



Ministry
of Justice

Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan

March 2023

Protecting and advancing the principles of justice

Introduction

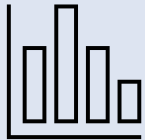
- The [Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan](#) was published in January. This builds on the Female Offender Strategy of 2018.
- It is – in part – a response to criticisms from the NAO, PAC and JSC that the Strategy did not contain specific commitments.
- Looking to ensure that there is a gender-specific and trauma-informed approach to all contact with women in or at risk of contact with the CJS.
- The Plan covers the period of the Spending Review 2022-25. Delays in publication mean that much of the work outlined in the Plan is already underway.
- The Plan retains the 3 objectives of the Female Offender Strategy and adds a fourth on better outcomes on resettlement. The objectives are:
 - ❑ **Fewer women entering the justice system and reoffending**
 - ❑ **Fewer women serving short custodial sentences with a greater proportion managed successfully in the community**
 - ❑ **Better outcomes for women in custody**
 - ❑ **Protecting the public through better outcomes for women on release**
- Governance - ministerial board, Women in the CJS Experts Group, cross-departmental Delivery Board, Female Offender Minority Ethnic Working Group (FOME).

1. Fewer women entering the justice system and reoffending

In some cases, a women's offending could have been prevented through earlier intervention, including through diversion from the criminal justice system and into support. Effective intervention and diversion requires a joined-up response by a wide range of government departments and statutory agencies, particularly the police and health service, who will often encounter vulnerable women at risk of offending. Services need to be alert and responsive to the trauma, including domestic abuse and sexual violence, that many of these women have faced.

Some of the key commitments under this objective:

- **Bring statutory and voluntary partners together** to address the needs of this group of women, diverting them away from offending behaviour and reducing demand on services. As part of this we have launched a competition for up to £21m multi-year grant funding to support vital community services for women, and up to £3.6m to incentivise local partnership working.
- Work with Home Office, College of Policing, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), to ensure **police forces** understand and respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable women, including developing a tactical toolkit by March 2023, and review the use and effectiveness of Out of Court Disposals (OOCs).
- Work with police and Liaison and Diversion (L&D) partners on better **identifying and diverting** women out of the criminal justice system into support, where appropriate, and publish guidance to support women to understand what happens at each stage of the criminal justice system reflecting the specific needs of those from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Work with **non-police prosecutors** to explore options for addressing the high number of women prosecuted for offences such as TV licence evasion.



To monitor progress under objective one we will measure:

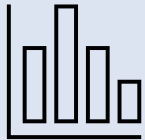
- No. of women first time entrants into the CJS (first time cautions, first time sentencing)
- Number of women arrested across England and Wales
- No. of women prosecuted for offences where they are overrepresented (theft, TV licence evasion, truancy, benefit fraud)
- No. of women dealt with via use of Out of Court Disposals (OOCs)

2. Fewer women serving short custodial sentences with a greater proportion managed successfully in the community

We want to see more women managed effectively in the community, where the offence committed allows it, with women remaining closer to their families and support networks and engaging with rehabilitative support to prevent re-offending. To achieve this, courts need more information about the particular issues faced by the women before them, including those of ethnic minority backgrounds, and the availability and suitability of different sentencing options.

Some of the key commitments under this objective:

- Develop, deliver and maintain briefing materials that support regular information sharing sessions, starting in early 2023, for the **judiciary and all those who work in courts**.
- Commence **first hearing bail report pilots** in Cardiff and Ipswich magistrates' courts by the end of 2022 to ensure those courts receive advice from the Bail Information Service (BIS) on all women defendants and remove the power of courts to **remand** defendants to prison for their own protection solely on the grounds of mental health.
- Explore options for increasing **residential provision** that could be used as part of a robust community order.
- Trial **Problem Solving Courts**, including one site in Birmingham that will focus exclusively on women, evaluate the **Pre-Sentencing Report** pilot, and complete the national roll out of **Community Sentence Treatment Requirement** sites including bespoke women's pathways.



To monitor progress under objective two we will measure:

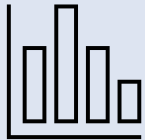
- Sentencing outcomes (%) for women, incl. % sentenced to immediate custody and receiving a community order
- Number of women sentenced to custody for <6/12 months
- Number of sentenced women received into custody on a sentence <6/12months
- % of female defendants bailed/remanded in custody
- % sentencing outcomes for women remanded in custody

3. Better outcomes for women in custody

We are committed to providing appropriate support and environments that will enable women to address the root causes of their offending behaviour so that they pay their debt to society, are rehabilitated and will not re-offend upon their release. We aim to reduce levels of self-harm, test a bespoke approach to managing young women, improve family relationships, giving support for pregnant women and mothers in custody, and take action to address additional disparities arising from ethnicity, faith, culture, or language needs.

Some of the key commitments under this objective:

- Improve **safety** for all women in custody and reduce the severity and instances of **self-harm** through the expansion of therapeutic service, exploring options to reduce the need for women to move, developing a Young Women's (18-25) Strategy, developing and test a bespoke approach to managing young women in two prisons, and developing and pilot an enhanced approach to supporting women in their first weeks in custody.
- Professionalise the prison and probation **workforce** through training, guidance and the introduction of new roles. This will include a pilot for up to three social workers in women's prisons to support mothers in custody, increasing uptake of Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) places, and introducing additional family engagement workers in prisons.
- Provide women in custody with equivalent **health care** to that which they would receive in the community, agreeing next steps for taking forward the recommendations of the joint NHS England and HMPPS Women's Prisons Health and Social Care Review, introducing health and perinatal managers in closed women's prisons, and developing operational guidance to enable staff to understand better the relationship needs of ethnic minority women.
- Ensure that the women's **prison estate** offers decent accommodation that supports rehabilitation, continuing work to deliver new facilities in women's prisons, through a combination of Open and Closed places.



To monitor progress under objective three we will measure:

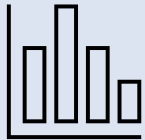
- Self-harm rate per 1,000 in female establishments
- Number of self-harm incidents per individual
- % of female prison population who self-harm

4. Protecting the public through better outcomes for women on release

In order to reduce reoffending rates for women leaving custody, we must focus on what we know works: a home, a job and access to treatment for substance misuse. Through this Delivery Plan we will build on wider work to reduce reoffending by focusing on the particular issues that women face. We will ensure that the support that women receive in custody to overcome their complex needs continues into the community.

Some of the key commitments under this objective:

- Raise the level of numeracy, literacy, skills, and qualifications of women so that they are more likely to secure **jobs or apprenticeships** on release, rolling out Employment hubs, Employment Advisory Boards, Employment Leads, and Banking & ID Administrators to prisons; and holding an employment conference to increase awareness of the different challenges that women face when leaving prison.
- Enable all female prisoners to develop personal **learning** plans, and develop curriculum guidance to ensure it is gender responsive, trauma informed and include provision that supports prisoners to develop wellbeing, confidence, motivation and resilience building skills, introduce Support Managers for those with additional learning needs.
- Ensure that a minimum 10% of beds delivered through the **Community Accommodation Service** (Tiers 1, 2 and 3) are allocated to women in women-only properties so that they feel safe, especially those with backgrounds of abuse, and recruit up to 9 F.T.E Strategic Housing Specialists across women's prisons.
- Develop a **resettlement passport** that provides women with the key information and services that they need to adjust to lead a crime-free life to address known drivers of repeat offending.
- Ensure support is in place so prison leavers can continue with the **substance misuse or mental health treatment** they need upon release, including recruiting Health and Justice Coordinators to all Probation Regions, working with NHS RECONNECT to continue roll-out, and increasing the number of laptops and licences to facilitate virtual initial appointments with community drug treatment providers.



To monitor progress under objective four we will measure:

- Proven reoffending rate for women
- % on women in employment six weeks post release
- % of female prison leavers in accommodation three months post release from prison
- No. of women Released on Temporary Licence (ROTL)
- No. of women recalled to custody
- Number of women released on Home Detention Curfew

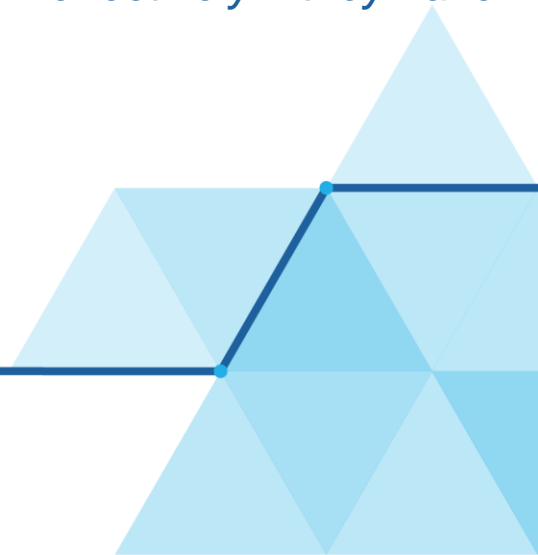


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The Concordat

“We commit to work together to improve outcomes for women who have already encountered the criminal justice system or are at risk of doing so. These women, often with multiple and complex needs specific to their sex, include some of the most vulnerable in our society.

We will work together, both nationally and locally, to address the needs of these women, preventing crises from happening or dealing with them effectively if they have happened already.”



What have we done?

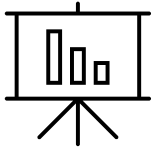
We published a Concordat Progress report alongside the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan. The Concordat will now be carried forward through the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan.

We have completed the specific activities that were set out in the Concordat's national action plan including:

- *Launching a grant funding competition of up to £1.5m to support the delivery of Whole System Approaches. This funding is available to help drive forward the development of local Whole System Approaches*
- *Engaging with national and local partners to develop a series of events on WSA best practice, the first of which have taken place in January 2023.*
- *Undertaking a survey of co-signatories and agencies and found that whilst the majority have trauma-informed training, there are still some gaps which the MoJ is supporting to fill.*

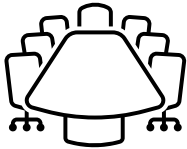
However, there is still more that we can do to build on the progress made to drive forward local integration of services (or Whole System Approaches, WSA's) for women in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

There are three areas of focus for the year ahead:



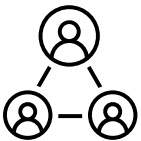
Supporting local integration fund areas

To ensure that we support funded areas and are able to measure their success, we will need to further develop our evidence base of what works. We will bring together funded areas to share data and evaluation and collectively identify ways to build a stronger evidence base.



Promoting WSA best practice

As we will be funding fewer areas than anticipated, there is a need to explore how we can utilise lessons learned to support the development of WSAs nationally. We will host events targeted at specific areas of interest, e.g. sharing data and working with local and national partners, and develop further Lessons Learned materials following the conclusion of the grant funding.



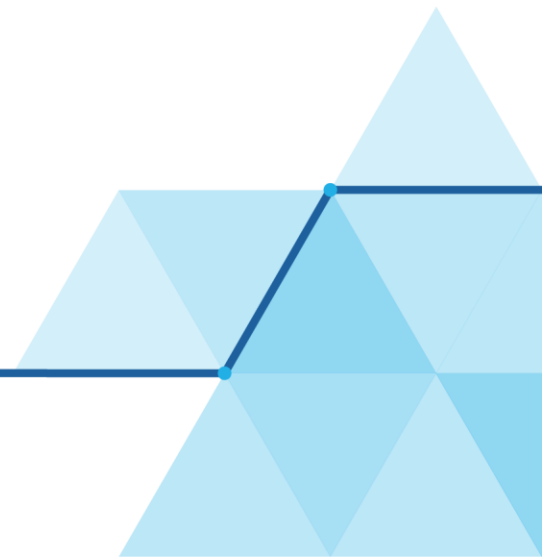
Enabling greater join up across government

Though the Delivery Board and development of the Delivery Plan have increased join up at a national and local level we now need to ensure we keep up the momentum. We will continue to collaborate and develop relationships across government and statutory bodies to explore further areas of joint working



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The Farmer Review



Update on progress

- The Farmer Review for Women, published in 2019 concluded that ‘healthy, supportive relationships are not just a “nice to have” for every woman in the criminal justice system...they are utterly indispensable’.
- Since the publication of the Farmer Review for Women, we have been making good progress on implementing Lord Farmer’s recommendations, and so far have completed 27 out of 33 recommendations including:
 - the rollout of video calling and email-reply systems in all women's prisons, and in-cell telephony in all closed women's prison
 - a case review of applications to Mother and Baby Units by the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families
 - authors of Bail Information Reports now have a specific prompt to consider the impact on dependent children
- We continue to work across the Ministry of Justice, Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and wider Government on taking forward all recommendations. This
- We have embedded the importance of family ties and supportive relationships into delivery of the Female Offender Strategy and will continue to monitor this through the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan.