



National Offender
Management Service

Women's Custodial Estate Review

Cathy Robinson
National Offender Management Service

October 2013

Contents:	Page
Introduction	2
Summary	3
Review Methodology	7
Current Location and Capacity of Women's Prisons	9
The Future Location of Women's Prisons	10
Strategic Hubs to Better Meet the Needs of Women Prisoners Close to Home	11
Resettlement	14
Whole System Approach	17
The Personality Disorder Pathway	17
Women with Complex Needs and Restricted Status Provision	19
Women with Complex Needs	19
Restricted Status Provision	20
Transforming Rehabilitation	22
Primary Carers	23
Ability to Access Interventions	25
Substance Misuse	25
Accredited Programmes	25
Domestic Violence and Sex Workers	26
Release on Temporary Licence	26
Life Skills Training and Prisoner Led Programmes to Support Preparation for Release	27
Gender Responsive Prisons	28
Provision for Specific Groups of Women	29
Mother and Baby Units	29
Reducing Self Harm	29
Foreign National Women	30
Bibliography	31
Annexes	
Annex A: Terms of Reference	34
Annex B: Population Trends	36

Introduction

On 10 January 2013 the Secretary of State for Justice commissioned the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to conduct a review of the women's custodial estate, saying:

"I am conscious that women offenders have particular needs and that the custodial female estate should be organised as effectively as possible to meet gender specific requirements whilst also delivering best value for the public. I have therefore asked officials to undertake a review of custodial arrangements for women."

I was appointed to head that review, and our findings signal a new way of working for women's prisons – starting with ensuring that decision-making for women prisoners takes into account three key priorities, as set out in our terms of reference:

- proximity to family (in particular dependent children) to maintain family ties throughout sentence;
- ability to access interventions to reduce risk of reoffending and meet women's needs; and
- opportunity for meaningful resettlement which can continue on release, in line with the Government's Transforming Rehabilitation Programme.

However, to meet these priorities, the review team acknowledge that the NOMS needs to work differently. This report sets out our agenda for improving the women's custodial estate, which will be implemented over the coming months and years. Our findings also align with the overall direction of the Government's Strategic Objectives for Female Offenders and as set out in the Government's response to the Justice Select Committee – also published today. Ministers have accepted all the recommendations set out in this report.

Cathy Robinson
25 October 2013

Summary

The commissioning of this review outlined the Government's vision for rebalancing the custodial system in England and Wales, closing small and expensive prisons, as capacity allows and replacing them with fit-for-purpose accommodation where the prisoners could best address their offending behaviour needs and prepare for release.

During the course of the review the team considered not only where, but also how women are held, so that the report includes a focus on regimes provided in women's prisons.

Women represent only five percent of the prison population and are held in a small number of prisons compared with men. It is therefore necessary to ensure that their small numbers do not result in less favourable treatment, through careful consideration of their particular needs. We also need to ensure that the estate is effective, affordable and sustainable.

The review recommends the establishment of strategic prison hubs, located as far as possible close to major centres of population. These hubs should be of an appropriate size to serve the courts, hold women from the surrounding region and provide a range of interventions. Moreover, they should provide an appropriate physical environment to support women's caring responsibilities through family visits, which maintain and build upon relationships with children and other family members.

These hubs will enable most women to remain in their closest prison throughout their sentence and will support the Government's approach to Transforming Rehabilitation through their links to Community Rehabilitation Companies and "through the gate" support for all prisoners. They will also enable a larger number of women, subject to appropriate risk assessment, to undertake work outside of prison which can be continued after their sentence and which will further support rehabilitation and maintenance of family contact and personal responsibility.

The review team has considered the recommendation of Baroness Corston for small custodial units. The team agreed with the underlying argument, that women should be held in appropriate physical conditions as close to home as possible, so that they can be supported back into their communities on release. However, women's prisons provide a wide range of services, particularly in partnership with health, to those who have significant needs when they enter prison. Women's access to this support is vitally important to their rehabilitation and reducing reoffending.

It is therefore recommended that, as part of the wider priority to provide appropriate opportunities for all suitable women close to their homes, a trial open unit is established outside the perimeter at Styal. This site offers good transport links to Manchester and Stockport where paid and voluntary work opportunities are available and where women can establish links to community facilities and services which will continue on release. The unit will provide evidence on the effectiveness of the approach to reduce reoffending and support community reintegration, and will be a pathfinder for the development of other possible opportunities across the women's estate.

This different and enhanced approach, once successfully implemented, would reduce the need for the two open prisons, which will no longer offer the best option to meet the needs of the majority of women, particularly maintaining community links that will endure post-release. Opportunities within the strategic hubs will better meet this need and allow for flexible provision closer to the home locations of women prisoners.

The key recommendations in the report are set out below:

Recommendation 1

NOMS and other criminal justice partners should work together to ensure that women prisoners can, wherever appropriate, be held as close as possible to their home location (while taking into account wider criminogenic need).

Recommendation 2

NOMS should provide strategic hubs for women prisoners, reconfiguring court alignment and making flexible use of custodial capacity to keep women as close to home as possible for as much of their sentence as possible. This should be achieved by:

- re-rolling Downview from a women's to a men's prison. This recommendation has already been accepted and it was announced on 4 September 2013;
- increasing capacity at Foston Hall through upgrading current buildings;
- formation of a strategic hub between Foston Hall, Drake Hall and Styal to facilitate closeness to home and progression;
- refurbishment of mothballed places at Eastwood Park;
- giving priority to keeping Welsh women in Eastwood Park and Styal;
- creating additional places at Drake Hall to facilitate the progression of midlands women;
- working with all women's prisons to develop community employment regimes, subject to appropriate risk assessment, while maintaining closeness to home; and
- giving priority to keeping Welsh women in Eastwood Park or Styal for as much of their sentence as possible. It is proposed that Eastwood Park focuses on meeting the needs of Welsh women, and that the two prisons work closely together to ensure that they are responsive to their needs.

Recommendation 3

An open unit, possibly on the site of Styal, should be established for women from the region to work in the community and test the impact on reoffending. The unit will provide a pathway from prison to employment in their local community.

Recommendation 4

Following the successful implementation of community employment regimes in strategic hubs, which enable women to prepare for release and progress in their sentence closer

to home, closure of the two open prisons should be considered as they will no longer offer the best option for the majority of women due to their location.

Recommendation 5

Forthcoming evaluation of the Offender Personality Disorder pathway should be used to inform further development of joint commissioning and delivery of services to those with the highest levels of need.

Recommendation 6

A central case management system for women with complex needs should start work as soon as possible to provide direction for the care and management of these women ensuring that they benefit from the most appropriate interventions and regimes available for their particular needs.

Recommendation 7

Restricted Status (RS) women should be included in the central case management system for women with complex needs which will ensure their access to the most appropriate regimes and interventions taking into account their security status.

Recommendation 8

RS review reports should focus on reporting behaviour and progress made by the women in the context of their risk factors and offending.

Recommendation 9

RS women should be assessed for their suitability to access relevant interventions to enable them to evidence a reduction in risk, where this has been the case.

Recommendation 10

All women's prisons will be resettlement prisons under the Transforming Rehabilitation Programme.

Recommendation 11

Provision of family days in women's prisons should be increased and other methods of maintaining contact between visits should be explored.

Recommendation 12

Interventions should be commissioned more widely across the women's estate to ensure that strategic hubs meet the needs of their populations. Holding women closer to home and reducing the need to transfer between prisons will support the development of

appropriate and supportive relationships with staff and other prisoners. This can reduce feelings of isolation, distress and the risk of self-harm.

Recommendation 13

NOMS will explore with NHS commissioners responsible for commissioning substance misuse services in custody, whether substance misuse services provided to women should include a focus on relationships as a core element of encouraging future abstinence.

Recommendation 14

Provision of services to women who are survivors of domestic violence or who have been sex workers should be of a consistent quality and should meet the relevant NOMS framework.

Recommendation 15

Existing provision of life skills training should be increased and expanded so all prisons offer peer led services in the following areas:

- independence skills classes;
- classroom assistant roles;
- self-harm support and prevention; and
- advice giving in other settings, including induction, pre-release, motivational work and preparation for other regime activities or interventions.

Recommendation 16

The mother and baby unit at Holloway should close in order to reduce over-supply without affecting closeness to home. There would be a further reduction of ten places should Askham Grange close.

Recommendation 17

Work should be undertaken with the Home Office to develop a hub at Peterborough for foreign national women who are likely to be deported, taking into account best practice from the male hub and spoke system. This will allow for more effective decision making by the Home Office while providing clarity earlier in their sentence for these women.

Review Methodology

The review team was established in March 2013, led by senior Prison Governor Cathy Robinson. The research period ran from March until June 2013. Members of the team visited all thirteen public and private sector women's prisons, consulting with prisoners, staff, senior managers and Governors and considering the buildings, regime, examples of good practice and overall experience of the women.

The team has consulted widely with a range of stakeholders to help gain a better understanding of the issues facing women before, during and after their imprisonment. It also discussed with them how best to support women to use their time in custody productively, to give them the best chances of success on release and reduce their risks of reoffending.

The review team worked with NOMS Commissioning Strategies Group to examine the evidence on the characteristics of women in prison, an overview of current interventions and promising approaches. This work has informed our recommendations. We have worked closely with NOMS commissioners both to inform the development of our recommendations and to contribute to Commissioning Intentions and the forthcoming commissioning round.

Those who have contributed their views and experience to the team include:

- Directors of Public Sector Prisons, Probation and Contracted Services and National Operational Services;
- Deputy Directors of Custody (DDCs), representing each region of England and Wales;
- Directorate of Commissioning and Commercial;
- Equality, Rights and Decency Group;
- NOMS departments with policy and relating to women's prisons;
- Probation Trusts women's leads;
- Ministry of Justice Transforming Rehabilitation Team;
- Ministry of Justice Estates Team;
- Ministry of Justice Criminal Justice Group Female Offenders Team;
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP);
- Women in Prison;
- Women's Aid;
- St Giles Trust;
- Howard League for Penal Reform;
- Birth Companions;
- Prison Reform Trust;
- Trade Unions;
- The Probation Chiefs' Association;
- Welsh Government;
- Scottish Prison Service; and
- Staff and prisoners at all the women's prisons.

All are thanked for their contributions which were appreciated and valued.

The report, including the financial implications of the recommendations, was submitted and considered by the NOMS Executive Management Committee in July 2013.

The review team is represented on the Advisory Board on Female Offenders and the review is one of the Board's four principal designated work streams.

Current Location and Capacity of Women's Prisons

On 31 March 2013 there were 3,869 women in prison in England and Wales, accommodated in thirteen prisons (eleven public sector and two private sector), which fall within nine of the eleven prison regions; there are no women's prisons in Wales or the NOMS South Central region. Of these thirteen prisons, eight receive prisoners directly from courts, seven hold mothers with babies and two are open prisons.

The operational capacity of the estate is 4,583 places.

Accommodation in the women's estate is of differing age and security levels, with most having been converted from other uses over many years. Some of the prisons have newer units which were designed specifically for women, in particular the former girls' units. There are two recently built women's prisons offering modern, purpose built accommodation (Bronzefield and Peterborough). This is the most physically secure accommodation in the estate.

The Future Location of Women's Prisons

The review has identified three priorities which NOMS should follow when planning the location of women's prisons and which should be taken into consideration in any future strategy development across MoJ:

- proximity to family (in particular dependent children) to maintain family ties throughout sentence;
- opportunity for meaningful resettlement which can continue on release, in line with the Government's Transforming Rehabilitation Programme; and
- ability to access interventions to reduce risk of reoffending and meet women's needs.

Recommendation 1:

NOMS and other criminal justice partners should work together to ensure that women offenders can, wherever appropriate, be held as close as possible to their home location (while taking into account wider criminogenic need).

Previous studies, and discussion with women prisoners during the review, demonstrate that closeness to home is a key issue for women prisoners, particularly due to the significance of their role in many cases as primary carers. Remaining in one prison as far as possible also supports the development of positive relationships and a purposeful rehabilitative environment. It can help reduce feelings of distress and isolation, and promote safer custodial environments in which the likelihood of self-harm is reduced.

While overall distance from home for men and women prisoners is broadly similar at just over 50 miles, rising to 85 miles in the women's open estate, this average hides some significant variations.

On 31st March 2013, 63% of female prisoners were located within 50 miles from home, a further 23% within 100 miles, and 14% more than 100 miles from home. Reducing the distance for those furthest from home and, as far as practicable, women's requirement to move around during their sentence due to insufficient places being available in some regions of the country, are priorities for the strategic provision of women's prison places.

The review team has worked closely with the Ministry of Justice Transforming Rehabilitation Programme to ensure best fit in terms of closeness to home and access to regionally commissioned resettlement services for women.

Strategic Hubs to Better Meet the Needs of Women Prisoners Close to Home

In order to address these priorities, the review team recommend that the women's custodial estate should be formed of prisons which provide a range of interventions and services on site, enabling women to be held close to home. The "strategic hub" prisons will reduce the need for women to be moved further from their homes, and to be transferred during their sentences.

To support this configuration of prisons, the alignment of courts to prisons should be changed so that women are received into the prison in their home region, and remain there, in many cases, throughout their sentence. This reconfiguration will have the added advantage of reducing the distance to court for those women who are currently remanded furthest away, which should have a positive effect on travelling times to and from court, an issue which has been highlighted by HMIP.

An increase in places is therefore proposed in the Midlands and the South West. This will be balanced by a reduction in places where there is over capacity for the population. The changes required are set out below.

Providing additional accommodation for women in the midlands

The proposed reconfiguration of courts and prisons would result in an increase in the remand population at Foston Hall. The review team proposes that the capacity of the former girls' unit is increased from 16 to 50 in order to meet this demand. In addition, Foston Hall should form a hub with Drake Hall and Styal.

The provision of a hub in this region would offer the following advantages:

- access to a wider range of regime opportunities for women while remaining in their home region;
- a progression route to Drake Hall for women who are suitable for less secure conditions;
- opportunities to sequence the interventions within the three prisons by enabling women to move between them as required by their sentence plans'
- flexibility in the use of prison places to maximise effective use of the estate within the region' and
- sharing good practice between the prisons and development opportunities for staff.

Eastwood Park and Styal – closeness to home for Welsh women

Welsh women frequently begin their sentences at Eastwood Park but are transferred to other prisons to serve their sentence due to its shortage of places. In order that south west and Welsh women can remain at Eastwood Park, an expansion of 77 places is recommended by bringing back into service two units that are currently mothballed.

Refurbishment of these places would be required to provide appropriate accommodation. In addition, the former girls' unit has been identified as a possible site for a personality disorder service, providing an additional 17 places. These proposals have been discussed with Welsh Government representatives.

A smaller number of women from north Wales are held at Styal which has a similar role in working with Welsh authorities.

The Welsh Government has already met the Governor of Eastwood Park, where the majority of Welsh women are held, and is working on meeting the needs of Welsh women to support their return to Wales.

The Welsh Government endorsed proposals to extend provision at Eastwood Park to meet better the needs of longer-term prisoners so that Welsh women no longer need to transfer further from home to complete their sentences.

Holloway - key geographical location for serving the courts

The review team considered the physical design of Holloway which has attracted some criticism. The findings of the team were that Holloway is in a key location to serve courts in London and the south east. Women held there spoke in positive terms about their closeness to families and the ability of their visitors to travel to the prison, which maximises their visits and supports their family ties. This was endorsed by the recent HMIP inspection of Holloway, which also found that women said that "the central location of the prison facilitated women's contact with their family, friends and community".

Holloway has a very wide range of service provision including a variety of voluntary sector providers meeting specialist needs, and health investment of £7 million annually. Health providers and their partners are able to address the complex needs of some of the most vulnerable and high risk women in the prison estate. The recent inspection of Holloway agreed that "there was an impressive range of partner organisations involved in delivering the reducing reoffending pathways".

The review team observed work with women who have severe mental health problems, and the extensive work which is carried out both to manage and support them in custody, and arrange transfer to secure NHS provision where this is appropriate. As such the prison currently provides a range of specialist and high intensity provision, which is not available elsewhere in the system. Unless and until an equivalent level of service could be provided in a suitable location for women from London and the south east and serve the courts, Holloway must remain an integral part of the women's estate.

Re-role of Downview to hold male prisoners

A review of the home location of women prisoners found that, although there was spare capacity in the estate as a whole, this was not evenly spread across the country. The existing estate included a surplus of places in the east of the country but insufficient

accommodation for women in the west, with particular shortfalls in the south west and the west midlands. The proposed reconfiguration will address these shortfalls and reallocate the excess in the south east to the male estate.

Downview shares a site with a male local prison, High Down, and is well placed to provide lower security conditions and resettlement opportunities for male prisoners close to London. It has no court function and at the time of the visit was mainly holding foreign national prisoners and those who had been displaced from the south west and Wales due to insufficient accommodation for those women closer to home.

Recommendation 2:

NOMS should provide strategic hubs for women prisoners, reconfiguring court alignment and making flexible use of custodial capacity to keep women as close to home as possible for as much of their sentence as possible. This should be achieved by:

- **re-roling Downview from a women's to a men's prison. This recommendation has already been accepted and it was announced on 4 September 2013;**
- **increasing capacity at Foston Hall through upgrading current buildings;**
- **formation of a strategic hub between Foston Hall, Drake Hall and Styal to facilitate closeness to home and progression;**
- **refurbishment of mothballed places at Eastwood Park;**
- **giving priority to keeping Welsh women in Eastwood Park and Styal;**
- **creating additional places at Drake Hall to facilitate the progression of midlands women;**
- **working with all women's prisons to develop community employment regimes, subject to appropriate risk assessment, while maintaining closeness to home; and**
- **giving priority to keeping Welsh women in Eastwood Park or Styal for as much of their sentence as possible. It is proposed that Eastwood Park focuses on meeting the needs of Welsh women and that the two prisons work closely together to ensure that they are responsive to their needs.**

The reconfiguration of places produces a small average reduction in distance from home for the overall population. More importantly, the benefits for the women furthest from home are significant.

Resettlement

The review team considered the report on women in custody undertaken by Baroness Corston in 2007. It made 43 recommendations in relation to the way in which women are treated throughout the criminal justice system, and the importance of a woman centred approach. Forty of the recommendations were accepted in the Government response published in December 2007. However, the recommendation regarding the future strategic approach to locating women prisons and women prisoners was not accepted:

- i. 'The Government should announce within six months a clear strategy to replace existing women's prisons with suitable, geographically dispersed, small, multi-functional custodial centres within 10 years'*

The review team agreed with the underlying argument, that women should be held in appropriate physical conditions as close to home as possible, and that women benefit from a rehabilitative culture supporting return to their home communities.

It is also recognised that women's prisons provide a wide range of services to those who frequently have several significant areas of need and that women's access to this support is important to their rehabilitation.

It is therefore recommended that a unit outside a women's prison should be established in order to test its ability to offer the best possible work opportunities and links to the community in preparation for release. A possible location for this has been identified at Styal where 25 women could be accommodated in a unit outside the prison perimeter. This site offers good transport links to Manchester and Stockport, where paid and voluntary work opportunities are available and where women can establish links to community facilities and services which will continue on release. Other options for the location of this unit could be explored.

Several women's prisons already provide some opportunity for external work and participation in community activity and they should be made available to women across the country to increase access. The prisoner survey on employment, training and education, (Hopkins, K., March 2012) showed the importance of employment in reducing reoffending for all prisoners, concluding that:

"Both having been employed in the year before custody and having a qualification were associated with a lower likelihood of reconviction in the year after release than being unemployed and not having a qualification".

Recommendation 3:

An open unit, possibly on the site of Styal, should be established for women from the region to work in the community and test the impact on reoffending. The unit will provide a pathway from prison to employment in their local community.

Provision of other opportunities across the country would reduce the need for the two open prisons by providing community employment regimes which are close to home for women, linking with the Ministry of Justice's wider Transforming Rehabilitation agenda.

While the average distance of women from home is 53 miles, in the open estate this rises to 85 miles as of 31 March 2013. Providing the opportunities of the open estate in the prison closest to the woman's home would significantly increase the benefits offered.

Recommendation 4:

Following the successful implementation of community employment regimes in strategic hubs, which enable women to prepare for release and progress in their sentence closer to home, closure of the two open prisons should be considered as they will no longer offer the best option for the majority of women due to their location.

The table below assumes that each woman is received at the prison identified in the new court alignment proposals, and remains there throughout her sentence unless she has specialist treatment needs, in which case she is transferred to one of the specialist prisons within her region if possible. (The Therapeutic Community at Send and the Primrose Unit at Low Newton are national resources). The table shows that the capacity of the prisons, in line with the reconfiguration recommendations made in the report, is generally sufficient to meet the demand for places, supporting the aim of holding women in appropriate prisons close to their home:

Places Provided	Existing Places at Publication of Review	Proposed Capacity following Implementation of Review	Projected Population following Implementation of Review
London and South East	1,499	1,386	1,236
Bronzefield	527	527	
Holloway	591	578	
Send	281	281	
(East Sutton Park)	100	0	
West Midlands and North West	1,085	1,169	1,212
Foston Hall	310	344	
Styal	460	485	
Drake Hall	315	340	
South West	363	457	462
Eastwood Park	363	457	
Yorkshire	553	442	401
New Hall	425	442	
(Askham Grange)	128	0	
North East	344	344	160
Low Newton	344	344	
East of England	384	384	277
Peterborough	384	384	
Home Location Data Not Available			194
(Downview)	355	0	
Total	4,583	4,182	3,942

Whole System Approach

A whole system approach is a designated workstream of the Advisory Board on Female Offenders due to the multiple needs that many women in prison face and which has been recognised by this review.

Current joint commissioning work being undertaken between NOMS and the Department of Health for women with personality disorder aims to meet these needs. It represents an example of good practice that is also planned in other areas of provision, such as family engagement and support work for families separated by imprisonment.

The Personality Disorder Pathway

The personality disorder (PD) pathway represents an innovative approach to meeting the needs of women who in some cases have the most complex needs and to supporting the effectiveness of other services across the prison. The programme is jointly commissioned and managed by NOMS and the Department of Health. Women at all stages of their progress through the criminal justice system can have access to the pathway as it is not dependent on length of sentence or the location of women in custody or the community.

This initiative offers an opportunity to establish the benefits of government departments commissioning and delivering services jointly, and overcoming the barriers which can exist in transition between services or those with multiple needs becoming lost in a complex service delivery system. It also offers a pathway for a group of women who have sometimes presented the most challenges to service providers and who frequently pose a risk of serious harm to themselves and others due to their complex and intractable needs.

PD treatment services involve women completing an intensive programme of psycho-social and learning activities, based on individual and group work. These are designed to increase their motivation to engage in current and future treatment, improve their coping strategies and pro-social behaviour and improve psychological health.

The Offender PD Strategy for Women will provide up to four new PD treatment services nationally (80 places). These will complement the existing high-harm Primrose service at Low Newton, the therapeutic community at Send, and the CARE programme at Foston Hall. The first of the new services will be at Foston Hall and is due to open in November 2013. Called the CAMEO service, it will offer day treatment to up to 20 women.

Subject to final approvals, services will also be developed in the following locations:

- New Hall: the Rivendell Unit (previously used to accommodate 17 year old girls) is the preferred site for the development of a treatment service for the north.
- Eastwood Park: a new PD treatment service with pre-treatment PIPE (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment) for the south west. The very large catchment area that Eastwood Park serves means that distance from home is reduced for women accessing this service.

These proposals will result in PD services being provided in the south west (Eastwood Park), the midlands (Foston Hall) and the north (New Hall).

All the services will also conform to the Enabling Environments (EE) concept developed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists to reflect the importance and impact of positive relationships between people and the effect of the social environment on service outcomes. Ten simple standards make up the critical elements of a healthy environment, and they apply equally to those providing a service and those receiving it.

Enabling environments are underpinned by additional knowledge and understanding framework training for unit staff and a specific course has been developed for those working with women. The training aims to support staff working with women who demonstrate challenging behaviour and avoid a cycle of escalation that is often seen among this group. Such an approach can reduce the problems associated with segregation or frequent transfer of challenging prisoners and increase their opportunities to progress within the wider prison regime. The training is also supported by the Commissioning Intentions description of pro-social modelling by staff, as beneficial for all prisoners. The principle is that it creates a supportive environment that underpins learning from the interventions which are provided across the prison.

The PD pathway is therefore an example of a joint approach that may benefit a larger group of prisoners and increase the effectiveness of other services which are provided by NOMS and partner agencies. The Female Offenders Advisory Board is committed to achieving a cross Government approach to women and this initiative is a good example of how services can be improved through such joint working.

Recommendation 5:

Forthcoming evaluation of the Offender Personality Disorder pathway should be used to inform further development of joint commissioning and delivery of services to those with the highest levels of need.

Women with Complex Needs and Restricted Status Provision

Women with Complex Needs

Most women entering prison have a range of interrelated needs. The term 'complex needs' has been applied both to women who are highly distressed and to those who present with a range of mental health related issues or personality disorders. For some women these issues can manifest themselves in challenging behaviour. This can include violent and unpredictable conduct that poses such a high level of threat to others that they may not be able to be safely accommodated in normal living conditions with other women or easily engaged in group activities. Options are being considered for the introduction of enhanced guidance that will further strengthen the management of those women who continue to present a danger to others.

The services offered through the PD pathway as set out above present an opportunity to bring these women into a suitable environment to meet their needs, which will link with interventions such as the CARE programme or the therapeutic community at Send.

The difficulties of co-ordinating and sequencing interventions are more acute for women who have complex needs and challenging behaviour. NOMS Equality, Rights and Decency Group is in the process of establishing a case management model to facilitate the progression and care of the most complex cases. This will become operational in autumn 2013.

Restricted Status (RS) women will be included in the case management model. The aim in relation to the RS cases will be to ensure the provision of interventions which will allow them to actively engage in rehabilitation and thereby demonstrate any potential reduction in their risk and/or challenging behaviour. It is intended that this approach will provide a framework for these women to improve their behaviour so that they are no longer of sufficient risk to require restricted status classification, and it may enable RS women to be accommodated in a wider range of prison locations than is currently possible.

The approach will be multi-disciplinary, including all relevant staff who are involved in the care of each woman. The process will be managed through a review board which will provide overview of the case management and intervention activity.

The review board, chaired by the Head of Equality, Rights and Decency Group will:

- review the current security risk of all RS cases annually, or following any significant material change in their circumstances;
- review all women identified as having complex needs on an annual basis in order to ensure that the most appropriate care and support is being provided to each woman dependent on her personal circumstances;
- identify additional support, activity, intervention or treatment activity which could be offered for those who do not appear to be responding to their treatment plan

and/or are displaying challenging behaviour. This may also involve taking decisions about the location of those who continue to represent a significant risk to others;

- provide mediation and arbitration to resolve location or treatment disputes between the various programmes or care providers to ensure the best possible treatment/interventions are available to the individuals and that the NOMS estate is being used most effectively and providing the best value for money;
- review all new RS or complex needs cases to establish a consensus that they have been appropriately included in the case management approach; and
- review all cases no longer deemed to require case management oversight.

The board will bring together expertise and resources from across NOMS so that each prison is fully supported to deliver an appropriate regime and interventions for each complex case. This model will encourage learning and develop increased expertise within the women's estate to enhance further management of these women.

Recommendation 6:

A central case management system for women with complex needs should start work as soon as possible to provide direction for the care and management of these women ensuring that they benefit from the most appropriate interventions and regimes available for their particular needs.

Restricted Status Provision

Members of the team visited Low Newton and Bronzefield to discuss the custodial experiences of RS women currently held there. Three were located in Low Newton and eight in Bronzefield.

A RS prisoner is any female or young person convicted or on remand, whose escape would present a serious risk to the public and who is required to be held in designated secure accommodation. Whilst the review was being conducted there were 11 restricted status women.

New Hall and Styal are currently approved to hold RS women for court appearances. Peterborough also offers secure accommodation. These prisons offer appropriate physical security, and provide a wider range of interventions than is presently available to RS women. We propose that these three sites, in addition to Low Newton and Bronzefield, are used to hold RS women at any point during their time in custody, following assessment of their risk at their annual review. Once the case management system for women with complex needs is operational, this will significantly increase the opportunities available for RS women to make progress during their sentences.

Commissioners are currently planning to increase the provision of the women's accredited programme Choices, Actions, Relationships, Emotions (CARE) so that it is available in locations in the North, Midlands and South East. This programme was developed to meet the needs of women with a history of complex needs and violence. RS women who are suitable should be able to access this programme.

Recommendation 7:

Restricted Status (RS) women should be included in the central case management system for women with complex needs which will ensure their access to the most appropriate regimes and interventions taking into account their security status.

Recommendation 8:

RS review reports should focus on reporting behaviour and progress made by the women in the context of their risk factors and offending.

Recommendation 9:

RS women should be assessed for their suitability to access relevant interventions to enable them to evidence a reduction in risk, where this has been the case.

Transforming Rehabilitation

The Transforming Rehabilitation Programme will introduce supervision in the community for all offenders sentenced to 12 months or less. As a greater proportion of women than men receive short sentences they will particularly benefit from the support offered under this programme. It also introduces Through The Gate (TTG) support for all offenders in custody with providers of community support working with offenders while in prison and on release. This provision will be delivered in prisons which have been designated as resettlement prisons. In order to ensure that all women prisoners benefit from the TTG provision all women's prisons will be designated as resettlement prisons.

Recommendation 10:

All women's prisons will be resettlement prisons under the Transforming Rehabilitation Programme.

Primary Carers

Although parental status information is not routinely collected by NOMS, studies have repeatedly shown that the majority of women prisoners have children. The Oxford Health Study of Women in Prison in 2004 (Plugge, E. et al., 2006) recorded that 70 percent of the women were mothers.

A Home Office study of all mothers held in prison in 1994 (Caddle and Crisp, 1997) surveyed imprisoned mothers' own upbringing. Thirty-five percent had been in care at some point, with 15 percent growing up in children's homes. The mothers' care experience was mirrored in that of their children: 25 percent of those with a care history said that they had at least one child in care at the time of their imprisonment, compared with only six percent of the mothers who had no care history. There is no evidence to suggest that this is different in 2013.

Imprisoned women in the Home Office study become mothers at an early age: 55 percent of the women interviewed were teenage mothers.

The Oxford study found that 27 percent of mothers were single parents before imprisonment compared with eight percent of the general population. Only 15 percent of the children who had been living with their mother before imprisonment lived with their father afterwards. Twenty – three percent of children were separated from siblings after their mother's imprisonment. (Plugge, E et al., 2006)

Whereas most children of male prisoners are cared for by their mothers, studies have repeatedly found that grandparents and other relatives (most often female) look after the children of women prisoners. This was the case in 33 percent of the women surveyed for the Oxford study and 41 percent of those in the Home Office study. As a result, children are often cared for by older people and may need to move further from home. Women told us during focus groups that it can be difficult to persuade these carers to travel to the prison and as a result they receive fewer visits.

The Home Office study found that nine percent of the mothers said that they supported themselves through crime and two percent through prostitution, nineteen percent said they were unemployed, and twenty-eight percent were in paid employment. Seven percent described themselves as too ill to work (Caddle and Crisp, 1997).

Imprisoned mothers are a group with high levels of need. The effect on children is disproportionate when women are imprisoned, and the need to maintain family contact is increased.

The Troubled Families Programme works to provide a joined up response to families and includes offending as a measure of need for the programme. It is recommended that prisons are fully engaged with the programme as key partners and with local multi-disciplinary approaches to addressing the needs of families. Individual services should be planned with reference to work that is being undertaken with other members of their families.

Given the high proportion of women who are primary carers of children and the levels of need they face as parents, the review has considered how women's prisons can best support women to maintain contact with their families. At present most prisons across the country provide family days. These extended visits provide prisoners with an opportunity to play with their children in organised activities, care for them in a more normal way than is usually possible through preparing or eating a meal with them, helping with homework and other caring responsibilities.

The information about the relative proportion of children who are separated from both parents on imprisonment is an indication of the higher level of disruption to children of a mother's imprisonment and also the greater proportion of women prisoners who are primary carers of children compared with men. In order to support women to maintain their relationships with these children and be better prepared to care for them on release, an increase in the provision of family days in the women's estate is recommended so that these extended, interactive visits become the norm.

NOMS has piloted a model of integrated family support including custody based family engagement workers which has been evaluated and points to promising intermediate outcomes in a number of areas such as increased parent-child or prisoner-family contact, improved custodial behaviour and reduced self-harm. Early findings from the two women's prisons involved in the pilot, Low Newton and Eastwood Park, concluded that most of the support offered involved women whose children were involved in the care or adoption system, or who had become estranged from their children and wanted to see them again. Because of the pilot, NOMS has highlighted the important potential that the pilot has for engaging the family to support desistance.

A national benchmarking team is reviewing the resourcing of all prisons. The team has proposed allocating resources for a family engagement worker in each of the women's prisons. Further work to implement this proposal will now be undertaken.

The value of parenting programmes in reducing reoffending has not been established. Further robust studies of the various programmes and approaches are required in order to establish their outcomes for prisoners and their children

Other options for maintaining contact such as telephone calls, emails and exploring the use of Skype and similar technology with appropriate safeguards should be increased to facilitate contact between visits, particularly for foreign national women. No prisoners should have direct access to the internet because of these measures.

Recommendation 11:

Provision of family days in women's prisons should be increased and other methods of maintaining contact between visits should be explored.

Ability to Access Interventions

Prisons should provide a wider range of interventions so that most women are able to remain in their receiving prison during their sentence unless they need a more specialist intervention.

Recommendation 12:

Interventions should be commissioned more widely across the women's estate to ensure that strategic hubs meet the needs of their populations. Holding women closer to home and reducing the need to transfer between prisons will support the development of appropriate and supportive relationships with staff and other prisoners. This can reduce feelings of isolation, distress and the risk of self-harm.

In addition to the personality disorder work described above, interventions that should be commissioned in strategic hubs are detailed below.

Substance Misuse

A survey on gender differences in substance misuse (Light et al, 2013) found that women entering custody were more likely to have used a class A drug in the four weeks before custody than men. The survey found that drug use is strongly associated with reoffending for men and women. In some women's prisons, 70 percent of new receptions require detoxification. Substance misuse treatment is therefore one of the most important factors in rehabilitation and preparation for release.

Forty-eight percent of women said that their offending was driven by the need to support someone else's drug use and half of women who injected drugs said that they were initiated into doing so by their partner. Drug using women who returned to live with their partner after release were more likely to reoffend than women who did not (Light et al, 2013). Therefore there is some evidence that, for women, drug misuse is often linked with unhealthy relationships.

Recommendation 13:

NOMS will explore with NHS commissioners responsible for commissioning substance misuse services in custody, whether substance misuse services provided to women should include a focus on relationships as a core element of encouraging future abstinence.

Accredited Programmes

Accredited programmes are recognised by the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel as using methods that are effective in reducing reoffending, and are consistently delivered to a high standard. The CARE programme was developed specifically for women in prison with a history of complex needs and violence. It is

currently delivered at Foston Hall and this is due to be increased to three prisons across the country.

Other accredited programmes including the Thinking Skills Programme and Focus on Resettlement are provided in the women's custodial estate.

Given the prevalence of acquisitive offending – 19 percent of the women's prison population has an acquisitive current index offence and a more than 50 percent chance of general reconviction in the two years following release from prison (NOMS Internal Management Information) – development of an accredited programme for acquisitive offenders would be particularly relevant for the women's prison population.

Domestic Violence and Sex Workers

Rates of experience of domestic violence are high in all surveys. The prisoner survey on childhood and family backgrounds (Williams, K. et al, March 2012) found that 53 percent of women reported experiencing some kind of abuse in childhood and that women who had witnessed or experienced violence in the home as a child were more likely to reoffend than those who had not.

The Oxford Study of Women's Health in Prison (Plugge, E. et al, 2006) found that 27 percent of women said they had been paid for sex in the last 12 months, and the 1997 Home Office Survey (Caddle and Crisp, 1997) found that two percent said they had supported themselves through prostitution before imprisonment.

A lead for each of these pathways has been identified in each prison and services are commissioned locally. Expert organisations such as Women's Aid have worked with NOMS to produce the NOMS framework *Supporting Women Offenders Who Have Experienced Domestic or Sexual Violence* (Women's Aid 2011). Ensuring that these leads are appropriately trained and supported and that guidance is available on commissioning high quality services will increase the consistency of support offered to women with high levels of need.

Recommendation 14:

Provision of services to women who are survivors of domestic violence or who have been sex workers should be of a consistent quality and should meet the relevant NOMS framework.

Release on Temporary Licence

Community ties and the benefits of retaining links with their families make Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) a particularly important aspect of rehabilitation for many women. The prospect of ROTL is a very motivating incentive during women's sentences and it encourages engagement with all aspects of the regime. Maximising the use of

temporary release subject to appropriate risk assessment across the women's estate rather than mainly in the open prisons is an important way of achieving these priorities.

Life Skills Training and Prisoner Led Programmes to Support Preparation for Release:

Several prisons are already providing facilities that enable women to take more responsibility for their daily lives during their sentences. These include skills such as budgeting, cooking, dealing with authorities including benefits offices, responsibility for a home and raising children. Expansion of independence skills would support the other skills that women learn in prison and offer a very practical response to the difficulties that they describe in their lives in the community. Peer led services represent an effective way to deliver these that also benefit those offering the support through development of new skills and the opportunity to work towards qualifications. Peer support is well developed in some prisons and already offers a range of valuable services. Benefits include:

- developing skills amongst prisoners and the opportunity to obtain qualifications for future work;
- a motivated and cost effective workforce to address the high level of need for support;
- a way of engaging the hardest to reach women;
- a source of information about what women need and the most effective methods of delivering services to them; and
- using the range of skills which some women bring with them into prison

Recommendation 15:

Existing provision of life skills training should be increased and expanded so all prisons offer peer led services in the following areas:

- **independence skills classes;**
- **classroom assistant roles;**
- **self-harm support and prevention; and**
- **advice giving in other settings, including induction, pre-release, motivational work and preparation for other regime activities or interventions.**

Gender Responsive Prisons

In the course of visiting all of the women's prisons the team has seen examples of good practice that are making a positive impact on the lives of women in prison. Several women's prisons have achieved an ethos of care and challenge that enables women to make significant changes and confront the very difficult issues that have brought them to prison.

We were also encouraged by the level to which women were keen to make use of services provided for them and saw their sentence as an opportunity to change their lives, and address the factors that led them into prison.

At most of the focus groups conducted, women wanted to describe the positive changes they had made and wanted to make to their lives while in prison and on release. In many cases access to appropriate interventions had been an important factor. However, in several prisons women said that they had deliberately offended in order to be imprisoned as they felt that they could not cope in the community or were in physical danger from which prison represented a place of safety and respite. The frequency of this message raises questions about how some women with high levels of need are able to access provision in the community that would improve their lives and reduce the effects of their offending on themselves and wider society.

However, once women come into custody, internal stakeholders expressed the view that security policies and procedures could be adapted for women, whom they judged as representing a lower risk of escape, lower risk to the public and were not involved in criminal networks to the same level or extent as men.

The team found that in many prisons there is a positive culture in which women felt listened to and supported as their needs are recognised and understood by staff. Governors overwhelmingly identified staff-prisoner relationships as a vital part of creating the right ethos in women's prisons, and are committed to giving strong leadership in this area.

The gender specific training implemented following the Corston Report is being reviewed by NOMS with the aim of updating it for the current needs of the estate and including a focus on the skills required by staff working with women in prison. The findings of the review will be included in the changes being made to foundation level training, which covers recruitment, assessment, and initial training of operational staff.

Provision for Specific Groups of Women

Mother and Baby Units

The national capacity for Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) is 77 mothers and 83 babies, to accommodate multiple births. There are currently more mothers than babies in the units due to pregnant women being accommodated there. Occupancy of the units has been declining reflecting the overall reduction in the number of women in custody. On 25 June 2013 there were 31 women and 28 babies accommodated in the units.

All MBUs hold mothers with babies until at least 18 months old, except at Holloway where it is restricted to babies of approximately nine months in age, due to the physical restrictions of the unit. As Holloway is approximately 20 miles from the MBU at Bronzefield, we propose that the unit at Holloway closes, with a consequent reduction of 13 places. Should Askham Grange close, it would result in a further reduction of 10 MBU places.

Recommendation 16:

The mother and baby unit at Holloway should close in order to reduce over-supply without affecting on closeness to home. There would be a further reduction of ten places should Askham Grange close.

Reducing Self Harm

Women frequently enter prison with a history of self-harm or suicide attempts. The prison survey on gender differences in substance misuse and mental health (Light, M. et al, 2013) found that 46 percent of women prisoners had attempted suicide at some point in their lives, and that 21 percent had done so in the year before entering prison. In addition, 29 percent said that they had harmed themselves but not as part of a suicide attempt.

Ministry of Justice Safety in Custody Statistics Quarterly Update to 31 March 2013 state that:

“incidence of female self harm [in prison] have fallen by 45 percent over the last two years largely driven by a reduction in the number of repetitive self-harmers. The rate of female prisoners self harming has fallen from 312 females self harming per 1000 prisoners 10 years ago, to 264 females self harming in 2012/13”.

The recommendations in this review will result in more women being held as close to their families as possible, family ties are maintained and women will be able to access a co-ordinated suite of interventions to address their needs and promote progression during sentence. The report also recommends strengthening work with other government departments to ensure that the wide range of their needs is met in a holistic way. The review team believes that this additional support will enhance current safer custody provision within prisons.

Foreign National Women

On 31 March 2013 there were 612 women in prison who had been identified as foreign nationals (source: Prison Population Tables). On 7 June 257 sentenced women were identified by the Home Office as meeting criteria for deportation.

Foreign national prisoners who are not of interest to the Home Office will be released into the UK and require resettlement support as for UK national prisoners. A needs analysis of foreign national offenders was completed by NOMS Business Development Group in April 2013, stating that 'Unless instructed otherwise by the then UK Border Agency, offender managers must work on the basis that the offender could be released within the UK at the end of the sentence and plan accordingly'. NOMS policy on foreign national women states 'Serving foreign national prisoners should continue to be managed in the same way as British nationals while recognising their individual needs'.

For those identified as being of interest, decisions about deportation can be taken at any point in sentence, resulting in a "twin track" approach to their sentence planning.

The review team recommends that most foreign national women should be treated in the same way as for British national women. However, for those identified by the Home Office as being likely to be deported, a hub for foreign national women prisoners (in line with those in the male estate) would be beneficial in providing them with enhanced access to case workers and therefore potentially earlier decisions on their immigration status. The creation of a hub at Peterborough will lead to better information sharing between custodial managers and Home Office caseworkers.

Recommendation 17:

Work should be undertaken with the Home Office to develop a hub at Peterborough for foreign national women who are likely to be deported, taking into account best practice from the male hub and spoke system. This will allow for more effective decision making by the Home Office while providing earlier clarity for these women.

Bibliography

Bartlett A., Somers N. , Reeves, C., White, *Women prisoners: an analysis of the process of hospital transfers*, Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology, 20 Jul 2012

Birth Companions, *Working with Women in Pregnancy, Birth and Post Separation*, March 2012

Borrill, A. et al, *Differential Substance Misuse Treatment Needs of Women, Ethnic Minorities and Young Offenders in Prison: Prevalence of Substance Misuse and Treatment Needs* , Home Office Online Report 33/03, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, 2003

Caddle and Crisp, *Imprisoned Women and Mothers*, Home Office Research Study 162, Home Office, 1997

Clark, L., *Provision of Support for Imprisoned Adult Female Street-Based Sex Workers*, The Griffin Society, 2006

Clark, L., *Sex Workers in Prison: Project Evaluation Report*, The Griffin Society, 2009

Corston, Jean, *A Report by Baroness Jean Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, Home Office, 2006

Gullberg, Sofia, *State of the Estate: Women in Prison's report on the women's custodial estate 2011- 12*, Women in Prison, 2013

HMIP, *Report on an Unannounced Inspection of HMP Holloway by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 28 May – 7 June 2013*

HMP and YOI Low Newton, *Draft Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy*, unpublished, February 2013

HM Prison Service, *Good Practice Guidelines to Staff: Breastfeeding in Prisons*, (Undated)

Hopkins, K. *The Pre-Custody Employment, Training and Educational Status of Newly Sentence Prisoners: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) Longitudinal Cohort Study of Prisoners*, MoJ Analytical Services, March 2012

House of Commons Justice Committee, *Women Offenders: After the Corston Report, Second Report of Session 2013-14*, London: The Stationery Office Ltd, July 2013

Lart, Pantazis, Pemberton, Turner and Almeida *Interventions Aimed at Reducing Reoffending: A Rapid Evidence Assessment*, Ministry of Justice, 2008

Light, M., Grant, E. and Hopkins, K., *Gender Differences in Substance Misuse and Mental Health Amongst Prisoners: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) Longitudinal Cohort Study of Prisoners*, MoJ Analytical Services, 2013

McFeely, M *Review of Unclassified Deaths*, National Offender Management Service, May 2012

Ministry of Justice Safety in Custody Statistics Quarterly Update to 31 March 2013

NOMS Commissioning Intentions 2012/13: Discussion Document, Ministry of Justice, 2011

NOMS Ministry of Justice Commissioning Intentions 2013/4: Negotiation Document, Ministry of Justice 2012

NOMS Estate Management Review Team, *Women's Prison Estate Design: Key Principles to Inform the Design of Women's Prisons*, Unpublished

NOMS Personality Disorder Co-Commissioning Team, *Health/Criminal Justice System interface issues affecting women offenders with personality disorder: a data summary*, unpublished, 2013

NOMS Personality Disorder Co-Commissioning Team *Protocol on Health/CJS Interface Issues Affecting Women Offenders with Severe Personality Disorder*, unpublished, 2013

Plugge, E., Douglas, N., and Fitzpatrick, R., *The Health of Women in Prison: Study Findings*, University of Oxford, 2006

Prison Reform Trust, *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile*, November 2012

Social Exclusion Task Force, *Think Family: Improving the life chances of families at risk*, Cabinet Office, 2008

Stewart, L. and Gobeil, R. *Effective Responses for Female Offenders: A Rapid Evidence Assessment*, NOMS 2013, unpublished

Tchaikovsky, C. *One Hundred Women*, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, 2000

Ward, J. *Researching Self Injury in a Women's Prison via Participatory Action Research*, Durham University, 2012

Williams, K. Papadopoulou, V. and Booth, N. *Prisoners' Childhood and Family Backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) Longitudinal Cohort Study of Prisoners*, MoJ Analytical Services, March 2012

Women's Aid, *Evaluation of the Power to Change Program piloted within the National Offender Management Service and associated Community Services*, August 2012

Women's Aid, Supporting Women Offenders Project: Women's Aid Interim Report for Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service, October 2010

Annex A: Terms of Reference

Introduction

In a written statement to Parliament on 10 January 2013, the Justice Secretary set out his intention to review how women are held in custody:

“I am conscious that women offenders have particular needs and that the custodial female estate should be organised as effectively as possible to meet gender specific requirements whilst also delivering best value for the public. I have therefore asked officials to undertake a review of custodial arrangements for women”.

Direction

You are directed to carry out a review of the custodial arrangements for women in England and Wales. This review should consider:

1. The location, cost and fitness-for-purpose of women's prisons and alternative potential configuration of the women's estate. This should include consideration of possible changes of function for those establishments which do not currently hold women;
2. The provision of accommodation and geographical spread of closed and open female establishments, restricted status provision, resettlement and through the gate opportunities; and
3. The provision of regimes for women including gender-specific interventions and paying particular attention to those small groups of women who have very specific needs, including foreign nationals, mothers of young babies and those with complex health and mental health requirements.

In looking at these issues you must take into account: physical security; procedural security; regime requirements; proposed changes to post release supervision and support arrangements; projections of the size and shape of the women offender prison population

You are further directed to make appropriate and costed recommendations to ensure that the female custodial estate is organised as effectively as possible to meet gender-specific requirements of women offenders whilst also delivering best value for the public.

In doing this your recommendations should be both affordable and deliverable in Spending Review 2010 and Spending Review 2015.

Scope

This review should not consider women who are held in:

- immigration detention;
- young persons' accommodation; and
- local authority secure accommodation.

Reporting and Governance

An interim report and emerging findings should be presented to NOMS Executive Management Committee (NEMC) by 31 May 2013.

Your final findings and recommendations should be presented to the Director of National Operational Services by summer 2013.

Consultation

You should consult as appropriate to ensure that stakeholders from within the justice, health, education and welfare fields can engage with and help shape the review.

Your work should take into account the wider policy developments being developed by the Ministerial Advisory Board on Women Offenders.

Resources

Appropriate resources will be made available from within NOMS Operational Services and Interventions Group.

Annex B: Population Trends

Population trends to date

Whilst the general prison population has grown during most years since World War II, between 1993 and 2008 the growth rate increased from an average of two and half percent to four percent per year. Since 2009, the growth rate has slowed to 1.0 percent per year. The growth in the prison population since 1993 has been driven by tougher sentencing and enforcement outcomes, and a more serious mix of offence groups coming before the courts.

However, much of this growth was in the male estate – indeed the female prison population has fallen in most years since 2003 (whereas the male population rose in most years over this period). Between 2003 and 2012 the trends in the female population were in contrast to those of the male population. However, more recently, since early 2012 the trend in the female population has mirrored that of the male population.

Between 30 June 2003 and 30 June 2012 the female prison population fell by 10 percent from 4,600 to 4,100. This was in contrast to the trend in the male prison population which, over the same period, rose by 19 percent from 69,100 to 81,900.

The main driver of the fall in the women's prison population over this time was the fall in the remand population - from 1,100 in June 2003 to 630 in June 2012 - this accounted for over 90 percent of the total fall in the female prison population. Whilst there was no real change in the overall female sentenced population, there were significant differences between offence types. This period saw a large fall in the number serving sentences for drug offences, however, this was offset by increases in the number in custody for violence against the person, fraud and forgery offences.

More recently the female population fell by seven percent (270 prisoners) between 30 June 2012 and 30 June 2013. Almost all of the reduction was due to a fall in the sentenced population (the remand population fell by a similar proportion, but it had less of an impact overall as the remand population is much smaller than the sentenced population). Over the same period the male population fell by two percent (down 1,900) again driven by a fall in the sentenced population (although, as for females, the remand population also saw a small fall).

The latest court statistics for calendar year 2012 show the numbers proceeded against for indictable offences had fallen by 13 percent for women and 11 percent for men (compared to 2011). This translated into an eight percent fall in those sentenced to immediate custody for men and women.

Future population projections

Projections of the future prison population were published in November 2012 and these will be updated in November 2013. Actual population figures since publication show that the current over 18 prison population of women is tracking slightly below the lower projection.

Three projected scenarios have been modelled. They track the impact of three different sentencing trends on custodial convictions, custodial sentence length and hence, on the resulting prison population. Other impacts included in the projections, such as those of changing legislation, changing procedures and new sentencing guidelines are applied equally to all three scenarios.

Projected female 18 years and over prison population (based on historical end of June figures)

	Sentencing Scenario		
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
June 2013	3,900	4,000	4,100
June 2014	3,700	3,900	4,100
June 2015	3,700	3,900	4,100
June 2016	3,600	3,900	4,100
June 2017	3,600	3,900	4,200
June 2018	3,600	3,900	4,200

Source: Prison Population Projections 2012 – 2018 England and Wales, Ministry of Justice