



Ministry
of Justice

Female Offender Strategy

June 2018

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of Justice

Female Offender Strategy

Presented to Parliament
by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
by Command of Her Majesty

June 2018



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Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Chapter One: Early Intervention	11
Chapter Two: Community Solutions	17
Chapter Three: Better Custody	26
Chapter Four: Framework for Implementation	35
Conclusion	43
Annex A: Lord Farmer Review Terms of Reference	45

Foreword

As a Government, we are committed to doing all we can to protect and support the most vulnerable in our society. Nowhere is that more imperative than in the criminal justice system, where many vulnerable people find themselves in crisis either as victims, offenders or both.

People make choices and behave in ways which cause hurt and harm to others and wider damage to our society. It is right that we punish those behaviours and expect individuals to take responsibility for their actions. However, that is only part of the story. Offenders are part of our society and we must take steps to understand and address the underlying causes of offending, if we are to improve the lives of victims and support offenders to turn their own lives around.

The evidence shows us that vulnerability is not just a consequence of crime. It can also drive offending behaviour and prevent people from breaking out of a cycle of reoffending.

This is particularly stark when we look at female offenders. We know that there is a higher prevalence of need amongst female offenders, such as mental health problems, and self-harm. Many experience chaotic lifestyles which are often the product of a life of abuse and trauma; almost 60% of female offenders have experienced domestic abuse.

I am convinced that if we take the right approach to female offenders – one that addresses vulnerability, follows the evidence about what works in supporting them to turn their lives around, and treats them as individuals of value – it could have substantial benefits for victims, families, and wider society, as well as for female offenders themselves.

This strategy sets out the Government's commitment to a new programme of work for female offenders, driven by three priorities: earlier intervention, an emphasis on community-based solutions, and an aim to make custody as effective and decent as possible for those women who do have to be there. It also sets out our framework for taking this forward: it is only through effective partnerships, at national and local level, that progress can really happen. In particular, I know that the role of third sector partners, such as women's centres, working with local statutory bodies, will be key to taking this forward.

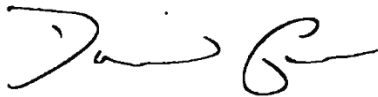
Underpinning this approach are some significant truths. 70.7% of adult women and 62.9% of adult men released from custody between April to June 2016 following a short custodial sentence of less than 12 months reoffended within a year. There is persuasive evidence that short custodial sentences are less effective in reducing reoffending than community orders. Short sentences generate churn which is a major driver of instability in our prisons and they do not provide sufficient time for rehabilitative activity. The impact on women, many of whom are sentenced for non-violent, low level but persistent offences, often for short periods of time, is particularly significant. The prevalence of anxiety and self-harm incidents is greater than for male prisoners. As more female offenders are primary carers than their male counterparts, these sentences lead to a disproportionate impact on children and families and a failure to halt the intergenerational cycle of offending.

Female Offender Strategy

Today there are 3,850 women in our prisons. I want to see this fall, with fewer women in prison for short sentences. The way forward is through shifting our focus from custody to the community.

This strategy outlines the immediate measures we are taking to achieve this, including cross-Government investment and plans to test new residential options for diverting women entering and re-entering custody on short custodial sentences.

We are setting out our commitment and direction of travel for female offenders. We acknowledge that making a meaningful change will be a substantial and ongoing task. We are committed to undertaking this journey in partnership across Government, by supporting locally-led approaches and building upon the evidence base about what works.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Gauke', written in a cursive style.

Rt. Hon David Gauke MP
Secretary of State for Justice

Introduction

A strategy for female offenders

1. To reduce crime and make a difference to victims, we need to consider the underlying causes of offending and reoffending, and take an evidence-based approach to rehabilitating offenders.
2. We know that many offenders are amongst the most vulnerable people in society and that these vulnerabilities can often contribute to their offending behaviours or how they engage and respond to interventions.^{1,2} Female offenders can be amongst the most vulnerable of all, in both the prevalence and complexity of their needs. Many experience chaotic lifestyles involving substance misuse, mental health problems, homelessness, and offending behaviour – these are often the product of a life of abuse and trauma.³
3. Although the proportion of women in the criminal justice system (CJS) is small – approximately 5% of the prison population and 15% of offenders in the community – the positive impact of addressing their needs is significant.⁴
4. On average female offenders commit less serious offences than male offenders and often pose a low or medium risk of serious harm to the public.^{5,6} Yet the reoffending rate among women is 22.9% for the April to June 2016 cohort, often committing non-violent, low-level but persistent offences, such as shop theft.^{7,8} Furthermore, chaotic lives and complex needs often mean female offenders have repeated needs for services and a disrupted family life. Female offenders cost the Government approximately £1.7bn in 2015/16, including estimated police costs of c.£1bn.⁹ This excludes wider social costs, such as the cost of intergenerational offending.
5. It is clear, therefore, that tackling and reducing the cycle of offending amongst women could have significant benefits to victims, families, and Government, as well as to female offenders themselves.
6. Outcomes for women in custody can be worse than for men: for example, the rate of self-harm is nearly five times as high in women's prisons.¹⁰ This disparity is highly troubling and it is right to seek to create equal opportunity for men and women in the CJS to rehabilitate themselves. Baroness Corston's seminal report, *A review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System* (2007), highlighted that the factors that can lead men and women to commit crime, and to reoffend, can vary significantly, as can the way men and women respond to interventions.¹¹ Our own evidence review suggests that ensuring interventions are tailored appropriately to the particular needs of women can be more effective than applying a generic approach to men and women alike.¹²
7. There is a clear opportunity to take an entirely different approach to this cohort – one that addresses vulnerability, acknowledges the role of gender, treats female offenders as individuals with the potential to make a positive contribution to wider society, and ultimately breaks the cycle of reoffending with all the benefits that brings for families and society as a whole.

The Case for Change:

Criminalising vulnerable individuals has broader negative social impacts

8. Coming into contact with the criminal justice system, and in particular custody, can undermine the ability of women to address the issues that have caused their offending. In particular, many have difficulty maintaining employment and accommodation whilst in the CJS. This can contribute to these women entering crisis, or failing to come out of it, ultimately requiring greater support from services and leading to reoffending. Furthermore, the criminalisation or incarceration of parents has a significant impact on families and children.¹³ The incarceration of women may also have a disproportionate impact on intergenerational offending as they are more likely to be living with their children prior to custody.¹⁴

Short custodial sentences do not deliver the best results for female offenders

9. Custody is intended as a last resort, to protect the public and to punish and rehabilitate offenders. Over three quarters of women sentenced to custody receive sentences of fewer than 12 months.¹⁵ 56.1% of adult women released from custody between April and June 2016 reoffended within a year, with 70.7% of women reoffending following a short custodial sentence (<12m).¹⁶ There is persuasive evidence that short custodial sentences of less than 12 months are less effective in reducing reoffending than community penalties.¹⁷ –Custody results in significant disruptions to family life. We also know that custody can be particularly damaging for women, whose rates of self-harm are nearly five times higher than those of men.¹⁸ Women are also twice as likely to report suffering from anxiety and depression and more likely to report symptoms indicative of psychosis.¹⁹

Good community management works

10. Many female offenders could be more successfully supported in the community, where reoffending outcomes are better.²⁰ Community orders also offer the opportunity to support female offenders to engage in employment, and secure stable accommodation. They can be used effectively to address other underlying causes of offending, such as substance misuse problems. The third sector network of women's services, such as women's centres, play an important role in supporting us to meet women's needs, minimise disruption to families and more effectively maintain female offenders within their community as productive citizens, at less cost to Government and greater benefit to themselves and society.

Our vision and strategic priorities:

Fewer women coming into the criminal justice system

11. We want to see fewer women offending in the first place. Intervening earlier to address the needs of vulnerable women could prevent offending for some, and interrupt the cycle of reoffending for others. We want to see more support for vulnerable women in the community and more measures to divert women from coming into contact with the CJS, where appropriate.

Fewer women in custody (especially on short-term sentences) and a greater proportion of women managed in the community successfully

12. We want to reduce the female prison population, with fewer offenders sent to custody for short periods. We will therefore shift our emphasis from custody to the community, and as part of this we will not be building the five new Community Prisons for Women.²¹ Instead, we want to ensure that the public and judiciary have confidence in non-custodial sentences - such as effective community orders - which directly tackle the causes of reoffending, including alcohol or drug abuse. We will be looking at what more we can do to emphasise that short custodial sentences should be viewed as a last resort.

Better conditions for those in custody

13. We want to see a custodial environment that continues to protect the public, but which also enables rehabilitation and delivers better outcomes for female offenders. This includes improving family ties. We want to drastically reduce the rates of self-harm and self-inflicted deaths. We want women to be supported on release to transition back into the community by securing stable accommodation and education and/or employment; along with the necessary support to manage and overcome other needs, such as mental health problems and substance misuse. This will help more women to step out of the cycle of reoffending and become productive citizens.

A Framework for Implementation:

14. Our strategic priorities must be underpinned by a clear framework for all partners within and outside the CJS to deliver real progress. We want to support an approach that is:

Locally-led

15. We want local areas across England and Wales to feel empowered to design approaches tailored for the specific needs of their populations and local circumstances. We will continue to support them with evidence of what works. We believe that the development of Whole System Approaches (WSA) that offer holistic support through joined-up local service provision are key to delivering better outcomes.

Partnership-focused

16. We want to ensure a joined-up approach across Government at a national level and between services at a local level, including the third sector, to deliver a holistic response to women. We will set a clear structure to help partners work together effectively to address the drivers of offending and the needs of female offenders.

Evidence-based

17. Working with local areas and providers, we will continue to develop the evidence base to better understand what works. Interventions will be tested for sustainability, scalability, and to ensure the best use of the available funding.

Our Commitment:

18. This strategy marks the launch of a new programme of work to improve our collective approach to female offenders and make society safer by tackling the underlying causes of offending and reoffending.
19. Our commitments today are a first step on which we will build going forward. We commit today to:
 - **Invest £5 million of cross-Government funding over two years in community provision for women.** As part of this, today we are launching an initial £3.5m grant competition for 2018/19 and 2019/20, which includes £2 million of funding explicitly for female offenders who have experienced domestic abuse. We recognise that the availability and sustainability of these services, such as women's centres, is essential for ensuring that we can deliver the vision we have outlined. An additional £1.5m will be invested to support the development of community-based provision for female offenders, such as residential support.
 - **Work with local and national partners to develop a pilot for 'residential women's centres' in at least five sites across England and Wales.** This supports our vision to see fewer women in custody by developing more options for supporting women in the community. We know that many women, particularly on short custodial sentences, can be better supported in the community on robust and effective community sentences. We consider that the availability of intensive residential support options, both at the point of sentencing and on release, is key for achieving the changes we want to see. The pilot will enable us to test models which provide safe accommodation and holistic support for women in the community so that they can address the underlying causes of their offending.
 - **We are committed to reducing the number of women serving short custodial sentences.** If we can successfully divert women from crime so as to close one or more prisons, we want to see at least part of the revenue used to further the aims of this strategy, subject to the wider context at that time.
20. To support implementation, we are publishing alongside this strategy:
 - **Guidance for the police on working with vulnerable women, developed in partnership with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC).** If we are to intervene successfully at an earlier stage, the police must be able to assess and identify the most appropriate outcome for these women and refer them to sources of support. Across England and Wales there are promising local examples of where models are in place to triage vulnerable women and support them in to Out of Court Disposals (OOCs) where appropriate.
 - **Guidance on the development of whole systems approaches,** which sets out the emerging evidence base for a holistic, multi-agency approach to addressing the needs of female offenders.

21. We want to improve outcomes for women at all stages in the CJS. With that in mind, we have:
- **Asked Lord Farmer to continue his work on the importance of family ties in improving outcomes for offenders, by undertaking a further piece of work to review his recommendations through the lens of the needs of female offenders.** We expect this to report by the end of the year. We know that there is an impact on families and children when a woman is involved in the CJS and that children of imprisoned mothers may be particularly affected by a custodial sentence. This review will enable us to understand what specific measures we can take to strengthen family ties, especially with their children, whilst serving sentences in the community, in custody and after they are released.
 - **Begun the process to replace Prison Service Order (PSO) 4800 with a Women's Policy Framework.** We will aim to publish a final version by the end of Autumn 2018. This will expand the focus from working with women in prison to guidance for working with women throughout the CJS.
22. Finally, we know that we will only make progress in tackling the often complex needs of female offenders by adopting a partnership approach at both a national and local level. Therefore, we will:
- **Work across Government and with other national and local partners to develop a National Concordat on Female Offenders.** This will set out how local partners and services should be working together in partnership to identify and respond to the often multiple and complex needs of women as they journey through the CJS. We aim to publish this by the end of 2018.

Scope:

23. The geographical scope of this strategy covers England and Wales. The UK devolved administrations have their own approaches towards the healthcare of offenders where responsibility is devolved. Some of the policy areas covered by this strategy such as health and social care therefore only cover England. Any mention of areas relating to the work of Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the MoJ apply to England and Wales. We, the Ministry of Justice, work with the devolved administrations to ensure a coordinated approach to the care and management of prisoners in all areas of the UK. The population referenced in this strategy includes all adult female offenders in England and Wales.

The Welsh Context

24. The Welsh Government shares the broad ambitions set out in this strategy, including fewer women in prison, earlier and more appropriate intervention, diversion, strong partnership working, and rehabilitative support that enables women to turn their lives around and stop offending.
25. However, Wales has its own legislative and policy landscape in areas such as health, social care, substance misuse, housing and accommodation, education and skills and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Further, Wales does not have a women's prison. As a consequence, it needs a distinct approach to Welsh women both within, and at risk of entering the Criminal Justice System.

26. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Wales (HMPPS), part of the Ministry of Justice, and the Welsh Government are working in partnership to develop a joint "blueprint" for Wales, for the delivery of appropriate provision for Welsh women in, and at risk of entering the Criminal Justice System. This will take account of both the devolved (Welsh Government) and non-devolved (Ministry of Justice) landscape. The blueprint will set out a shared ambition to establish and embed a Whole System Approach within Wales, from prevention and early intervention through to resettlement and reintegration. It will also address the question of alternatives to custody for Welsh women, as well as a distinct approach to supporting offenders, their families, and women at risk of offending.
27. The blueprint, and ongoing partnership working, will ensure that the diverse and complex needs of female offenders in Wales will be met in the best ways possible.

Chapter One: Early Intervention

Chapter Summary:

28. A significant proportion of women who come into contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) commit offences that are low-level.²² In some cases, their offending could have been prevented by addressing their vulnerabilities at an earlier stage. Many experience chaotic lifestyles involving substance misuse, mental health problems, homelessness and offending behaviour – as the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy has acknowledged, these are often the product of histories of abuse and trauma.²³ Often these offenders will have repeated demands on services and go on to reoffend. Contact with the CJS can often cause these women to go into crisis or prevent them from coming out of it. Conviction can mean a loss of accommodation and employment, disruption to families and children and the beginning of a cycle of intergenerational offending.
29. There are clear benefits to intervening earlier to reduce the number of women coming into contact with the CJS. For victims, prevention and reduced reoffending would lead to a reduction in crime; for wider society, there would be less cost and less pressure on services; for offenders and their families, they might avoid a crisis experience and instead begin a path towards more stable living.

We will reduce the number of women coming into contact with the CJS by:

Intervening earlier to address vulnerabilities that can lead to offending, by:

- Funding community provision and domestic abuse services for women

Diverting offenders from the CJS, where it is appropriate to do so, and addressing their needs to prevent reoffending, by:

- Optimising Liaison & Diversion schemes
- Supporting the Police to work with vulnerable women
- Improving use of Out of Court Disposals
- Working with non-police prosecutors
- Promoting Retail-Based Diversion

The Challenge

30. We know that in many cases vulnerabilities can be a contributing factor in female offending, whether substance misuse issues, experience of abuse, relationship issues, housing issues, employment or financial issues.
31. We recognise the major part that domestic abuse can play in female offending. This abuse can take different forms, including coercive and controlling behaviour. Being a victim of domestic abuse is a predictor of violent reoffending among women. Almost

60% of female offenders supervised in the community or in custody, who have an assessment, have experienced domestic abuse.^{24,25}

32. The Prison Reform Trust report, “*There’s a reason we’re in trouble*,” examined domestic abuse as a driver to women’s offending.²⁶ It found that the response of criminal justice agencies to female offenders affected by domestic abuse can be key to breaking the cycle of victimisation and offending, and that identification of domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity is critical. The Government’s VAWG Strategy acknowledges that the cost of domestic abuse to health, housing and social services, criminal justice and civil legal services is estimated at £3.9 billion.²⁷ Supporting these women at an early stage, either before they commit an offence or when the offence is very low level, can prevent them from (re-)entering the CJS.
33. Prosecutions against women are far more likely to be for low-level non-violent offences than those against men.²⁸ Shop theft is one of the most common offences for which women and men are given a custodial sentence, and the most common offence for which women are given a Penalty Notice for Disorder, community sentence or suspended sentence.²⁹ In 2017, shoplifting accounted for 43% of adult females sentenced for indictable/triable either-way offences. Women are also over-represented in prosecutions for TV licence evasion and child truancy. For TV licensing, about 70% of prosecutions are against women.³⁰ In some cases, it may be more appropriate to divert these women from prosecution and address the causes of their offending.
34. Contact with the CJS can also have very negative outcomes for the families, particularly children of offenders. International evidence has found that children with incarcerated parents are at increased risk of antisocial and offending behaviour.³¹ Given that a higher proportion of imprisoned mothers are living with their dependent children prior to imprisonment than imprisoned fathers (~60% vs. ~45%), the imprisonment of mothers has a greater impact on the living arrangements of dependent children than the imprisonment of fathers.³²
35. These risks are compounded by patchy provision of gender-informed community services to support them, particularly those run by the third sector such as women’s centres, which we know can be effective at reducing reoffending. Even where services do exist, the level of provision does not always match local demand, such as in London, which accounts for the highest volume of female offenders by area in England and Wales.

Intervening earlier to address the vulnerabilities that can lead to offending

The role of local areas, third sector and other Government Departments

36. We want local areas, whose service structures vary, to take a joined-up, multi-agency approach to addressing the barriers that prevent women with multiple and complex needs from accessing services effectively. To be effective, these approaches should bring together agencies such as the Police & Crime Commissioners (PCC), health services, criminal justice agencies and third sector providers. To deliver this, we want to see sufficient, gender-informed provision in local areas to meet the needs of female offenders.

37. Services commissioned by PCCs, the third sector network of women's centres and women-specific services provide valuable early support to vulnerable women, many of whom have complex needs, before they reach crisis point. Given the women these services work with, we would like to see local agencies and commissioners working with us and investing in women's centres and other women-specific services. We recognise the critical role that have played in supporting the sustainability of women's community services such as women's centres. We want to ensure that our approach instils
38. Many other services, such as health or education, may encounter at-risk women before they enter the CJS. We want services to identify and engage these women to address issues that could be factors in their offending.
39. We are grateful for the role which charitable trusts and foundations have played in supporting women's community services, often providing a critical lifeline for third sector providers. We are keen to work with these organisations and to ensure local services can continue to build on their expertise, experience and support.

Funding community provision and domestic abuse services for women

40. As part of our shift in emphasis from custody to the community, we are launching a grant competition alongside this strategy which will award £3.5m of funding between 2018-2020 (£2m in 2018/19 and £1.5m 2019/20) for community provision for female offenders or those at risk of offending. Funding will be provided to develop provision for women with an experience of domestic abuse, to maintain and develop community services for women, and to support local areas to develop and embed Whole System Approaches (WSA) for female offenders (see chapter four for further detail on WSA).
41. Given the overrepresentation of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) women in the CJS, we want to see funding used to address the needs of this cohort, as well as those of other cohorts of women with protected characteristics who find it difficult to access services.³³ Applications to the grant competition will be required to show how they will increase engagement with such cohorts, and support them.
42. We will invest an additional £1.5 million capital funding to support the development of community-based provision for female offenders.
43. The Government consultation on domestic abuse, *Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse* closed on 31 May 2018. £20 million in funding was announced by the Prime Minister in the Spring Budget 2017 to tackle domestic abuse, of which £2 million has been dedicated to female offenders. The consultation sought views on how we can work better with female offenders and vulnerable women at risk of offending identify their domestic abuse earlier. We are considering the responses to the consultation to determine how best the remaining funding can support victims and at-risk families. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will also announce further significant funding for domestic abuse services, including refuges, as early as possible this financial year. This will include launching a new fund which will be open to all local areas across England to bid for a share.

Diverting offenders from the CJS, where it is appropriate to do so, and addressing their needs to prevent reoffending

Optimising Liaison and Diversion

44. NHS-commissioned Liaison and Diversion (L&D) services are on the frontline of the effort to divert women from the CJS. They place clinical staff at police stations and courts across England to provide assessments and referrals to treatment and support. Offenders may be diverted away from the CJS altogether, away from charge, or to a community sentence with a treatment requirement. Health is devolved in Wales and they have developed a similar but separate Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion service. L&D started in April 2014 and is being rolled out across England. Coverage is currently at 82% of the population of England, with full coverage to be delivered by March 2020. Wales are developing similar plans.
45. These services will be most effective when they can respond to women in a gender-informed way, as many women struggle to disclose details about their circumstances. They often fear the negative consequences of any admissions of mental health problems or substance misuse issues, particularly if they have dependents or are in an abusive relationship. NHS England are currently enhancing 'women's pathways' across all L&D services, with a women's lead appointed in each service to lead this work. These pathways are being co-designed with women with lived experience of the CJS. Services will allow women coming into police custody to choose the gender of their practitioner, offer gender-sensitive tools for screening and provide effective onward referrals to gender-informed services. Consideration will also be given to addressing the barriers that particular groups, such as sex workers and foreign national women, face in accessing services. MoJ will continue to work with the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England to support roll-out and ensure that these services are best placed to meet the needs of women.

Supporting the Police to work with vulnerable women

46. The earlier a woman's vulnerabilities are identified, the more can be done to intervene in the cycle of offending.³⁴ Contact with the police is an opportunity to offer a single needs assessment that identifies and addresses the full complexity of an individual's circumstances, including protected characteristics.
47. We are launching alongside this strategy comprehensive guidance on working with vulnerable women which we have developed in partnership with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). This includes needs assessments for women who come into contact with the police, whether or not they are arrested. This may enable police to divert women from the CJS altogether, or support courts to give women a community order rather than a short custodial sentence by supplying them with a fuller picture of the woman's circumstances. The MoJ, Home Office, NPCC and Association for Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) have jointly committed to advocating and driving forward use of the guidance across police forces in England and Wales.
48. Additionally, the College of Policing have developed a vulnerability and risk training programme, which equips staff to work in a trauma-informed way. This has been delivered to 9,500 police officers and staff, and the course has recently become available for local delivery under licence from the College.

Improving Out of Court Disposals

49. Once women come into contact with the police, an Out of Court Disposal (OCD) can be administered to deal proportionately with low level offending without recourse to the courts. Whilst this could be an effective tool for maintaining women in the community, under the current system, too many disposals are simply warnings not to reoffend and fail to address underlying causes of the offending behaviour through attaching conditions. This is not sufficient if we are to provide the holistic support that will effectively divert women from the CJS in the long-term.
50. To explore the potential of this mechanism, we piloted an OCD framework in three police forces (West Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire) in 2014-15 that emphasised reforming offenders. 44% of all conditional cautions attached conditions that were rehabilitative.³⁵ Some of these pilot areas also referred female offenders to women's centres to address their offending behaviour alongside their OCD.
51. More broadly, many police areas are working to develop quality diversion options for women. We will look to support the replication of this approach through our support of police leadership by the NPCC, who published a *Charging and Out of Court Disposals Strategy* in January 2018.

Police Assessment and Out of Court Disposal Case Study

Checkpoint, a deferred prosecution scheme in Durham, saw positive outcomes working with female offenders out of court. Using a multi-agency approach, Checkpoint supports those eligible with a 'navigator' who conducts an in-depth needs assessment based on their risk of reoffending, sets the conditions and manages the woman throughout a four month period. The offender must agree and engage with the contract or risk prosecution for the offence. Over 90% of those who participated completed the scheme successfully and did not receive a criminal record.

The example below sets out one female offender's journey (referred to below as CM).

Arrested for shoplifting, police identified that CM had been exploited in many ways to commit the offence. Well known to police, she was categorised as a vulnerable offender, with a history of being a victim of crimes such as domestic abuse, violence and damage, and arson. A risk assessment was undertaken which looked at her accommodation, finances, health, family and relationships. Navigators identified issues with domestic abuse, methadone and alcohol addiction, and mental health.

CM agreed to, and engaged with, the pathway conditions: to attend a drug reduction programme and alcoholic anonymous group, schedule a GP appointment to address depression and anxiety issues, accept a referral to Harbour (a charity that works with individuals affected by abuse) and make right with the victim through a face to face apology.

In the four-month period, navigators worked to provide a support system and build a relationship of trust. The interventions improved her drug and alcohol dependencies, and helped the client distance herself from her abusive partner. Without Checkpoint, CM would have been processed in the CJS, potentially continuing the offending cycle and neglecting to address the underlying cause of the offending behaviour. CM has not offended since the conclusion of her pathway.

Working with non-police prosecutors

52. The 2015 *Perry Review* into TV licence evasion recommended that the BBC and Government should explore ways to investigate and consider the gender disparity in TV licence prosecutions.³⁶ We have been working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the BBC on their work to consider this issue. In response to a key recommendation to the review around flexibility of payment, legislation was introduced on 9 March 2018 which allows TV Licensing to test a new payment plan. The Simple Payment Plan is for those who find it most difficult to pay the licence fee and the plan offers flexibility if payments are missed. The BBC have also conducted research into the reasons for the gender disparity and published their findings in December. We will continue to monitor their response

Promoting Retail-based Diversion

53. Given the prevalence of shop theft offences amongst women, retail-based diversion schemes offer an important opportunity to divert women from prosecution and address the needs that lead to their offending. A 'women's retail triage' pilot in Bury is diverting women caught shoplifting to their local women's centre or women's service rather than to the CJS. We will be looking to gather further data from this pilot, and to promote its approach in other areas.

Bury Retail Diversion Scheme Case Study

April was referred to the Women of Worth centre via the Bury retail diversion scheme, in place of prosecution. A mother of one and a mature Student, April had a history of an eating disorder, and suffered with chronic pain, panic attacks and low self-esteem. She was identified as having both mental and physical health needs, and also issues relating to time management and offending.

As part of the support April received at the women's centre, April had five 1-2-1 sessions in which she explored how her mental health was affecting her behaviour, and the triggers for her offending, and learnt how to modify her negative actions. She was also supported to develop techniques to help manage panic attacks, to address her eating disorder, and to improve her time management. As a result, April had better self-awareness, including understanding why she offended. She gained more self-control, was able to manage her panic attacks and had higher self-esteem. April re-engaged with appropriate services and successfully completed her college course & qualification.

Chapter Two: Community Solutions

Chapter Summary

54. Custody is intended as a last resort, for the protection of the public and the punishment and rehabilitation of the offender. However, short sentences offer limited public protection, and fail to offer time for meaningful rehabilitative activity. In some cases, short sentences can aggravate vulnerabilities and raise the risk of reoffending. Going into custody often causes huge disruption to the lives of offenders and their families, causing crises in employment, housing and contact with dependents.
55. This issue disproportionately affects women: 77% of women sentenced to custody in 2017 were given sentences of under 12 months, compared with 62% of men.³⁷ Furthermore, there is a considerable population of women sentenced to custody for non-violent low-level but persistent offences, who have only a low or medium public protection risk. In 2017, almost half (47%) of women sentenced to a short custodial sentence had committed shop theft.³⁸ The majority (94%) of women in custody serving a short sentence of under 12 months are a low or medium public protection risk.³⁹
56. By contrast, good community management of offenders can in many cases be far more effective and produce better reoffending outcomes.⁴⁰ Community orders also support offenders to engage in employment and secure stable accommodation, both of which are factors in reducing reoffending. Disruption to families is significantly less and women can be more effectively maintained within their community as productive citizens at less cost to Government and greater benefit to themselves and society.
57. We would like to see fewer female offenders sent to custody for short periods. We will be looking at what more we can do to emphasise that short custodial sentences should be viewed as a last resort. We want to ensure that the public and judiciary have confidence in non-custodial sentences - such as effective community orders – which directly tackle the causes of reoffending, including alcohol or drug abuse and factors that influence how women engage and respond to interventions, such as mental health. We will aim to reduce female prison places and provide more options in the community for women that address the causes of offending and support more effective rehabilitation.
58. To address the prevalence of short custodial sentences, we are putting in place a number of measures to foster an environment that encourages the use of community sentences instead of custodial ones where appropriate.

We will support a greater proportion of women to serve their sentence in the community successfully and reduce the numbers serving short custodial sentences by:

Ensuring that courts have better and more comprehensive information about female offenders to inform sentencing decisions by:

- Engaging with courts
- Improving Pre-Sentence Reports

Developing more options for managing women in the community by:

- Piloting Residential Women's Centres
- Improving Accommodation Provision
- Increasing use of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements
- Piloting Electronic Monitoring, including new technologies such as location monitoring

Providing more support for those offenders managed in the community by:

- Developing a more gender-informed probation service

The Challenge

59. Given the low and medium risk profile of the majority of female prisoners serving short sentences, it may be more appropriate, in many cases, to manage them in the community rather than in custody.⁴¹ However, we know most women sentenced to immediate custody are given short custodial sentences, with over half sentenced to three months or less.⁴² On 31 March 2018, 15% of women in prison were held on remand.⁴³ This can be due to a lack of available appropriate accommodation for them, rather than because their risk profile or offence type necessitates it. For example, almost 9 in 10 women held on remand are low or medium risk of serious harm.⁴⁴
60. There has been a fall in the use of community orders for women and men.⁴⁵ This may be correlated with an observed increase in Suspended Sentence Orders, which put women at risk of recall to custody if they breach. However, recently published evidence also demonstrates that, among similar offenders, court orders (which includes Suspended Sentence Orders) can reduce reoffending compared to short custodial sentences.⁴⁶
61. Community orders with treatment requirements attached are in some cases a better option for offenders who might otherwise serve a custodial sentence. For dependent drug and alcohol users and offenders with mental health problems these orders can address the vulnerabilities which are a factor in their offending or how they engage and respond to interventions. The proportion of offenders with such vulnerabilities is substantial, but in 2017, fewer than 1% of all offenders starting a court order had a Mental Health Treatment Requirement, 4% had an Alcohol Treatment Requirement, 7% had a Drug Treatment Requirement and fewer than 1% received a residential requirement.⁴⁷

62. Sentencing is a matter for the courts, and the severity of sentencing decisions should not be impacted by the consideration of the gender of the offender, but should instead take into account their particular circumstances. Yet HMI Probation's 2016 thematic review of community provision for women who offend found that pre-sentence reports did not differentiate the needs of women from those of men.⁴⁸
63. Community provision of the services that would support women are inconsistent, particularly around homelessness, which is both a factor in offending behaviour and a significant need for those on release from custody. Controlling for other factors, prisoners who were rough sleeping or in temporary accommodation prior to custody had higher odds of being reconvicted within one year of release.⁴⁹ Homelessness is a significant problem for the female prisoner population: from April to December 2017, 39% of women allocated to Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS) were released into unsettled accommodation, with 18% released homeless.⁵⁰
64. For those who are being managed in the community under supervision post-release, lack of access to supportive community services can contribute to recall to custody. In an internal review of recall case files, lack of safe accommodation and substance misuse were found to be driving the two most common reasons for recall to prison: failure to keep in touch and non-compliance.
65. HMI Probation's 2016 thematic inspection identified a lack of focus on outcomes for women both strategically and operationally.⁵¹ Across probation services, including Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS), they found an inconsistent approach to recognising and addressing the gender-specific needs of women who have offended. The review also found fewer than one in four responsible officers had received training and guidance in relation to female-specific case management, and the national offer on this today is very limited.

Ensuring that courts have better and more comprehensive information about female offenders to inform sentencing decisions

66. Courts need to have comprehensive information to impose sentences that will effectively punish and rehabilitate offenders. Pre-sentence reports (PSRs) that capture the complexity of an offender's circumstances and demonstrate how offenders can be supported to comply with a community order, can support courts to keep offenders in the community rather than send them to custody.
67. We want all PSRs, whether on the day oral reports or written reports, to include details of an offender's circumstances, such as any dependents, and mental health or domestic abuse issues. They should also set out locally available gender-informed community sentencing options, so that courts are appraised of the full range of options for sentencing an offender and options to divert women from custody.

Engaging with courts

68. Sentencing is a matter for the courts, and any shift in emphasis from custody to community sentences must be led by the judiciary. The MoJ will work with judges to develop our understanding of what more might be done to ensure that the particular risks and needs of female offenders are addressed effectively in the court, and to

ensure that courts receive all necessary information to inform the sentencing process. Building on previous work with Crown Court judges, we will interview district judges and magistrates in the Magistrates' Court, where the majority of female offenders are sentenced, to better understand how we can further support them when sentencing women.

Improving Pre-Sentence Reports

69. As part of work already underway to improve the quality of information the court receives when sentencing, we have delivered nationally the Effective Proposal Tool which captures the range of interventions available, including those designed specifically for women, to provide staff developing PSRs with the sentence options for which an offender is suitable and eligible. The tool contains comprehensive information on the local provision of community sentencing and treatment options, which will support courts to understand what community interventions are available. It will also assist in identifying good practice in community interventions for women and gaps in local services.
70. Many women find disclosing details about their circumstances to criminal justice system (CJS) staff very difficult. They often fear the negative consequences of any admissions of mental health or substance misuse problems, particularly if they have dependents or are in an abusive relationship. Assessment of women's needs for PSRs must take account of the difficulties they face and support women to disclose. Working with Liaison & Diversion (L&D) services, we will ensure that, where consent is given, relevant information from these assessments is shared with relevant criminal justice partners so that information can be used to inform decisions on charging and sentencing.
71. To improve our own assessment processes, we have developed a new PSR interview checklist (built upon the Republic of Ireland gender-informed tool and the NPS North East divisional pilot) for probation court staff, which aims to ensure that the right questions are asked so that good assessments are made. The checklist will be rolled out nationally from Summer 2018 starting with pilots in the NPS North West division and South East and East divisions. Alongside this, a report template and a training package for all PSR writers will ensure that we have a workforce that can assess and respond to the specific needs of female offenders. Given the negative impacts on families of imprisoned mothers and the heightened risk of intergenerational offending, we have also supported the roll out of the, 'Safeguarding Children When Sentencing Mothers' training material developed by Dr Shona Minson. This training raises awareness of the diverse implications of maternal imprisonment for children.

Developing more options for managing women in the community

72. Supporting women in the community enables them to maintain their ties with their families and supports them to stay in employment and stable housing. This helps reduce both reoffending and demand on services.
73. To ensure fewer women go into custody, we must improve the range and robustness of the options for managing women in the community successfully. This will give

courts greater flexibility to respond to the specific factors that can contribute to their offending behaviour.

Piloting Residential Women's Centres

74. We know that many women at risk of, or having served, short custodial sentences, have particularly complex needs and prolific offending histories compared to women supervised in the community.^{52,53} Without support, many of those given a community order or under supervision on release will breach and be recalled to custody. Stable accommodation is a critical need for this cohort to reduce this risk and support them to gain employment or training, but this is often not available to them. From April to December 2017, 39% of women allocated to CRCs and the NPS were released into unsettled accommodation (35% of men).⁵⁴ We want to provide more residential support options in the community that offer the accommodation and holistic support that will allow these women to successfully complete community orders as a diversion from custody and prevent them from being recalled to custody. This should help reduce their reoffending in the long term and could be linked to existing women's community service provision such as women's centres.
75. Although there are some promising small-scale models already in place for female offenders which are centred upon residential-based support such as Willowdene Farm, Anawim, Threshold Housing First and Scotland's 218 Centre, we need to understand better the effectiveness of these types of models.
76. We are committing to work with partners to develop a 'residential women's centres' pilot in at least five sites across England and Wales. The aim of the pilot will be to develop a robust evidence base about what could be effective, sustainable and scalable models for improving outcomes for female offenders and reducing the numbers and frequency of women entering and re-entering custody on short custodial sentences.
77. We want the residential women's centre models we test to offer an intensive residential support package in the community for women at risk of, or having served, short custodial sentences, supporting them to address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour. We want them to identify, encourage and coordinate service users to access services that will address their offending behaviour, such as substance misuse, and allow them to establish a positive lifestyle in the community.
78. We will take a consultative approach for designing and delivering the pilot sites, engaging with potential providers, partners, including CRCs, and investors, both nationally and locally, to ensure that the models taken forward are sustainable, credible and appropriate for the local context of each site. Shortly after the publication of this strategy, we will commence a process of engagement to develop the detail on how the pilots could be designed and delivered.

Improving Accommodation Provision

79. There are a number of other accommodation options for women in the community who are on supervision after release, being managed in the community or at risk of offending. We will be working with our providers and other Government departments to ensure these options are responsive to the specific needs of female offenders, and

are offering them the best chance to rehabilitate themselves and remain in the community.

80. The Bail Accommodation Support Service (BASS) is one such Government contract that provides accommodation to those on bail, released on Home Detention Curfew (HDC) and, in a very few cases, when released at the end of a custodial sentence. BASS allows more of those who are eligible to be bailed or released on HDC, reducing loss of liberty and its negative impacts on family life, employment and housing. A new BASS contract commenced on 18 June 2018. The service specification has been expanded to provide access to prisoners released on licence without accommodation, including women, when demand from Bail and HDC is lower than current volumes. The service has around 17% of its property designated for female offenders and can respond to additional demand.
81. We want to provide a closer integration of BASS with established women's centres. A model for this is currently being piloted in Greater Manchester where women placed in BASS properties will benefit from high-quality holistic support provided by the Women's Support Alliance. The pilot, which started in March 2018, is due to last for 12 months with consideration for potential expansion across further sites within Greater Manchester and other national locations.
82. Approved Premises (AP) are another valuable resource to support female offenders on release. APs are available to provide enhanced levels of protection to the public and reduce the likelihood of further offending of high-risk offenders (e.g. serious violent and/or sexual offenders) released on licence. We are conducting a review into the AP capacity for women to ensure there is provision for women where it is needed. We are seeking to identify suitable AP provision for women in London and Wales, where we have recognised that need is pressing.

Increasing use of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements

83. There are three Community Sentence Treatment Requirements (CSTRs) currently available to the courts – Mental Health Treatment Requirements, Drug Rehabilitation Requirements and Alcohol Treatment Requirements – but their use is low.⁵⁵ This is despite the high prevalence of mental health, drug and alcohol issues amongst the female offender cohort. Of those with an assessment, 22% of women supervised under a court order have a mental health issue, 29% an alcohol misuse issue and 32% a substance misuse issue.⁵⁶
84. For some of these women, a CSTR may produce better outcomes than a custodial sentence. Recently published MoJ research suggests that sentences including mental health treatment, where mental health issues are identified, are associated with significant reductions in reoffending compared with similar cases without such treatment.⁵⁷ The reoffending rate was around 3.5 percentage points lower over a one-year follow up period. MoJ and Public Health England (PHE) linked data showed that among those who committed an offence in the two years prior to engaging with community-based substance misuse treatment, there was a 33% reduction in the number of offences committed in the following two years, and 44% did not go on to reoffend in the subsequent two years. This was especially striking for those engaging in alcohol treatment only, with 59% of these not reoffending in the two years after treatment, while for opiate treatment this figure was 31%.⁵⁸

85. The MoJ is working with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), NHS England and PHE on a protocol to increase the use of CSTRs in England. This is currently being tested across five sites, one of which began as a women-only site operating out of a women's centre in Northampton. We will use the findings from the evaluation of this programme later in 2018 to explore the potential for further national roll-out, and to inform further work on gender-informed approaches for community sentences with treatment requirements.

Community Sentence Treatment Requirement Case Study

Julie is a woman in her late 20's with long standing substance misuse and mental health problems and a history of abuse. She has recently been sentenced in one of the Community Sentence Treatment Requirement Protocol areas to two of the three Treatment Requirements – a Mental Health Treatment Requirements and a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement.

Julie was taken into care before she was 10 years old due to parental neglect, and physical and sexual abuse. On leaving care, Julie quickly lost her accommodation and came into contact with the CJS for possession of class A drugs. Julie's offending continued, and she served two custodial sentences and a number of community orders. In her mid-twenties, Julie had a child who was taken into care. Julie found this very difficult to cope with, and was diagnosed with emotionally unstable personality disorder, as well as suffering a series of self-harm incidents and suicide attempts.

Shortly after, she was arrested and charged with possession of a small quantity of a controlled drug along with shop theft. At court, Julie was assessed as being eligible for a Mental Health Treatment Requirement, although she was at high risk of receiving a custodial sentence. Julie pleaded guilty and was recommended for a 6-month Mental Health Treatment Requirement and a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement. Julie also received 10 Rehabilitative Activity Requirement days to support her accessing finance services, housing and other support.

The Community Order was sequenced so that her drug issues were addressed first. She successfully completed this part of the order and was then able to engage with the mental health treatment. Julie received weekly treatment, focusing on her experiences of trauma, and how this contributed to her offending behaviour. She was supported to understand her earlier diagnosis and develop coping strategies to intervene in the distressing emotions that caused her to abuse substances and offend. Julie successfully completed the order, and is currently being supported by her local women's centre to complete a course at college.

Piloting Electronic Monitoring, including new technologies such as location monitoring

86. Electronic Monitoring (EM) has the potential to provide greater support for women in the community. Evidence suggests that electronic monitoring is most likely to improve outcomes when used in conjunction with interventions that contain rehabilitative components.⁵⁹ Whilst EM is already an option for the courts, and is mostly used to monitor curfews, we believe where used more creatively it could further support offenders' rehabilitation and, where appropriate, divert women away from custody, including remand. There are a number of pilots looking at the use of different EM

technologies. We will take learning on how appropriate or effective these can be for female offenders, including as an alternative to custody

87. In particular, location monitoring using GPS tags could provide new and innovative ways to manage women in future. The MoJ recently piloted the use of GPS and an evaluation, due to be published this summer, will inform how location monitoring can be used to manage defendants and offenders in the community more effectively, both before and after conviction. The Mayor's Office for Police (MOPAC) is leading the way on these measures, and we are working with them to test the use of mandatory GPS tagging for prolific offenders through the Gripping the Offender (GtO) pilot. This is the first time mandatory use has been piloted.
88. We are also piloting the use of alcohol monitoring tags to evaluate whether a continuous period of sobriety has any effect on rehabilitation and reducing the risk of reoffending. As problematic drinking is a risk factor more strongly associated with reoffending for women than for men, there is clear scope for interventions that address alcohol misuse to be particularly suitable and beneficial for this cohort.⁶⁰ The findings from these pilots will be available from the end of 2018 onwards. We will continue to work closely with the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in exploring and delivering suitable criminal justice options to reduce harmful drinking and reoffending as part of the Government's new alcohol strategy.

Providing more support for those offenders managed in the community

89. Provision of adequate services in the community and a gender-informed probation service are vital to supporting women to stay in the community either instead of custody or after release.

Developing a more gender-informed probation service

90. We will continue to consider improvements we can make to the probation services and the support they provide to female offenders, including building stronger links with the third sector women's centres. A central part of this will be work to improve the delivery of Through the Gate (TTG) services. We are discussing with CRCs how they can do more to help offenders overcome barriers to resettlement, including developing a tiered approach to services based on need. Given that many female offenders in custody have complex needs, this new approach should particularly benefit female offenders.
91. Building on HMI Probation's findings that service provision for women was better in areas where there was dedicated leadership for women's offending, NPS will appoint (for an initial one-year pilot) a dedicated senior probation officer into this role in each NPS region.⁶¹ This person will be a dedicated women's champion, responsible for monitoring and driving up performance, supporting training, problem-solving service issues and implementing gender-informed practices. They will be in post from September 2018. All CRCs have an identified women's strategic lead and we will encourage them to focus on similar issues.
92. We will build upon the work that we have already commenced in providing gender-informed guidance to probation practitioners. In addition to last year's publication of *Working with Women Offenders*, a guidance document outlining how probation

practitioners working with women in the CJS can deliver services to them in a way that captures and reflects best practice, we are reviewing the overarching operational instruction covering the management of women offenders. We will also look to collaborate with our custodial workforce on gender- and trauma-informed training, so that we can create a CJS-wide approach to female offenders that acknowledges their vulnerabilities and addresses their needs.

93. To professionalise the probation workforce further, we intend to create a professional register thereby enhancing assessment and offender management of female offenders.
94. We will provide one training package, which replaces existing and out of date material, for prison staff and NPS staff. We want to ensure all staff across the probation system have access to the most up-to-date training, that is why we will offer this training to CRCs also. The training will be aimed at assessing and managing women with a range of complex needs, which will equip staff to work effectively with women in a trauma informed way thereby maximising their compliance with their Community Orders and licences and reducing the risk of reoffending.
95. We want to support offenders to complete the requirements imposed on them to reduce unnecessary recall. To do this, we will equip our probation staff with better information so they can make more informed decisions about the common causes of recall. For example, childcare issues are often a barrier to complying with requirements; we will be updating instructions to probation staff on Offender Childcare so they can support female offenders to complete the requirements imposed upon them where childcare issues were previously a barrier.
96. We are aware that there are unique challenges for Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) and foreign national female offenders in the CJS, both in custody and the community. This is why we will be looking closely at what further action can be taken to identify and address needs specific to these groups. We will be working closely with voluntary sector and other organisations who work with BAME and foreign national female offenders to improve their capacity to share best practice and form networks through facilitated events and more structured communication of policy developments. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is already committed to working with BAME oriented organisations on implementing the Lammy Review's recommendation 31 to overcome barriers to subcontracting between CRCs and BAME communities to help share good practice. We will provide more culturally-informed training for staff in offender management and rehabilitation. This will increase staff awareness of the impacts of culture, faith and sustaining family relationships for women in the criminal justice system.

Chapter Three: Better Custody

Chapter Summary

97. Although we want to reduce the female prison population, we recognise that diverting women who might otherwise be serving short custodial sentences to the community will not necessarily equate to significant reductions in the female prison population in the short term. Whilst a substantial proportion of women that go to prison serve short-term sentences, women on longer sentences make up the majority of the prison population at any given time.⁶² Moreover, there will remain some women who, for reasons of public protection or due to the severity of their offending, must be in custody for a period of time. Whilst our aim is to reduce female prison places, we acknowledge that this will be a long-term project.
98. Almost all of the women sentenced to custody will one day be released into the community. Reforming and rehabilitating these offenders must be a priority if we are to reduce crime, reduce reoffending and protect victims. Yet outcomes for female offenders in custody are poor and can be worse than for men. Women suffer higher rates of self-harm and a greater proportion of women in prison have experienced domestic abuse and have mental health problems than men. On release a smaller proportion have settled accommodation to support their transition back into the community.^{63, 64} The impact on children and families of the incarceration or criminalisation of parents is also significant. Having a convicted parent is a risk factor for offending – and some studies have found that this risk appears to be greater when the parent is imprisoned.⁶⁵ Given the higher proportion of women whose dependent children live with them prior to imprisonment, incarceration of women may have a disproportionate impact on intergenerational reoffending.⁶⁶ There is some evidence that while gender-neutral interventions have sometimes been effective, it is likely that gender-informed approaches will be more successful.⁶⁷ If we are to achieve equal outcomes for women, we should adopt a gender-informed approach and an adapted environment, that meets their gender-specific needs.
99. We will create a custodial environment that enables rehabilitation and delivers better outcomes, and which supports women on release to break the cycle of reoffending and successfully reintegrate themselves into society.

We will deliver better custody by:

Adapting the custodial environment to meet the needs of female offenders by:

- Focusing on better links with children and families
- Improving Safety
- Becoming Trauma-Informed
- Improving Health & Wellbeing

Offering comprehensive rehabilitative support by:

- Empowering the Prison Workforce
- Developing Education & Employment

The Challenge:

100. Our evidence shows that women do not respond well to the custodial environment. We know that women are more than twice as likely to report needing help for mental health problems than male prisoners (49% compared with 18% of male prisoners). They are twice as likely as male prisoners to suffer from anxiety and depression (49% compared with 23%) and more likely to report symptoms indicative of psychosis (25% compared with 15%).⁶⁸
101. The purpose of prisons is both to protect the public and support offenders to reform so that they do not reoffend. Women – like all other prisoners – should expect to be safe throughout their time in custody. This is especially true for those at risk of suicide and self-harm, yet the incidence of these issues amongst the female offender population remains too high. Though the rate of self-inflicted deaths in women’s prisons reduced to one in the 12 months to March 2018, down from 10 in the previous 12 months, that is still one too many.⁶⁹ The rate of self-harm among women was 2,093 per 1,000 in 2017, nearly 5 times higher than the rate for men, of 445 per 1,000.⁷⁰
102. Several studies have found that having a parent with a criminal conviction is a strong risk factor for offending.⁷¹ Some studies have found that this risk factor appears to be stronger when the parent is imprisoned as opposed to just having a conviction. Research also suggests that children may be more affected by parental imprisonment if parents are imprisoned more frequently or for longer periods of time, and if parents are held in more punitive conditions.
103. The 2017 Lord Farmer Review found, in spite of this evidence, that “there is an unacceptable inconsistency of respect for the role families can play in boosting rehabilitation and assisting in resettlement across the prison estate”.⁷² Whilst the focus of Lord Farmer’s Review is the role of family in preventing reoffending and intergenerational crime for male prisoners, its findings have great saliency for female offenders and their families. Findings from MoJ’s post custody resettlement surveys found that far more female prisoners report living with their children before going into custody than male prisoners; around 60% of women compared with about 45% of men in prison who have children.⁷³
104. Over half of women (56.1%) released from custody between April to June 2016, reoffend within a year.⁷⁴ A contributing factor may be the poor outcomes on release for female offenders around housing and employment. From April to December 2017, 39% of women allocated to Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS) were released into unsettled accommodation, with 18% released homeless.⁷⁵ Just under two thirds of women released from prison in 2010/11 were claiming out-of-work benefits one month after release.⁷⁶

Adapting the custodial environment to meet the needs of female offenders

105. The wider prison reform agenda has produced a comprehensive programme of work to improve conditions in custody across the prison estate, much of which will benefit female offenders. However, this cohort also requires interventions that respond to their particular needs, in order to secure the same outcomes for them as those in the male estate.

106. The necessity for tailored approaches is even more acute for those with protected characteristics, such as Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women, or women with experience of trauma.⁷⁷ Given the overrepresentation of BAME women in the criminal justice system (CJS) and the proportion of female offenders with experience of domestic abuse, our workforce, environment and interventions must become more alive to their experiences and responsive to their individual needs.

Focusing on better links with children and families

107. Last year the MoJ launched the report from the 2017 Lord Farmer Review on the importance of strengthening male prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime. We have asked Lord Farmer to undertake a further piece of work to review his recommendations through the lens of the needs of female offenders, given that many women in prison are primary carers of their children. The original Review focused exclusively on men serving custodial sentences. However, this new work will look more widely at how to strengthen family ties, especially with their children, for women serving sentences in the community and after they have been released, as well as for those women in custody. Lord Farmer will publish the findings of this by the end of 2018.

108. The 2017 Lord Farmer Review recommended that 'Virtual visits... should be available for the small percentage of families or individual family members who cannot visit frequently or at all'.⁷⁸ We are currently looking at Internet Based Video Systems (platforms similar to Skype) across both the men's and women's estates, allowing for family contact individuals would otherwise be unable to have.

109. From January 2018, a centralised visits booking system was rolled out across the Women's Estate with the aim of providing a better and more consistent service for families and women. We are also enabling better communication between families, and facilitating family days alongside courses and programmes to promote family engagement and parenting.

110. In responding to the 2017 Lord Farmer Review, we have introduced a requirement for all Prison Governors from April 2018 to produce local strategies, which will set out how they will support prisoners to improve the level of engagement with their friends and families. We will publish a new Family Policy Framework in Autumn of 2018, providing support to Governors for meeting new requirements and standardising the quality of services provided across all prisons, helping to strengthen relationships between prisoners, their family and friends. Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) has also appointed a lead inspector for Children and Families and included this within its schedule of prison expectations.

111. For female offenders who are mothers to very young children and need to be in custody, it is often in the interest of the child to have them with them during the important period of bonding. Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) enable women to stay with their babies and young children up until the age of 18 months and provide parenting support. The best interests and safety of children on the unit are the primary consideration. To ensure that the existing provision responds to need and offers the best support to women and their children, we will be reviewing the operation of MBUs and our management of complex cases.

Improving Safety

112. Every death in custody is a tragedy, and we will do our utmost to prevent them and keep prisoners safe. 2016 saw a particularly high number of self-inflicted deaths, and we have commenced a review to understand why this happened and how we might prevent it in future. The Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) on Deaths in Custody undertook a rapid information gathering exercise on how best to prevent suicide and self-harm and keep women safe in custody. This review has submitted evidence and recommendations to Ministers, which we are implementing alongside this strategy.⁷⁹ The Prison and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) also issued a bulletin of recommendations which drew on a review of several of its investigations between 2013 and 2016, most of which echoed those of the IAP. We are focusing on mental health and drugs misuse service provision and the importance of the exchange of information about risk and care planning. We continue to address their recommendations, in partnership with Departments across Whitehall and representatives from both the academic and voluntary sectors.
113. Alongside the recommendations of the PPO review, we are implementing several other initiatives in the custodial estate to better protect and support offenders. The “Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan” (CSIP) has been rolled out across all prisons as a new management tool to help staff establish clear principles for risk management and risk reduction. CSIP emphasises the importance of supporting and developing change in individuals and ensures individualised support plans around the offender’s particular circumstances. We are working to ensure that CSIP is implemented in a responsive way for women in custody by conducting a literature review on how such interventions can be most effective for women.
114. Recognising that there are specific safety needs in the Women’s Estate, a dedicated Group Safety Lead has been appointed. They will help Governors to address the particular challenges to safety in their establishments, identifying effective practice that is bespoke to women and sharing it across the Women’s Estate.
115. We are improving prison staff training so that staff are better supported to manage vulnerable women in custody. We have introduced female specific training around the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) case management system to ensure that staff better understand the behaviour and needs of vulnerable women. We have rolled-out a revised and improved *Introduction to suicide and self-harm prevention training* for all prison staff, which over 7000 staff had completed in full by March 2018.
116. Improvements to safety in custody must also take into account the complex needs of the most high-risk women. The Centralised Case Supervision System (CCSS) has been in place since September 2015 to enable a needs-led approach to the supervision of such women, whilst also making women’s prisons safer for other prisoners and staff. Women assessed as ‘Restricted Status’ are automatically referred to the CCSS and those who present with complex needs are referred by individual establishments. Each case is then assessed by the Case Referral and Review Board (CRRB), which brings together staff responsible for operational issues, mental health case work, psychology and high security. The Board works collaboratively to provide support to prisons managing women with complex needs and may offer alternatives to current arrangements and suggest different routes for progression, if that seems appropriate. The aim of the additional support is to ensure

that establishments are doing all that is possible to stabilise the individual and develop an appropriate and timely re-integration plan.

Creating a trauma-informed environment to tackle self-harm case study

Prisons and prison staff need to understand the impact of histories of trauma in their population. One such case of where this has worked well is at HMP Styal, where a woman, Sally, is currently serving a four year or more sentence. Sally had a history of childhood sexual abuse, but did not disclose this until she worked with staff at HMP Styal. Whilst in custody, Sally was highly distressed and displayed very high levels of self-harm. Staff at Styal engaged with Sally to give her more control over her own wellbeing. Sally was supported to cook a meal for her family when they visited her in prison. She also experienced high levels of anxiety when locked in her cell on the wing at lunch times, so Sally was supported to spend lunch times on the house block of her choice, which she was eventually moved into. Sally's self-harm incidents have reduced in number from almost 70 to fewer than 10 in six months.

Becoming Trauma-Informed

117. We are committed to developing a trauma-informed approach to working with women, given that a high proportion of them will have experienced some degree of trauma during their lives and its links with offending behaviour. We are grateful to the generosity of Lady Edwina Grosvenor and her charity, One Small Thing, which champions trauma-informed practice with criminalised women. This work has been done in partnership with Dr Stephanie Covington, an American clinician and author, who specialises in the development and implementation of gender-responsive and trauma-informed services.

118. One Small Thing delivers *Becoming Trauma-Informed* (BTI) training, which provides a greater understanding of the behaviours that often occur from a history of trauma, allowing for the development of new skills for staff when responding to these behaviours. The aim of the training is to reduce conflict and make the workplace safer for staff.

119. The charity has run free training events on trauma-informed practice since September 2015 for those working in prisons and women's community service providers. This has included a series of training workshops, some led by Dr Stephanie Covington, and delivered to staff across the women's custodial estate as well as a train the trainer course in June 2017 that included National Probation Service (NPS) colleagues. Training now covers all senior management teams in the women's custodial estate, with prisons continuing to embed this approach and train staff across all grades.

120. *Healing Trauma* is the next important phase, where women prisoners are being trained to conduct peer led training themselves. The Healing Trauma course consists of six sessions which help women to cope with trauma. This peer led training has been established over the majority of the female estate. The leading establishment is HMP Send with other establishments following on.

Becoming Trauma Informed case study, HMP Send

HMP Send has worked alongside the charity One Small Thing to train all operational and non-operational staff in Becoming Trauma Informed (BTI). HMP Send also offer the Healing Trauma intervention. Before the Healing trauma intervention started in 2017 there was no single gender-informed intervention that helped enable the women to manage the impact of past trauma. This would often result in the women attempting to manage their trauma by acting out violence upon themselves or upon others as a way to disassociate or 'manage' their trauma. HMP Send was the first setting in the female estate to run this successful programme, and has now been followed in the rest of the Women's Estate.

Since running the intervention at HMP Send, the prison has been able to assist 64 women and has an ever growing waiting list of 43 women. This has been achieved by word of mouth and promotion by the women who have completed the course and found it beneficial to them.

How BTI has supported one of the prisoners at HMP Send:

Miss X is a foreign national female offender who is currently serving a custodial sentence of more than four years. She has no previous convictions recorded from her time in the UK and she informed HMP Send that she has no previous convictions from abroad.

At the time of the intervention, Miss X informed staff that she did not know why she had been placed on the intervention and was not willing to take part as she felt she had suffered no trauma in her life. Staff spoke briefly with her about her journey through the legal system into custody and how that alone was a traumatic experience. Subsequently Miss X agreed to attend the sessions but stated that she would not actively participate.

By the end of session two, Miss X was very emotional and she spoke openly about the domestic abuse she had suffered, resulting in her engagement with crime. Miss X's offender supervisor has stated that she believes the Healing Trauma intervention has positively supported the offender and reduced her risk in terms of future relationships. Staff believe that it has encouraged Miss X to recognise the trauma that she has been through in her life and enabled her to identify ways of coping with this.

Miss X has now been relocated on the resettlement unit at HMP Send and has actively sought support from staff regarding her deportation. Before her transfer to HMP Send, Miss X had been placed on Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) monitoring for support at difficult times. Since completing the Healing Trauma intervention Miss X has displayed no behaviour that would lead staff to believe that she is a risk of harm to herself or others.

Improving Health & Wellbeing

121. Recommendations from self-inflicted death in custody reviews show unmet mental health, drug and alcohol treatment needs in prison which increase the vulnerability of women in custody. We are working with NHS England and Public Health England to set out clear standards which prison health services should meet. We are joining up services in order to tackle the comorbidity of mental health and substance misuse issues. We are also undertaking a review of the interventions that are available across the Women's Estate, to ensure we are delivering the most effective treatment options for this cohort, and responding to the full spectrum of their needs.

122. Many women find the process of being transported from prison to court for a short hearing highly stressful. We are working with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), and the Judiciary to support the use of video links more often and more reliably across the female estate. These will reduce the requirement for defendants to travel for short hearings and offer greater flexibility and efficiency.
123. The women offender personality disorder pathway is an integrated network of services for women offenders managed by the NPS (in custody and the community) with a diagnosis of 'personality disorder.' The pathway's aim is to improve public protection and mental wellbeing, and address women's offending behaviour. Interventions are psychologically-informed, gender-informed and trauma-informed. We have been working with NHS England to promote the delivery of this pathway, and services have increased threefold since 2013. We will work with our health partners to replicate these holistic care models across prison healthcare in the Women's Estate.

Options – A Personality Disorder Intervention Service Case Study, HMP Downview

'Options' service is embedded into the Offender Disorder Pathway and has been operational in HMP Downview since it re-opened 2016. Previously the service was operational in HMP Holloway for over a decade.

Options is a treatment service, offering modified Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) to female offenders who meet criteria for Borderline and/or Antisocial Personality Disorder. Options also provides staff training, as part of the Workforce Development initiative. To date, Options has trained over 150 members of staff at HMP Downview, including prison and probation officers.

Options also offers fortnightly formulation sessions. There are collaborative psychologically-informed meetings between multi-disciplinary staff whereby complex needs of women are considered and recommendations for management and treatment are shared and outlined.

The service also offers a consultation role to all staff working at HMP Downview who require advice and support in the management and understanding of the women.

Testimonials from women at HMP Downview on the Options Programme:

"I completed the Advanced DBT Options programme earlier this year. It has made a great impact on my thinking patterns and mindfulness is now central to my daily life. I'm an over tariff IPP [Imprisonment for Public Protection] and as, I believe, a direct result from the tool box that DBT and Options has provided me with, I will shortly have a parole hearing for release."

"I have gone on to become an Options Peer Mentor. A big part of this, is that a team of us are writing an offender-led DBT manual for offenders who do the programme so that they will be able to relate. As a peer mentor I also assist with the training on the Options programme of Prison officers, telling them both how it helped me and how it helps to enable them to have a greater insight from a prisoner's perspective."

Offering comprehensive rehabilitative support

124. If we are to rehabilitate female offenders successfully and reduce reoffending, our prison workforce must understand the factors that drive women's offending behaviour, and the greater likelihood that gender-informed interventions will be effective.⁸⁰
125. We must also give female offenders the best possible support whilst they are in prison so they can successfully transition back into the community after release. As noted in the MoJ's *Education and Employment Strategy*, prison can serve as an impetus to help set offenders on a path to a better life.
126. People leaving prison who find employment are between 6 and 9 percentage points less likely to reoffend than those who do not, even when a range of other factors are considered.⁸¹ As well as reducing reoffending, moving ex-offenders off benefits and into work reduces the financial burden on taxpayers and the welfare state.⁸²

Empowering the Prison Workforce

127. Currently, all women's prisons are required to comply with gender-informed standards for working with women prisoners, which are set out in Prison Service Order (PSO) 4800. We intend to replace PSO 4800 with a Women's Policy Framework that will incorporate guidance on best practice for working with female offenders. This will be applicable not only for prison officers but for workforce across the CJS and beyond. We are currently developing this Framework in consultation with other Government departments and external stakeholders and aim to publish a final version by Autumn 2018.
128. The Women's Estate leadership team in HMPPS is also creating an ethical practice reference group which provides a forum for senior leaders in prisons to resolve practice issues, and ensure practice guidelines for the Women's Estate are consistent, addressing current issues.
129. We have designed a new Offender Management in Custody Model tailored for the needs of women, which considers complexity alongside risk, and introduces key worker time to provide more focused support to individual offenders.
130. We will further support governor freedom to recruit prison officers to the Women's Estate based on criteria which reflect the particular values and skills needed for a gender-informed approach. This may be distinct from the majority need and recruitment approach pursued for the male estate. Given the overrepresentation of BAME women in prison, it is vital that we provide a workforce that is not only conscious of the impact of protected characteristics on the experience of female offenders, but that is representative of the women they work with.⁸³ The Lammy Review made two recommendations in relation to the prison workforce, citing the need for BAME recruitment and leadership targets.⁸⁴ The Government accepted both these recommendations. It has set an objective for 14% of all recruits (across HMPPS) being BAME by 2020, and to increase the diversity of the senior leader cadre by December 2020.

Developing Education & Employment

131. As highlighted in *The Education and Employment Strategy*, published on 25 May 2018, work can provide a foundation for a different kind of life.⁸⁵ The strategy outlined our plans to reform prison education in order to give governors more oversight and control of their education provision. This means that governors in the Women's Estate will be able to decide an education curriculum that meets the specific needs of the women prisoners, determine how it is organised and delivered, and choose who delivers it. New contract arrangements will enable governors to buy-in a range of specialised services, such as peer support and coaching, to meet their prison's population's needs. The Halfords Employment Academy at Drake Hall is just one example, amongst a number, of a governor having built highly effective partnerships to deliver vocational training alongside employers.
132. In addition, the New Futures Network is being developed to help create partnerships between employers, and has empowered governors to improve employment opportunities for prisoners on release. The network will place regional employment experts into regional prison groups to provide advice to governors and will also encourage more businesses to work with prisons. The New Futures Network will begin work before the end of 2018. We will ensure that this takes into account the specific needs of women.
133. We are currently undertaking a review of the current rules surrounding release on temporary licence (ROTL). ROTL is a vital part of rehabilitation and the goal is to improve access to all types of temporary release, where safe to do so including seeing more work undertaken whilst in custody, leading to employment upon release.
134. Before any modifications are made to aspects of temporary release, we will carefully consider the impact of any proposed changes on female offenders. We will also explore any opportunities for taking a gender-informed approach, in light of consultation responses.

Chapter Four: Framework for Implementation

Chapter Summary

135. The vision proposed in this strategy requires an approach that is tailored and holistic, emphasising early identification, intervention and diversion (where appropriate).
136. Many services - including those in the criminal justice system (CJS), other statutory agencies such as Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs), and the third sector - are involved in addressing the complex needs of the female offender cohort. Measurable change for this group will only be achieved through a high degree of cooperation, coordination and committed partnership working.
137. We are committed to providing strong leadership required to maximise the benefit of the many existing cross-Government initiatives that can support female offenders. We want to give local areas a 'mandate' to prioritise them, and to drive forward the aims and actions of this strategy. We want local areas to feel empowered to address the needs of female offenders in a way that meets local needs and circumstances. Given the constrained financial environment in which the Government is currently operating, all solutions should be rigorously tested to make the best use of the funding available.
138. We have developed a framework for the implementation of this strategy, to set out clearly what can be expected of the MoJ, the Government and the services working with women in the CJS. We will also put in place the necessary oversight and governance arrangements support the implementation of the strategy. This includes reforming the Advisory Board on Female Offenders, continuing to liaise with the Criminal Justice Inspectorates and working with other government departments through our cross-government Female Offender Leadership Board (see Conclusion).

Locally-led

139. We want local areas across England and Wales to feel empowered to design approaches tailored for the specific needs of their populations and local circumstances. We will continue to support them with evidence of what works. We believe that the development of a Whole System Approach (WSA) that offers holistic support through joined-up local service provision is key to delivering better outcomes. We will do this by:
- Continuing support for Whole System Approaches
 - Exploring Devolution

Partnership-focused

140. We want to ensure a joined-up approach across Government at a national level and between services at a local level, including the third sector, to deliver a holistic response to women. We will set a clear structure to help partners work together

effectively to address the drivers of offending and the needs of female offenders. We will do this by:

- Developing a National Concordat on Female Offenders
- Strengthening cross-Government working

Evidence-based

141. Working with local areas and providers, we will continue to develop the evidence base to understand better what works. Interventions will be tested for sustainability, scalability and to ensure the best use of the available funding. We will do this by:

- Sharing and supporting further data & evidence

The Framework:

Locally-led

142. We want to see a higher proportion of female offenders and at-risk women being supported in the community. To achieve this, local communities must be equipped to respond to the needs of these women. We want local areas across England and Wales to feel empowered to design approaches tailored for the specific needs of their populations and local circumstances.

Continuing support for Whole System Approaches

143. All local areas should have a plan to address the particular circumstances of female offenders. We want to see the spread of multi-agency, WSA models, which bring together local agencies (criminal justice, statutory and voluntary) to take a joined-up, gender-informed approach to providing the holistic, targeted support that female offenders need, with shared investment and outcomes.

144. We know a WSA approach has the potential to work. The Government has invested £1m seed funding since 2016 in a number of local areas developing WSA approaches, and early evidence from these sites shows promising success. Women's centres are often central to WSAs and can be effective at reducing reoffending: a 2015 Justice Data Lab analysis found a reduction in the one year proven reoffending rate of between 1 and 9 percentage points for female offenders who received support provided by 32 women's centres throughout England compared with a matched group of similar offenders.⁸⁶

145. The WSA model will vary according to local needs and services but key elements include: early needs assessment at first contact with the police, a women-centred, problem-solving approach at court, and wraparound, gender-informed support alongside community orders and on release from prison.

146. WSA models are appropriate for both at-risk women and female offenders. Where women do come into contact with the CJS, a WSA should divert women away from it, where appropriate. Providing joined up support to a woman from her first contact with police, should result in fewer women serving short custodial sentences or breaching community orders, and reoffending. This could have important social benefits

including a reduction in long-term or crisis-point demands on services such as health and housing, more women accessing support for domestic abuse, and a reduction in the number of children taken into care or on the risk register.

147. There are a number of areas including Greater Manchester, Wales, Surrey, Sussex, West Mercia, Lancashire and Cumbria, Norfolk and Exeter already operating WSAs. We will work with them to build an evidence base to support this approach and share best practice, supporting the wider rollout of this model.

Manchester WSA Case Study

Greater Manchester (GM) WSA has been fully operational since January 2015. The WSA includes police triage, a problem-solving court, and support alongside community orders and on release from prison, with women's centres established in all boroughs in GM to provide women-only 'one-stop shop' support for women. 2015-16 MOJ funding was used to address the barriers to engagement for some women (e.g. Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women and young adults).

Whilst we cannot conclude that the WSA has had a direct impact, there has been a promising reduction in the number of adult women prosecuted and in the number sentenced to custodial sentences in GM since 2014.

Emerging evidence from the GM WSA shows:

- *A 40% reduction in the number of adult women sentenced to immediate custody since 2014, compared with a 3% reduction for England and Wales.⁸⁷*
- *A 45% reduction in the number of adult women arrested since 2014/15, compared with an 18% reduction for England and Wales.⁸⁸*
- *91% of those assessed in GM to end March 2017 have multiple needs.⁸⁹ By end March 2017, 605 women had completed more than one Outcome Star assessment (of issues such as mental health, substance misuse and accommodation). On average, a positive change of 1.5 was seen against every assessed issue (on a scale of 1-10).*
- *Proven re-offending was calculated at 17% for a small cohort of women referred to the centres*

Exeter CoLab 'Resilient Women, Resilient System' Initiative Case Study

In Devon, a 2017 study revealed a fragmented offer for women with complex needs, particularly for those on the justice pathway. Participating stakeholders offered a snapshot of the challenges and strengths of the current pathway, along with their aspirations for an improved offer. Respondents felt that clear leadership, committed to improving outcomes for women on the justice pathway, was key to creating a WSA that would support this.

CoLab Exeter is a multi-agency hub hosting 28 organisations aligned around 4 key strategic themes; Health & Wellbeing, Reducing Reoffending, Homelessness and Recovery from Mental Ill-health and Substance Misuse. The CoLab/MoJ WSA 'Resilient Women, Resilient System' Initiative aimed to improve the offer for women within or at risk of entering the Justice Pathway, using a model that invested in both the system and the woman herself. Key to this was utilising a 'resilience' based model that built on already existing assets for both.

The project developed two key work streams. The first works directly with women through dedicated drop-in sessions offering a range of support opportunities in a women-only environment, along with a women's forum and specific structured workshops delivering a range of topics that they identified as being key to recovery. The second has been the creation of a System Stewardship Group made up of senior representatives of all aspects of the justice pathway including Police, Public Health, CRC, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and local authority housing. They have worked with the evidence base that the project has developed to influence local and regional policy including the Devon Reducing Reoffending Strategy, Exeter Reducing Homelessness Strategy and the Devon Complex Lives Strategy and Commissioning Framework, which includes Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and Substance Misuse, all of which now have a trauma-informed approach to their implementation.

From September 2017 to March 2018 they worked with 75 individual women attending the multi-agency 'Resilient Women Open Sessions' on a regular basis, with an additional 297 individual visits from women to the building for information, advice or support. 50% of referrals to the service came from the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), with the majority serving community orders, whilst those referred by the National Probation Service (NPS) were referred for post-release support. Self-referrals increased steadily, by March 2018 making up 33% of numbers attending. 78% had experienced trauma as a result of domestic and sexual violence and abuse. 32% of those attending were aged 50 and above. 48% of those who were mothers had their children in care. The top three needs women presented with upon engagement were substance misuse, mental health, and access to education and training.

Session topics include developing skills for financial resilience, creative writing, skills for employability, and healthy relationships. The women have recently been involved in the co-design of an upskilling 'pattern changing' programme that will be developed for future use in a range of justice settings.

Exploring devolution

148. Locally-led approaches are more likely be effective if local areas have the tools to influence partners and change. We are keen to devolve power and responsibility from central Government to local areas so that they have the levers they need to deliver a WSA in their communities. We have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements with London and Greater Manchester, which commit us to working towards greater devolution of powers. Both agreements have identified female offenders as a cohort where areas are keen to make progress, and we are working to develop options.

149. We will also work with other areas to identify and take forward options for increasing freedoms and working in partnership to address the needs of female offenders. This will involve working with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to understand how and whether additional powers and responsibilities may help them drive improved outcomes in this area.

Partnership-focused

150. There will be a joined-up approach across Government at a national level, and between agencies and services at a local level, to deliver a holistic response. At a national level we will work across Government to secure recognition of the specific needs of female offenders within wider initiatives. We will also set out what can be expected of services at a local level to deliver a joined-up approach.

Developing a National Concordat on Female Offenders

151. We will work across Government and with other national partners to develop and agree a National Concordat on Female Offenders. We want the Concordat to act as a joint statement of intent, agreement and understanding about how public services should be working together in local partnerships to identify and respond to the often multiple and complex needs of women as they journey through the CJS.

152. Through the concordat, we want to establish a clear framework of best practice principles and guidance, that local organisations and partnerships can use to commission services. We hope that this document will better support them to develop high quality services, as well as reflect the evidence for attaining better outcomes for this group of women.

153. Our ambition is for local organisations and partnerships voluntarily to adopt the concordat once published, and outline how they will work together. They will then implement the principles of the concordat into their service planning and delivery where possible. We will continue to consult with the relevant Government departments and national and local partners to develop and agree the concordat by the end of 2018.

Strengthening cross-Government working

154. Government is increasingly recognising that the needs of individuals cannot be addressed in isolation by different Government departments, but that they require a partnership approach that straddles traditional boundaries. A number of cross-Government groups are addressing the complex needs of vulnerable people. This includes the Whitehall Vulnerable Persons Directors Group, the Cross-Departmental Complex Needs Group and the Reducing Reoffending Group. We will work through each of these to ensure improved outcomes for female offenders and women at risk of offending, including exploring the scope for cross-departmental budgets to address the needs of specific cohorts, such as those with complex needs.

155. The new Reducing Reoffending group, chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, will work across Government to tackle some of the main causes of reoffending, including employment, health and accommodation. The objectives of the group will include identifying opportunities to join up existing policies to address key drivers of reoffending, and to build up the cross-Government evidence on activities related to reoffending and the interventions likely to be most effective. As well as MoJ, the group will also be attended by Home Office, Cabinet Office, Treasury, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Department for Education (DfE), and DHSC.

156. MHCLG is carrying out a comprehensive review of the funding and commissioning of domestic abuse services across England. The review will be informed by an audit being run by Ipsos MORI. This will give us a picture of provision across England, enabling Government to assess the impact that services are having and to identify any gaps in provision. MHCLG will draw on outcomes from the review to inform its approach to improving services for victims with complex needs. We will liaise with MHCLG to ensure that the specific needs of female offenders and at-risk women are considered in this process.
157. We will work collaboratively and capitalise on existing Government initiatives, such as the set of Principles on gender and trauma informed care for mental health services for women currently being developed by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) led Women's Mental Health Taskforce.
158. The Government consultation on domestic abuse Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse closed on 31 May 2018. We consulted on range of non-legislative and legislative measures to tackle domestic abuse. The consultation also sought views on how we can work better to identify vulnerable women at risk of offending and address issues relating to domestic abuse earlier. The consultation will help inform the work that we take forward. We will work closely on the response to this consultation to ensure we capture and address the needs of female offenders.
159. The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2016 underpins many of the recommendations of the Female Offenders strategy, given the links between domestic abuse and offending, and the prevalence of vulnerabilities amongst the female offender cohort.⁹⁰ A cross-Whitehall working group has been established to draw in the expertise of the sector, ensuring a real difference is made to vulnerable and marginalised women. The current VAWG Strategy Action Plan is being driven forward through the Home Secretary chaired VAWG Inter-Ministerial Group, which will also consider new proposals to tackle domestic abuse within this framework.
160. The Government consulted on a new funding model for supported housing earlier in 2018. A response is expected in the summer.
161. The Government has also passed the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*, which came into force in April 2018, to reform England's homelessness legislation, ensuring that more people get the help they need earlier to prevent them from initially becoming homeless. It places duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas and requires local authorities to provide new homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who are protected under existing legislation. The Act also introduces a duty to refer which requires public authorities in England specified in regulations to notify a local authority of service users, including offenders, they think may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. This will mean prisons and probation providers will have a duty to refer and prevent homelessness amongst their population from October 2018.
162. The Government has committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it altogether by 2027. To achieve this ambition, we will be publishing a cross-Government rough sleeping strategy in July 2018. Delivery of the strategy will be driven through the cross-Government Rough Sleeping & Homelessness Reduction Taskforce. Approximately one third of people sleeping rough in London in 2016/17 had experience of serving time in prison and we know that significant work is needed to better support those leaving prison into accommodation.⁹¹ The rough sleeping

strategy will take action to support particularly vulnerable groups, including female rough sleepers, many of which have an offending history and multiple and complex needs.

163. Following the announcement of a new Rough Sleeping Initiative, MHCLG has recently allocated £30 million to 83 areas to boost the immediate support available to people living on the streets and help them into accommodation. This Initiative will implement measures that will have a rapid impact this year. Councils across England with the highest numbers of rough sleepers will receive a share of this funding to significantly increase the support they are able to offer people now, and also those at risk this coming winter. Funding will be used to provide an additional 1,750 bed spaces for rough sleepers and an additional 531 dedicated homelessness workers. The funding will also help improve the co-ordination of services available to those in need and at risk.
164. Together with the Welsh Government, we are investigating how the Housing First pilots currently underway in both England and in Wales could help to ensure that offenders with complex needs, including female offenders, can secure suitable accommodation. The MHCLG funded pilots in England are being delivered by the Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority Regions, and will be subject to rigorous external evaluation to determine the effectiveness of this internationally proven approach in an English context. We are working closely with the three pilot regions to ensure that the particular needs of those with a history of offending are met.
165. DWP's roll-out of Universal Credit delivers advance payments to ex-prisoners of up to their first full month's entitlement, alleviating urgent financial need. This can be paid back over a period of up to 12 months. All Universal Credit claimants are exempt from the waiting days currently served under Jobseekers Allowance. To accommodate the complex circumstances of many female offenders, it is possible to make alternative payment arrangements, either payment of housing costs direct to landlords, splitting payments between partners, or making payments more frequent than monthly. Critically, prisoners serving short sentences of 12 months or less, which includes anytime spent on remand, are able to retain the housing element of their Universal Credit claim for up to 6 months (if their total absence does not exceed 6 months) under new temporary absence rules. This will prevent them being homeless on release. For those prisoners in receipt of legacy benefits, they can receive help with their housing costs for 13 weeks as long as their sentence is not expected to exceed that length. For prisoners on remand, housing benefit support can continue for up to 52 weeks.
166. At present, DWP Prison Work Coaches provide employment support to prisoners during their sentence and support to make their claim to benefits prior to their release. This includes support in gathering all the details and documentation needed to make their Universal Credit claim and booking an appointment at the local jobcentre on the day of release, so they can complete their claim and access financial support immediately through advance payments. Recent changes to Universal Credit means all claimants, including prison leavers, can apply for an advance payment of up to 100% of their expected monthly entitlement from day one of their claim. This work sits within the context of a wider national partnership agreement between MoJ and DWP, which sets out clear roles and responsibilities for the various bodies involved in getting more prisoners into employment in the future across England and Wales.

Evidence-based

167. We will build the evidence base on what works, testing interventions for sustainability, scalability and to ensure the best use of the available funding. We will share best practice widely, supporting collaborative training practices and building professional networks.

Sharing and supporting further data and evidence

168. We are committed to working with local areas to build a strong data and evidence base, and are establishing a cross-Government analytical working group on female offenders to share learning and collaborate.

169. We have already taken steps to give local areas the information that they need to create a gender-informed approach towards the women in their area by including a Court Outcomes by Police Force Area data tool in our annual Criminal Justice Statistics publication.⁹² We will also develop a data toolkit alongside the Concordat that will enable local areas to interrogate this court data and other key local data on their cohort. Our aim is to enable local areas to better understand the needs of the women in their area and tailor their work accordingly. It will also allow them to track the success and outcomes of their work.

170. We will make use of existing WSA models to build the evidence base for multi-agency approaches, inform our understanding of what works, and achieve value for money and good practice. We will look for opportunities to bring interested areas together to discuss the practicalities and benefits of developing a WSA. It is particularly important that smaller organisations supporting BAME women and women with other protected characteristics can benefit from the learning of larger organisations and each other, and we will prioritise their engagement. We will also look to engage with BAME women with lived experience of the CJS to inform our policy development in this area. The Troubled Families Programme, which provides high-quality, holistic support for at-risk families and is funded by MHCLG, will share the findings of its evaluation and best practice to facilitate similar work in other local areas. We will look to integrate this learning into WSA resources.

171. The Government is funding Clinks, a third sector coalition organisation, to develop and facilitate networks of support in specialist areas, providing meetings, targeted communication, and support. These will have a particular focus on women and families and BAME offenders. They will also look to improve outcomes for, and support people, with protected characteristics.

172. We are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (*Equality Act 2010*) which has a proactive focus on eliminating discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations. All our work with women should be underpinned by Equality Analysis to ensure we create inclusive systems, structures and ways of working that benefit women of all backgrounds, consistent with our responsibilities under the *Equality Act 2010*. We know that women from BAME communities are disproportionately represented in custody, and those who are Foreign Nationals may experience particular challenges. In implementing the strategy both nationally and locally, it will be important to consider how to tailor our work to ensure that women from all backgrounds stand to benefit. Monitoring of protected characteristics other than gender will allow us to measure progress.

Conclusion

173. To deliver meaningful change for female offenders, their families, victims and wider society, we must ensure that we are accountable for the priorities set out in this strategy. We will commit to publishing an annual update on the progress of the work of the strategy. To support this, the right governance processes need to be in place to oversee the delivery of the commitments made in this strategy. We will put in place a reformed Advisory Board on Female Offenders, continue to work through the cross-government Female Offender Leadership Board, and liaise with the Criminal Justice Inspectorates.
174. The Advisory Board on Female Offenders, which brings together key stakeholders, criminal justice agencies and officials from relevant Government Departments, has provided expert advice and challenge to Government on the issue of female offending since 2013. Its work has been invaluable in developing this strategy. As we move into the next stage of implementation, we want to increase the effectiveness of this body even further by:
- Giving the Board responsibility for monitoring and advising on the delivery of commitments in this strategy
 - Ensuring that we have relevant expert representation by regularly refreshing stakeholder membership through an application process
 - Securing attendance from Ministers from other relevant Government Departments to attend the Board, making sure that female offending remains a priority across Government
 - Linking the work of the Board with that of other cross-Government groups that impact on female offenders
175. Delivering this strategy will not be without its challenges. The MoJ is operating in an environment of financial constraint, and in this context, we are clear that the measures we have put in place to deliver this strategy must be evidence-based and evaluated to test their suitability for further rollout, as well as scalable and sustainable.
176. Furthermore, as we have acknowledged throughout the strategy, the criminal justice system (CJS) is often 'downstream' of a wide range of statutory and third sector services that female offenders have come into contact with. Even whilst women are within the CJS, working effectively to rehabilitate this cohort requires cooperation from many other Government departments and agencies. It is imperative that we engage in partnership working across Government to address female offending as a shared priority. The cost of female offending affects all of us – and the benefits of implementing our vision will benefit all of us.
177. If we achieve our vision of seeing fewer women in the CJS, fewer women in custody and more women being successfully managed in the community, we will have contributed significantly to creating a justice system that is better for everyone.
178. In the development of our strategic priorities, we have drawn on existing work from across Government from which the female offender cohort may benefit. We will work

to ensure that this strategy will continue to inform their work going forward, and that the particular needs of female offenders are recognised and addressed within their agendas.

179. Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has worked on and contributed to this strategy document. This includes the staff and women we met at HMP East Sutton Park, HMP Styal and HMP Downview, who provided such candid feedback. Your cooperation and support has been invaluable so far, and will continue to be so going forward if we are to achieve the ambition set out here. It is only by working in partnership across organisational and institutional boundaries to secure the best outcomes, that we will be able to deliver the kind of justice system that will benefit society as a whole.

Annex A: Lord Farmer Review Terms of Reference

Building on the original Farmer Review: *The importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime*, which focused on men in prison, a further independent review will be commissioned from Lord Farmer to investigate how supporting female offenders to engage with their families can lower recidivism, aid rehabilitation and assist in addressing the issues of addressing intergenerational crime.

The follow-on Review will aim to learn about:

1. What works to help female offenders, their families and especially their children, to maintain and even improve family ties, where appropriate, while serving a custodial or community sentence, or post-release.
2. The challenges of mothering and fulfilling this primary carer role either whilst at a distance from their children or in the community.
3. What works to help those prisoners who do not have any family connections, either because they have been through the care system, their children have been taken into the care system, or the nature of their offending precludes contact with their families.
4. How this can be translated into policy and commissioning for change.

Expert group

- Nicola Drinkwater, Head of Female Offending, Clinks
- Tina Parker Head of Women's Services, Pact
- Kate Paradine CEO, Women in Prison
- Jenny Earle, Programme Director, Prison Reform Trust
- Director, Women's Custodial Estate, HMPPS
- Deputy Director, Vulnerable Offender Policy, Ministry of Justice
- Gabrielle Lee, Governor Low Newton
- Carlene Dixon, Governor HMP Send
- Julia Mulligan, Police and Crime Commissioner, North Yorkshire
- Val Castell, Adult Court Committee, Magistrates Association
- One or more women with lived experience of life inside prison and the difficulties of fulfilling primary care responsibilities while serving a custodial sentence.

Endnotes

- ¹ The higher prevalence amongst offenders of issues with drugs, alcohol and mental health is well documented. In a 2005/06 MOJ survey, 46% of female prisoners reported having attempted suicide – more than twice the rate of male prisoners (21%). This is higher than in the general population, amongst whom around 6% have. In the same MoJ survey, 64% of prisoners reported using Class A drugs in the four weeks before custody compared to 13% of the general population, and 49% of prisoners were assessed as being at risk of suffering from anxiety and/or depression, compared to 16% of the general population. In the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey of prisoners (1998), 90% of prisoners had one or more of the five psychiatric disorders studied (psychosis, neurosis, personality disorder, hazardous drink and drug dependence). MOJ (2013). Gender differences in substance misuse and mental health amongst prisoners Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-differences-in-substance-misuse-and-mental-health-amongst-prisoners--2>
- ² Substance misuse has been linked to increased likelihood of reoffending. According to a MoJ survey of adult prisoners sentenced in 2005 and 2006, 62% of prisoners who reported using drugs in the four weeks before custody reoffended in the year after released compared to 30% of those who reported never using drugs. 62% of those who reported drinking alcohol every day in the four weeks before custody were reconvicted, compared with 49% of those who did not report this. Addressing mental health issues should also help offenders better address other needs more directly associated with offending, such as engaging in drug treatment or maintaining stable accommodation. MOJ (2013). Gender differences in substance misuse and mental health amongst prisoners Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-differences-in-substance-misuse-and-mental-health-amongst-prisoners--2>
- ³ The human cost of VAWG is high. Experiences of abuse have serious psychological, emotional and physical consequences and may contribute to multiple disadvantage, or a chaotic lifestyle involving substance misuse, homelessness, offending behaviour, gang involvement, prostitution or mental health problems. That 41% of the prison population have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse is illustrative of the wider social harms these crimes cause". (HM Government (2016). Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020, p.8.) Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522166/VAWG_Strategy_FINAL_PUBLICATION_MASTER_vRB.PDF
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