-shops provide integrated, individualised support services, which may include:

- parenting support
- help with debt, benefits advice and support with finances
- support for escaping violent relationships
- help to find safe and affordable housing
- substance misuse treatment programmes
- access to mental health treatment and social care
- offending behaviour programmes, including community payback and specified activity requirements
- supervision of women subject to court orders
- mentoring
- peer support
- educational courses
- voluntary work experience or leisure activities
- help to find paid work
- needs-assessments undertaken in conjunction with police and probation.<sup>79</sup>

Some centres deliver services in partnership with police, probation and health, others with local authorities, drawing funding from different budgets and workstreams. Anawim women's centre in Birmingham, for example, delivered a two year Department of Health-funded project piloting a mental health alternative to custody aimed at bridging gaps between statutory services.<sup>80</sup> Service level agreements between women's centres and local police forces, and steering groups bringing together diverse service providers, are examples of strategic partnerships which have developed locally to improve multi-agency working between statutory services like police, probation and the courts, children's services and women's centres.<sup>81</sup>

### **Beth Centre, London Borough of Lambeth<sup>ix</sup>**

Commissioned by Lambeth Council, jointly funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and Lambeth, and delivered by Women in Prison and Eaves, the Beth Centre is a new initiative targeted at women at risk of entering, or involved in, the criminal justice system. Delivering holistic support that addresses the drivers to women's offending, such as domestic and sexual violence, it provides services and interventions such as peer mentoring, through the gate support, prostitution outreach, childcare and a crèche, in a women-only space. Bringing together the probation, youth offending, prison in-reach and Integrated Offender Management (IOM) workstreams, it will deliver one referral pathway and service for women from the first point of contact. Its aims include reducing reoffending, diverting women from the criminal justice system and from custody, and preventing family breakdown as a result of imprisonment or offending

*For further information email [referral@bethcentre.org.uk](mailto:referral@bethcentre.org.uk)*

## **ADVANCE Minerva, Tri-Borough<sup>x</sup>**

ADVANCE Minerva women's centre in London is partnering with Tri-Borough, one of four whole place community budget pilots, in the delivery of a new service aimed at reducing women's reoffending. Part of a wider service targeting high reoffending rates of short sentenced prisoners, it was decided early on to commission a bespoke service for women offenders in recognition of the specific needs of this group.

Funded by the Tri-Borough councils (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, City of Westminster and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea), and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), Minerva will work with women via two pathways: providing voluntary support to women referred following assessment in Tri-Borough custody suites; and support and advocacy to short sentenced female prisoners whilst in prison and on release.

Key workers provide specialist assessments, liaison with statutory or voluntary services for women already engaged with statutory services, referrals to specialist services such as substance misuse and mental health for those who need them, and through the gate advocacy, to ensure women released from prison are engaged with local support services that will aid resettlement.

Alongside this, a specific service for young adult women, funded as part of Barrow Cadbury Trust's T2A pathway initiative, will enable Advance Minerva to work with approximately 150 18-24 year olds who have been stopped by the police for anti-social behaviour or minor offences, arrested, made subject to an ASBO, or have been in custody. In support of the scheme, police in Tri-Borough custody suites will receive gender-awareness training.

*For further information email [E.Butler@advanceadvocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:E.Butler@advanceadvocacyproject.org.uk)*

## **Measuring the impact of women's services**

Evaluations of women's community services, particularly their impact on reducing reoffending, have been hampered by lack of investment in monitoring systems, and the difficulty of single services with small numbers of women offenders demonstrating a statistical impact on reconviction rates. In an effort to address this data deficit, the government has committed to an analysis of one year of data from probation trusts in summer 2014, which will provide *"an indication of reoffending rates for the women referred to community services"*.<sup>82</sup>

***As soon as I walked in here [a women's centre] I knew that it was alright to feel what I was feeling because I wasn't the only one. Obviously there's lot of women that come in here with all different types of situations and you're not going to get judged...I felt that as soon as I walked in.***

Radcliffe and Hunter (2013) The development and impact of community services for women: an evaluation

There is already some local evidence of positive outcomes that suggest these services support desistance:

- the specified activity requirement delivered by Birmingham's Anawim centre has a 1% reoffending rate<sup>83</sup>
- Together Women Projects (TWP) across the North West report reoffending rates of between 3-6%<sup>84</sup>

- an early evaluation of the Evolve project delivered by Calderdale WomenCentre found that women engaged with the service had a 3.2% reoffending rate<sup>85</sup>
- women residing at Adelaide House approved premises in Liverpool experienced a statistically significant reduction in reoffending.<sup>86</sup>

Whilst not directly comparable, one year reoffending rates for women given generic community orders and custodial sentences are significantly higher (33% and 51% respectively – for women serving the shortest prison sentences the latter increases to 62%).<sup>87</sup>

In addition, the Women’s Justice Taskforce, reporting on the economic case for reforming women’s justice, found “*a substantial and increasing body of evaluation evidence that points to the effectiveness of community approaches for women offenders*”.<sup>88</sup>

Existing women’s services that have been funded by their local probation trust will continue to receive funding from community rehabilitation companies (CRCs) until March 2015. After this date, funding of this aspect of women’s services will depend on the commissioning decisions taken in each contract package area for offender services.<sup>89</sup>

### **Inspire Liaison and Diversion Service, Sussex<sup>xi</sup>**

The Inspire project, delivered through Brighton Women’s Centre, is a partnership with four other women’s organisations across Brighton.

Inspire is a formal partner in the Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Service delivered through health, police, probation and the voluntary sector across Sussex, accepting referrals from criminal justice liaison nurses based in police stations and the courts. The service supports women with mental health needs, substance misuse issues, learning disabilities and other social needs to reduce their offending. Many do not meet the threshold for statutory mental health support but are affected by anxiety and depression.

In the six months from April 2013, 37 women had been referred to the service by the criminal justice liaison nurse. Whilst referrals are made on a voluntary basis and attendance at Inspire is not mandatory, most women engage to some degree, whether by attending an initial needs assessment or by engaging more fully with the services offered. When a woman referred through Liaison and Diversion has subsequently committed an offence and appeared in court, information on engagement has been included in pre-sentence reports.

Inspire caseworkers are currently only able to provide holistic direct personal support to women from Brighton, with those living elsewhere in Sussex initially supported by an Inspire liaison coordinator. Women across the county will soon have access to an Inspire caseworker based at one of four service hubs which are opening across Sussex in 2014. In addition it is hoped that the range of professionals who can make referrals into the service will be expanded.

Inspire also work with women who are subject to statutory orders, delivering a Specified Activity Requirement (SAR) which local courts can attach to a generic community order when sentencing women. Since April 2013, three women who were originally referred to Inspire through the criminal justice Liaison and Diversion service have been given Inspire SARs, where the value of the work initiated through Liaison and Diversion can be built on during their engagement with the women’s centre under the SAR.

*For further information email [sophie.gibson@womenscentre.org.uk](mailto:sophie.gibson@womenscentre.org.uk)*

## Cost-effectiveness of women's services

Research by new economics foundation (nef) on five women's services concluded that they return a social value of between £3.40-£6.70 for every £1 invested. In addition, they bring about improvements for their users across four aspects of well-being:

- *meaning and purpose* - feeling that what you do in life is worthwhile and valued by others
- *supportive relationships* - the extent and quality of interactions in close relationships with family, friends, and others who provide support
- *optimism* - feeling optimistic about your future
- *autonomy* - feeling free to do what you want and having the time to do it.<sup>90</sup>

Outcomes of these kinds can significantly contribute to reductions in reoffending over time. Measuring reoffending, however, is inherently problematic; it is a long process and especially difficult with a small group of offenders with complex needs. As the National Audit Office has noted (2013):

*Measuring reductions in reoffending fails to recognise distance travelled by individuals and wider benefits to society such as the improved health of the users of women's centres.*<sup>91</sup>

Nonetheless most women's centres do include reduced offending as a measure of their effectiveness, and it features as a spoke in the Outcomes Star<sup>92</sup> widely used by centres to measure distance travelled by women accessing their services, and "by others to assess the effectiveness of women's community services",<sup>93</sup> including nef, whose report *Women's Community Services: a wise commission* was co-funded by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

*Since my involvement with the project I have been able to stop taking the drugs and am not even on a script anymore. My life has stabilised and I have been able to move from a hostel to my own flat. I have also been able to access some courses...and an employability qualification...They have filled me with the confidence...and given me the tools to be able to get on with my life.*

Anawim (2013) An Untold Struggle

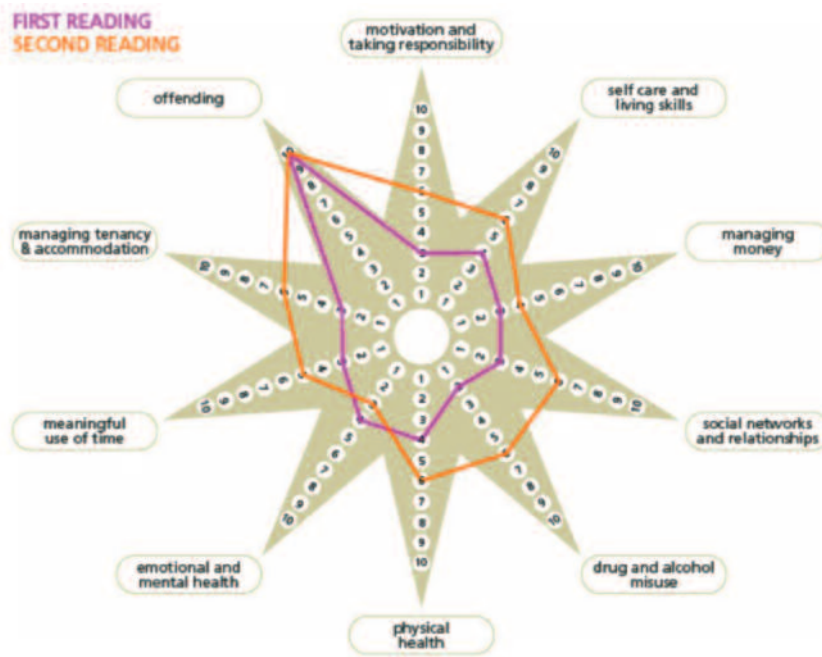


Figure 2: Outcomes star

## Conclusion

In researching this briefing we've been both impressed and inspired by the number and range of innovative partnerships between police, local women's services and other agencies that are working together to provide constructive options for women involved in low-level offending. There are models of good practice to build on, demonstrating positive outcomes for women, their children and communities of an integrated early intervention approach. However, we need a more even spread of these timely, cost-effective, women-specific responses and we hope this briefing will inform and encourage their adoption across the country.



## Recommendations

Improved and cost-effective outcomes for women require co-operative working between criminal justice, health and social care and local community services. Local leadership is necessary to implement this, which can come from a range of different individuals and organisations including, for example, Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables; Directors of Adult Social Services and Directors of Public Health; Health and Wellbeing Boards; the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies; Clinical Commissioning Groups; NHS England Health and Justice leads, Welsh Government Offender Health leads and Community Safety Partnerships. Many of the recommendations below are designed to encourage collaborative funding of, and partnership working between, these services.

### 1. Funding for women's services:

- Central government should fund a national network of women's centres, projects and services as these are critical to improved outcomes for women in contact with the criminal justice system.
- The funding framework or formula for these centres must be sufficiently flexible to avoid the criminal justice system being the primary gateway through which vulnerable women can access appropriate support.

### 2. Mapping local needs:

- Criminal justice, health and social care agencies should ensure that data concerning the particular needs of women offenders and women at risk of offending are reflected in their local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and given sufficient prominence in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other local plans and commissioning strategies, such as the Police and Crime Plan and Community Safety Plan.
- Local strategies should take account of women's housing needs, parenting support needs and the needs of children whose mothers are in the criminal justice system.
- The link that frequently exists between women's experiences of domestic violence and sexual abuse and their offending behaviour, should be taken into account when designing local service provision for women victims and offenders.
- All agencies should ensure good coordination and gender monitoring, analysis and evaluation.

### 3. Screening and assessment of individual needs:

- The particular needs of women, and the needs of their children and other dependants, should be routinely screened for and, where appropriate, assessed, at key points of entry to the criminal justice system.
- Local partners (e.g. health, police, probation and women's services) should agree a common screening tool to facilitate information sharing and service planning and delivery.
- Protocols and good practice should ensure that as far as possible a woman only has to provide key information or give an account of her experience and needs once.

#### **4. Pooled budgets:**

- Aligned or pooled budgets, for example through the Whole Place Community Budgets programme in England and through Local Service Boards in Wales, and co-commissioning should be used to develop specific provision for women.
- Pooled budgets are key to ensuring such provision can focus on prevention as well as support for women offenders, whether offered on a voluntary basis or as part of the terms of a conditional caution or a court order.

#### **5. Liaison and Diversion services:**

- The particular needs of women suspects and offenders should form part of the training for all Liaison and Diversion staff.
- Liaison and Diversion services should routinely offer women-specific provision, and build links with local women's service providers.
- Outcomes for women in the ten trial sites should be carefully evaluated to ensure that the resulting standard service specification is gender-sensitive.

#### **6. Triage and Integrated Offender Management (IOM):**

- Building on the success of pathfinders, every police force should consider developing a triage scheme specifically for women and every IOM partnership should consider developing women-specific approaches.
- Outcomes for women should be monitored and evaluated.
- Liaison and Diversion services, police triage and Integrated Offender Management arrangements operating in the same geographical area should work co-operatively to ensure the most appropriate response to women.

#### **7. Probation services and local criminal justice partnerships:**

- The particular needs of women offenders, and the two women-specific pathways to reducing reoffending, should form part of the training for National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company staff.
- A women's lead officer/ champion should be appointed within each National Probation Service region and Community Rehabilitation Company.
- Probation services and local criminal justice partnerships should ensure that relevant data on women, including that gathered by Liaison and Diversion services and police triage and IOM arrangements, informs local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies, and integrated local commissioning.
- Sentencers and court legal advisors should be regularly briefed on the availability of women's services and interventions in the local community.
- Information on outcomes for women sentenced to community orders which include women-specific requirements, such as attendance at a women's centre, should be shared at court user group meetings.



## Directory of women's services<sup>94</sup>

### Women-specific services and resources

#### Women's Breakout

Women's Breakout is the representative body for a national network of women-centered services offering effective gender specific community alternatives to custody. It publishes a directory of services and provides a point of contact for a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations interested in researching and evaluating integrated, women's community solutions.

[www.womensbreakout.org.uk/](http://www.womensbreakout.org.uk/)

#### Women's Resource Centre

The Women's Resource Centre (WRC) is the largest national umbrella body for women's charities, with over 500 members that provide a wide range of services to women. WRC has information resources on its website that support the development and delivery of services for women, and promote effective partnerships, including briefings on the value of women-only services, partnership working, monitoring and evaluation.

<http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/>

### One-stop-shops

The following are examples of one-stop-shops which provide a wide range of holistic services to women at risk of offending and those in the criminal justice system, including drug and alcohol support, debt and benefits advice, parenting skills, childcare and counselling. For a full list of one-stop-shops and other specialist women's services visit the Women's Resource Centre or Women's Breakout (above). See also the government's stocktake of women's services for offenders in the community.

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/252837/stocktake-wcs.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252837/stocktake-wcs.pdf)

Together Women Project (TWP) has centres in Bradford, Hull, Leeds and Sheffield and provides in-reach services at HMP New Hall.

[www.togetherwomen.org](http://www.togetherwomen.org)

WomensCentre operate in Calderdale and Kirklees.

[www.womencentre.org.uk](http://www.womencentre.org.uk)

Anawim supports women and their children from a centre in Balsall Heath, Birmingham and in the community.

[www.anawim.co.uk](http://www.anawim.co.uk)

Brighton Women's Centre is the only holistic women-centre organisation providing services to women in Brighton and Hove.

[www.brightonwomenscentre.org.uk](http://www.brightonwomenscentre.org.uk)

Eden House provides day and outreach services to women in Bristol.

[www.edenhouseproject.org](http://www.edenhouseproject.org)

ISIS provides services to women who are aged 18+ and live in the Gloucestershire area.

<http://nelsontrust.com/community-based-services/isis>

ADVANCE Minerva, based in West London, provide services to women across the London Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Brent.

[www.advanceadvocacyproject.org.uk](http://www.advanceadvocacyproject.org.uk)

Jagonari women's educational resource centre is a community centre based in East London.

[www.jagonari.org.uk](http://www.jagonari.org.uk)

## Mental health

Together for Mental Wellbeing is a national mental health charity whose forensic mental health practitioners deliver court liaison services for women appearing at Thames, Westminster and Camberwell Green magistrates' courts in London.

[www.together-uk.org/our-mental-health-services/criminal-justice-mental-health/](http://www.together-uk.org/our-mental-health-services/criminal-justice-mental-health/)

Their guide to working with women with health and wellbeing needs in the criminal justice system for criminal justice agencies and service providers is available here:

[www.together-uk.org/guide-launched-to-ensure-womens-health-and-wellbeing-needs-are-not-missed-by-criminal-justice-staff-2/](http://www.together-uk.org/guide-launched-to-ensure-womens-health-and-wellbeing-needs-are-not-missed-by-criminal-justice-staff-2/)

WISH Community Link provides gender-sensitive support and services to women with mental health needs in their journey through the criminal justice and mental health systems and into the community. They have two regional offices, one in Liverpool for the North and the Midlands, and in London for the South.

[www.womenatwish.org.uk](http://www.womenatwish.org.uk)

## Domestic violence

Women's Aid support a network of 350 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK, are the leading specialist training provider for tackling and preventing domestic and sexual violence, and run a free 24-hour domestic violence helpline – 0808 2000 247.

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

Respect develop, deliver and support effective services for male and female perpetrators of domestic violence and young people using violence and abuse at home and in intimate relationships.

[www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)

Eaves work with women who are vulnerable through experiences of violence. They have specialisms in the areas of trafficking, exiting prostitution and sexual violence, and also offer housing and employment services. The Poppy Project was set up in 2003 to provide high-quality support, advocacy and accommodation to trafficked women.

[www.eavesforwomen.org.uk](http://www.eavesforwomen.org.uk)

[www.eavesforwomen.org.uk/about-eaves/our-projects/the-poppy-project](http://www.eavesforwomen.org.uk/about-eaves/our-projects/the-poppy-project)

## Prostitution/ sexual exploitation

women@thewell is a women-only drop-in centre in London's Kings Cross dedicated to supporting women with a range of complex needs, including those involved in street-based prostitution.

[www.watw.org.uk](http://www.watw.org.uk)

Anawim's street outreach service operates at least once a week, going out into the areas where women involved in street-based prostitution are working, offering them an introduction to the women's centre, a hot drink and a chat. Women are provided with information about other services that are available in the area.

[www.anawim.co.uk/outreach.html](http://www.anawim.co.uk/outreach.html)

The Cyrenians' Gap project provides safe, confidential and supportive services and help to access mainstream services to women who are exposed to sexual exploitation, women working in the escort industry and migrant women in Tyneside.

[www.thecyrenians.org/NR/exeres/610235BC-3F8A-45E6-9DE5-B75C955B6936.htm](http://www.thecyrenians.org/NR/exeres/610235BC-3F8A-45E6-9DE5-B75C955B6936.htm)

## Housing

Re-Unite is a nationwide housing and support project to reunite and resettle families when a mother is released from prison. It works with women in prison and on release, providing individual, tailored support and help in finding and securing settled housing. It has recently been evaluated and the reports are on its website.

[www.re-unite.org.uk](http://www.re-unite.org.uk)

The North London Women's Hostel run by St Mungo's is a 29-bed service working with local agencies to provide intensive holistic support designed to help women make a sustainable recovery from homelessness and move towards independent living.

[www.mungos.org](http://www.mungos.org)

## Employment, skills and training

Working Chance restorative recruitment is a London-based charitable social enterprise that helps women with criminal convictions into employment.

[www.workingchance.org](http://www.workingchance.org)

SmartWorks provide high quality interview clothes, styling advice and interview training to out-of-work women on low incomes in London. They accept referrals from individual prisons and probation services, as well as voluntary organisations working with women who have offended.

[www.smartworks.org.uk](http://www.smartworks.org.uk)

Clean Break is a women-only theatre company that also provides high-quality theatre-based courses, qualifications, training opportunities and specialist support for women offenders in prison and the community.

[www.cleanbreak.org.uk](http://www.cleanbreak.org.uk)

## Mentoring

Pecan's Moving On programme supports young women from across a number of London boroughs who are aged 15-22 and leaving custody. Mentors provide practical and emotional support covering issues like housing, finance, drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, family, work, education, training and anything else needed to live a settled life outside of prison.

[www.pecan.org.uk/our-projects/moving-on](http://www.pecan.org.uk/our-projects/moving-on)

Key Changes is a peer mentoring scheme taking a women-centred approach to address offending and resettlement for women in prison and on release. Based in Sheffield, it operates across Barnsley, Sheffield and Rotherham.

[www.keychangesuwp.org.uk/](http://www.keychangesuwp.org.uk/)

Catch 22's women's mentoring service is delivered in partnership with London Probation Trust and provides practical and emotional support to women on community orders. Mentors provide tailored support around housing, money and benefits, mental health and self-esteem and healthy relationships.

[www.catch-22.org.uk/Service/Female-Mentoring-Service-London](http://www.catch-22.org.uk/Service/Female-Mentoring-Service-London)

Open Gate is a mentoring scheme providing support to women leaving HMP Low Newton and returning to the north-east. It aims to aid resettlement and reduce the risk of reoffending by supporting women to access housing and maintain tenancies, getting to appointments and accessing services.

[www.opengate-ne.org.uk/](http://www.opengate-ne.org.uk/)

Together Women Project has developed a gender-specific mentoring toolkit to help others develop mentoring programmes for female offenders in prison and in the community.

[www.togetherwomen.org/mentoring](http://www.togetherwomen.org/mentoring)

## Guidance

Crown Prosecution Service: Diverting women offenders and the Women Specific Condition (within the National Conditional Cautioning framework)

[www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d\\_to\\_g/diverting\\_women\\_offenders\\_and\\_the\\_women\\_specific\\_condition\\_\(within\\_the\\_national\\_conditional\\_cautioning\\_framework\)/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/diverting_women_offenders_and_the_women_specific_condition_(within_the_national_conditional_cautioning_framework)/)

Home Office: A Review of effective practice in responding to prostitution (2011)

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97778/responding-to-prostitution.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97778/responding-to-prostitution.pdf)

Ministry of Justice: Diverting women away from crime: a guide to the women's community projects (2010)

[www.cps.gov.uk/legal/assets/uploads/files/diverting\\_women\\_away\\_from\\_crime.pdf](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/assets/uploads/files/diverting_women_away_from_crime.pdf)

Ministry of Justice: A distinct approach: a guide to working with women offenders (2012)

[www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/noms/2012/guide-working-with-women-offenders.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/noms/2012/guide-working-with-women-offenders.pdf)

Women's Aid: Supporting women offenders who have experienced domestic violence (2011)

[www.womensaid.org.uk/core/core\\_picker/download.asp?id=3409](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/core/core_picker/download.asp?id=3409)

Department of Health: Mainstreaming gender and women's mental health – implementation guidance (2003)

[www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_4072069.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4072069.pdf)

Department of Health: Identifying and supporting victims of human trafficking - guidance for health staff and interactive learning resource (2013)

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/187041/A5\\_Human\\_Trafficking\\_Guidance\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/187041/A5_Human_Trafficking_Guidance_leaflet.pdf)

[www.e-lfh.org.uk/projects/human-trafficking-e-learning/](http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/projects/human-trafficking-e-learning/)

Ministry of Justice: Support for victims of human trafficking – available in 11 languages (2013)

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-victims-of-human-trafficking](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-victims-of-human-trafficking)

NHS Confederation: Health and Wellbeing Boards and criminal justice system agencies – building effective engagement (2012)

[www.nhsconfed.org/Publications/Documents/criminal-justice-system-agencies.pdf](http://www.nhsconfed.org/Publications/Documents/criminal-justice-system-agencies.pdf)

## Other relevant publications

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade (2014) *Shifting the burden: Inquiry to assess the operation of the current legal settlement on prostitution in England and Wales* London: APPG

<http://appgprostitution.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/shifting-the-burden.pdf>

Bell, H., Gukhool, A. and Hean, S. (2009) 'Women defendants appearing in Bristol magistrates' court – a four-month pilot study', Nacro conference presentation

Bradley, K. (2009) *The Bradley Report: Lord Bradley's review of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system* London: DH

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This Prison Reform Trust briefing presents the case for more widespread provision of targeted support to divert women out of the criminal justice system where appropriate.

It highlights the specific needs of women, profiles existing initiatives and partnerships that seek to deal more effectively with their offending, and provides links to other useful resources. It should be of interest to those with policy, funding, commissioning and service delivery responsibilities.

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