Evening Seminar

What About the Women?

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Background to the Academy

• The Academy’s mission is to bring people together to share knowledge, skills and practice and to promote excellence in social justice commissioning

• The Academy was created in 2007 and now has over 3600 cross sector members

• Services are designed to support the development of social justice commissioning and include nationwide events, eLearning, commissioning themed learning groups and a website offering commissioning information
What about the Women?

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Women in the Criminal Justice System

• A greater proportion of prosecutions against women are brought by bodies other than the police.

• Women are over-represented in prosecutions for TV licence evasion, child truancy and benefit fraud.

• Since 2012, prosecutions against men have fallen by 5% whilst those against women have increased by 4%.

• The increase in the number of women prosecuted is largely driven by TV licence evasion prosecutions – the majority of these women receive a fine.

• In 2016, 1,679 women sentenced for benefit fraud:
  41% of women received a community sentence;
  25% a suspended sentence; and
  2% immediate custody
Sentencing

• On average, women commit less serious offences than men…89% of women are sentenced for summary offences and 11% for indictable or triable-either-way offences compared to 76% (and 24% of men).

• In 2016, 2% of sentenced women were sentenced to immediate custody compared to 10% of sentenced men.

• Those women who do enter custody receive shorter sentences than men, on average 17 months for men and 9 months for women.

• The most common offence for which custody is given for women (and men) is shoplifting.

• 56% of women receive an immediate custodial sentence of 3 months or less.

• Women make up around 4.5% of the total prison population.

• The women’s prison population had been around 4000 since 2007.
Community Sentences

• Women are slightly more likely to compete community orders than men. (76% compared to 70%)

• For women and men, the number of community order (CO) starts have decreased since 2009.

• Falling demand across the CJS can explain some of this effect. Other factors that may contribute are: increased use of suspended sentence orders (SSOs); fewer first time entrants; a shift in the case mix towards more serious offences; and sentencing behaviour.
Community Sentences contd/…

• Despite high levels of need, Drug Treatment Requirements (DTRs), Alcohol Rehabilitation Requirements (ARRs), Mental Health Treatment Requirements (MHTRs) and residential requirements appear to be underused.

• MOJ analysis that used matching techniques to compare similar offenders found that those who received court orders (community orders or suspended sentence orders) had a statistically significant lower level of reoffending than those who received short custodial sentences (3 percentage points for community orders and 7 percentage points for suspended sentence orders).
Black and minority ethnic offenders are more likely than white offenders to receive a custodial sentence and are over-represented in the prison population

• BAME women are over-represented within the prison population, particularly Black women

• Under similar circumstances, the odds of imprisonment for BAME women and men are higher compared with white women and men

• The average custodial sentence length was 3 months longer for BAME females (12.8 months) than for White female offenders (9.6 months), and 6 months longer for BAME males (24.6 months) than for White males (18.8 months)
Factors linked to women’s offending:

Women are:

- More than twice as likely as male offenders to report needing help for mental health problems (49% compared with 18%)
- Twice as likely as male offenders to report having experienced abuse in childhood (53% compared with 27%)
- More likely to report committing their offence to get money to buy drugs, (66% compared with 38% of male prisoners)
- Twice as likely as male prisoners to suffer from anxiety and depression (49% compared with 23%)
- Over 60% of female offenders report being a victim of domestic violence
3 top tips to takeaway

• **Women are not the same as men**
  • Their needs and complexity should to be taken into account when commissioning services
  • We cannot assume services for men will meet the needs of women

• **Women are not all the same**
  • Women have different experiences and needs from each other.
  • Ethnicity, age and other protected characteristics should be taken into account when commissioning services for women - they are not an homogenous group.

• **Women interact in different ways to men**
  • How women react with professionals and services may depend upon their past experiences of trauma and abuse.
  • Training in how to work with women in a trauma informed way should be part of service specifications when considering services for women
Any Questions?