



Ministry
of Justice

The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System

Progress Report

January 2023

Introduction

The Female Offender Strategy (2018) identified the importance of effective partnerships in addressing the often multiple and complex needs of women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. The Strategy committed Government to develop a Concordat for England and Wales to set out a model of joint working at a national and local level.

The Concordat was published in January 2021 and aims to encourage partnerships at both the national and local level, and between the two. It is not intended to replace current arrangements that are working well, but rather to build on these to improve existing support to women. The Concordat considers the needs of adult women and does not include the youth justice system unless explicitly stated.

The Concordat applies to England and Wales. Wales has its own legislative and policy landscape in areas such as health, social care, substance misuse, housing and accommodation, education and skills, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The focus of the Concordat is not solely on the criminal justice system, as a joined-up response to the needs of women will only be effective if it includes organisations with responsibility for issues such as health, social care, education, employment, welfare and housing. All need to be involved to deliver tangible improvements.

This report will set out the significant progress we have made in completing the ten-point national action plan, including launching grant funding competitions, refreshing the Delivery Board and wider governance structures to improve collaborative working and working with the co-signatories to the Concordat in developing a new Delivery Plan for the Female Offender Strategy.

The completion of the national action plan does not represent the end of cross-government collaboration on women in or at risk of contact with the CJS. Instead, it is intended to lay out the progress on increasing collaboration so far and sets out our vision for the future.

Method

- Delivering the aims of the Concordat is a shared responsibility, and this report incorporates contributions from co-signatories and local areas. The MoJ has also engaged with external stakeholders to ensure that the report accurately reflects what the impact of the Concordat has been on the women's voluntary sector, as well as women themselves.

Data and analysis

- Small sample sizes and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underlying crime rates and the workings of the criminal justice system are difficult to quantify at this stage, and so it would be inaccurate to assume trends based solely on 2020 data.
- The Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan will be measured against an Outcome Framework which sets out metrics for success. The Concordat, as part of the wider strategy, will also be measured against this framework.

National Action Plan

We have completed the specific activities that were set out in the Concordat's national action plan. However, there is still more that we can do to build on the progress made to drive forward local integration of services for women in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. These next steps will be delivered as part of the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan over the coming years.

Action 1: Review the Government's response to vulnerable women

What we said we would do

- Representatives of each co-signatory (at Deputy Director level, or an appropriate alternative) to attend the Delivery Board.
- A report on work currently underway to improve outcomes for women in the criminal justice system to be published.
- Progress on achieving our shared commitment and agreed outcomes to be reported at Delivery Board and in the "One Year On" report.

What we have done

- **The MoJ has reviewed work underway and developed a Delivery Plan that will drive forward government's response to vulnerable women.**
 - The Women in the Criminal Justice System (WCJS) Board, chaired by the Minister for Women in the CJS, met twice in 2022 and is driving forward progress on the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan.
 - The MoJ Female Offender Policy Team has assessed work currently underway, and this has informed areas for focus.
 - The cross-government WCJS Delivery Board began meeting regularly in November 2021 with a refreshed membership. The Delivery Board has enabled better join up across government than had been in place previously.
 - Delivery Board members have been commissioned to provide updates on work undertaken in the female offender space and these have informed the commitments that have been included in the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan
 - The ministerial board has agreed a set of principles aimed at improving outcomes for vulnerable women which are presented in the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan:
 1. Reaffirming commitment to the objectives of the Female Offender Strategy and the Concordat.

2. Agreeing that a gender-specific and trauma-responsive approach should be the default approach to the delivery of services, unless there are compelling reasons otherwise.
 3. Better join-up of provision of services and investment in them, including in ensuring the sustainability of the women's community sector.
 4. Collectively identifying ways to build a stronger evidence base.
 5. Agreeing to the new governance arrangements.
- These will then be taken forward and monitored by the Delivery Board and held to account by the ministerial WCJS Board and stakeholder WCJS Expert Group.

Selected actions taken across Government to improve outcomes for vulnerable women

Safety: Self Harm Taskforce (Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service)

- *Review of Prolific Self Harmers in the Women's Estate has been completed by the Women's Estate Psychology Team and, as an outcome of this work, additional funding for Support through Enhanced Management (StEM) has been provided within the Women's Estate as has funding of a pilot relating to Early Days.*
- *Significant work has been conducted to review the Early Days provision across the Women's Estate as part of the Health Review. This will feed directly into the work of the Taskforce.*

Social Care Review Group (Department of Health and Social Care and NHSC/NHS E/I, HMPPS)

- *In January 2021 HMPPS and NHS E/I stood up a multi-agency National Women's Health and Social Care Review Group. This group is independently chaired and has a remit to consider improvements required in the built environment as well as within the health offers made to women in custody*

Updated Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (Home Office)

- *Since the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Government has published the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2021) and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (2022). These documents will further transform the response to these crimes, from prevention and raising awareness, improving support to victims and survivors, to ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice. This followed an extensive call for evidence which received an unprecedented response – over 180,000 responses in total.*

Action 2: Respond to emerging issues

What we said we would do

- External stakeholders wanting to raise generic issues within scope of the Strategy and/or the Concordat to contact MOJ (on cjwst@Justice.gov.uk).
- MOJ to acknowledge the issue and advise whether MOJ or another co-signatory will be providing a response. Designated co-signatories to respond substantively to the stakeholder and report back to the Delivery Board.

What we have done

- **The MoJ and co-signatories respond to emerging issues through the cjswt@justice.gov.uk inbox and the new Expert Group on Women in the Criminal Justice System**
 - The cjswt@justice.gov.uk inbox is monitored on a daily basis and where the issue requires co-signatories to respond, the MoJ facilitates this.
 - The Women in the Criminal Justice System (WCJS) Expert Group (formally the Advisory Board on Female Offenders) and the Female Offender Minority Ethnic Working Group (FOME) are two major forums that enable stakeholders to raise any issues of concern including on the specific issues that affect ethnically diverse women in the CJS. The Expert Group first met on 30 November 2021 and most recently on 7 December 2022.
 - Regular group discussions take place through the WCJS Delivery Board, as well as bilateral conversations with senior cross-government colleagues including on specific issues of concern to stakeholders. For example, during the development of the Delivery Plan the group has met throughout to help shape commitments and how they are measured.
 - The MoJ has published the membership of the WCJS Expert Group on gov.uk.

Next Steps

- Co-signatories will ensure issues raised by stakeholders are shared as appropriate with colleagues at the Delivery Board. On occasion, stakeholders may be invited to directly address the Delivery Board to share their experiences and present evidence.
- Co-signatories will feed in their departmental perspectives on issues raised across the governance framework and agree actions to help address them.

Action 3: Champion local achievement

What we said we would do

- Co-signatories to share examples of best practice or innovation at the local level with the Delivery Board, allowing effective approaches to be adopted more widely.
- Co-signatories to assist local organisations (within their area of responsibility) with work to improve outcomes for women, by promoting best practice shared at the Delivery Board.

What we have done

- **The MoJ has engaged with national and local partners to develop a series of events on WSA best practice, the first of which have taken place in January 2023, with resources subsequently published online.**
 - The MoJ has undertaken a survey of co-signatories in order to gather examples of best practice and has undertaken detailed interviews with stakeholders to develop case studies that are included in this report. The information gathered has been shared with co-signatories.
 - The MoJ has developed a series of events on best practice to support areas setting up a WSA.
 - The MoJ has been meeting with stakeholders from inside and external to government to create working relationships which has allowed progress on the Concordat and the Female Offender Delivery Plan to be driven forward.
 - The MoJ also attends internal and external forums to raise awareness of female offender issues and to gather information/best practice.

Next Steps

- Co-signatories will continue to work with local and national organisations to identify areas of achievement and encourage other areas to replicate this where possible.

Action 4: Gender- and Trauma-informed and -responsive front-line services

What we said we would do

- Co-signatories to identify the workforces in their respective areas of responsibility that have contact with women already in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system.
- If a training need is identified, co-signatories to establish an action plan to address this need. Where appropriate, this may include using national representative bodies for workforces as the channel of communication and for delivery of training.
- All co-signatories who have front line services that work with vulnerable women to report to MOJ on how this commitment has been met

What we have done

- **The MoJ has undertaken a survey of co-signatories and agencies and found that whilst the majority have trauma-informed training, there are still some gaps which the MoJ is supporting to fill.**
 - The MoJ has shared the training resources that were identified with the delivery board and worked with departments to provide training where required.
 - A number of co-signatories are working to further improve their training offer including:
 - HMPPS developing POWER training
 - DWP has committed to prison work coaches in women's prisons receiving trauma informed and gender-based training provided through MoJ/HMPPS
 - MoJ and cross-government Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan actions are trauma-informed and -responsive.
 - The MoJ has included gender and trauma-informed and responsive training resources in the WSA best practice events.

Next Steps

- The MoJ and co-signatories will use the new governance structures, such as the Delivery Board, to continue to provide a forum to highlight new and emerging training practices.

Case study of trauma-informed training: Devon and Cornwall Police

- *Devon and Cornwall Police is a founding member of the Trauma-Informed Plymouth Network which brings together more than 300 members from statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors, alongside people with lived experience of trauma. The Network aims to make Plymouth a trauma informed city and has undertaken work within the police to raise awareness of trauma and to embed trauma-informed practice. The Network has developed free and collaborative interagency training which has been - as of early 2022 - delivered to over 1,000 professionals in the Plymouth area, from local substance misuse services, and safeguarding professionals, to Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service.*
- *The training is a part of a larger package of ground-up initiatives, including a 'Kindness' Charter developed with Plymouth City Council, and a Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPH) information resource which supports police officers in engaging with victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse in a trauma-informed way.*
- *These changes have had oversight from the Local Criminal Justice Board, as well as a women-specific sub-group - Working in Partnership for women in the Criminal Justice System - both receiving ongoing input from Independent Advisory Groups and lived experience advisors. During late 2021 and into 2022 the force has begun working with a number of academics and third sector agencies to ensure its trauma-informed interventions are evaluated, including research with the University of Exeter to understand the impact of shame on offending behaviour of women.*

Action 5: National Data Collection

What we said we would do

- Delivery Board to commission survey of all current data collection relevant to this cohort of women.
- In response, co-signatories to report to Delivery Board regarding data they collect and how it is disaggregated.
- Delivery Board to challenge co-signatories, identify possible areas of where further collection and disaggregation is needed, where appropriate.

What we have done

- **The MoJ is increasing data visibility and use through cross-government working groups and newly developed metrics that will be used to measure the progress of commitments made in the Delivery Plan.**
 - The MoJ has developed an Outcomes Framework that will allow it to measure progress made on the Female Offender Delivery Plan against specific metrics.
 - Through the Better Outcomes for Linked Data (BOLD) Project we are exploring data sharing to improve our understanding of this cohort of women.
 - Co-signatories have signed up to a cross-government Female Offender analytical group which will discuss data and statistical issues.
 - Areas that have adopted WSA's with previous MoJ funding were required to conduct evaluations of effectiveness which have found that though we cannot yet conclude that the WSA has had a direct impact, emerging evidence taken from publicly available data suggests there has been a promising reduction in the number of adult women arrested.
 - Areas that have received funding will also be required to conduct evaluations and share data on progress.
 - Alongside the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan, the MoJ has published a series of metrics that will be used to measure progress against the objectives. The MoJ will report on progress against these metrics on a six-monthly basis.

Next Steps

- The NAO report on [Improving Outcomes for Women in the CJS](#) noted the need for the MoJ *to identify gaps in available data which reduce its ability to monitor changes in women's journeys through the system at key stages, and plan how to work with other bodies to develop better data.* The MoJ will work through the delivery board and other fora to

identify areas to increase join up. The MoJ is also setting up a cross-government female offender analysis network which will discuss and share findings from analysis of programmes within the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan.

Case Study of National Data Sharing: Better Outcomes through Linked Data

- *Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD) is a £19.7m programme, led by the Ministry of Justice in collaboration with a range of Other Government Departments. The programme seeks to enable better evidenced, joined-up and more effective cross government services through linked data in order to better support people at specific touchpoints in their interactions with the Criminal Justice System.*
- *Four pilots are being run as part of BOLD to demonstrate the value of linked data. They are reducing reoffending, supporting victims of crime, tackling homelessness and reducing substance misuse.*
- *The Reducing Reoffending pilot is supporting Government ambitions to tackle the root causes of offending by linking data to better understand the impact of specific interventions that help offenders turn their backs on crime, particularly in terms of outcomes that are linked with other parts of government such as employment, health, housing and family relationships. As part of this programme, we will also be looking at specific cohorts of people and how outcomes may vary as a result of differing characteristics; one of these cohorts is women.*

Action 6: Local Data Sharing

What we said we would do

- Delivery Board to produce and distribute a best practice guide.
- Co-signatories to contribute to best practice guide, regarding the collecting and sharing of relevant data.
- Co-signatories to share this guide with their local agencies and delivery organisations.

What we have done

- **The MoJ has undertaken a survey of co-signatories in order to gather examples of best practice which it will share following this report.**
 - The MoJ has also undertaken detailed interviews with stakeholders to develop case studies that are included in this report. The information that has been gathered has been shared with co-signatories.
 - The MoJ has engaged with a number of data leads for WSAs and discussed what best practice they have identified and what guidance would be useful for other areas.
 - Data leads have been supportive and agreed to input and share materials.
 - Advice on local data sharing has been included in the MoJ's WSA best practice events, with resources subsequently published online.

Next Steps

- The MoJ will continue to examine how local data is collected, aggregated and used at the MoJ and amongst co-signatories.

Case study of local data sharing: Greater Manchester Women's Support Alliance

- *Since 2014, Greater Manchester Whole System Approach has brought together statutory, private and voluntary services to identify women at the points of arrest and sentence to divert women from prison, and where possible, from CJS altogether. This approach has built on an Alliance of eight local women's centres, which collaboratively deliver a core set of interventions addressing key drivers of women's offending – from mental ill-health, to debt and substance misuse problems.*
- *This collaborative approach is underpinned by a local data sharing agreement, which enables the centres to collate, with each woman's consent, information on her housing, mental health, domestic and criminal justice background in one case management system. Since its inception in 2014, the system not only enabled a more holistic, person-centred service provision, but has been crucial in implementing the 'Tell us once' initiative, which minimises the need for woman to re-describe her traumatic experiences to numerous practitioners in order to access the package of support that meets all her needs.*
- *Since the implementation of the Whole System Approach, Greater Manchester has seen a significant 60% reduction in number of women sent to custody, and a female reoffending rate which fell by 5 percentage points between 2014 and 2020, remaining consistently lower than the national average.*

Action 7: Local Area Data Tool

What we said we would do

- MOJ to publish data tool with metrics available at the local level.
- Delivery Board to assess value and use of the tool and take action accordingly.

What we have done

- **The data tool was published in January 2021 and is used by national and local organisations to investigate data and trends across geographic areas.**
 - The MoJ has published an updated version of the tool in February 2022 and have discussed with a number of stakeholders how they use the tool to inform their work.

The Local Area Data Tool: case study of Prison Reform Trust

- *The Prison Reform Trust is an independent charity working to create a just, humane and effective penal system. Reduction in use of prison for women has been a key focus of their recent 5-year programme ‘Transforming Lives: reducing women’s imprisonment’.*
- *Analysis of the Data Tool data supported this campaigning work, enabling the Prison Reform Trust to interrogate trends in sentencing outcomes for women across England and Wales, and to highlight geographical differences in the use of imprisonment since the publication of the Female Offender Strategy. In particular, the Tool helped highlight discrepancies in imprisonment rates across police force areas – with some areas seeing significant increases in the use of community solutions for women, while in others there has been little change in high imprisonment rates for women.*

Action 8: National Investment

What we said we would do

- Delivery Board to arrange an engagement event with representatives of all co-signatories, voluntary sector organisations, service users and other stakeholders, focusing on issues of value for money, collaborative working, breaking down silos and improving outcomes for women.

What we have done

- **The MoJ has launched a grant funding competition of up to £3.6m to support the delivery of Whole System Approaches. This funding is available to help drive forward the development of local Whole System Approaches.**
 - Advice and best practice in securing funding at a local and national level, collaborative working, breaking down silos and improving outcomes for women has been included in the MoJ's WSA best practice events, and in the resources subsequently published online.
 - The MoJ collated information from co-signatories on the new funding opportunities that are presented by the 3 year Spending Review Period that began in April, and has shared this with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The MoJ and co-signatories will consider how this and other funding information can be circulated further.
 - The WCJS Delivery Board has begun discussing how better to align the funding that government offers to support vulnerable women.

Next Steps

- Through the WCJS Delivery Board, co-signatories will continue to identify and share information on joint funds, build the evidence base for future Spending Reviews and co-commissioning of services that can improve outcomes for women.

Ministry of Justice Core Costs funding for the women's sector: case study of Anawim Centre

- *Since the publication of the Female Offender Strategy, the Ministry of Justice has invested £9.5m in the women's community sector. In 2020/21 and 2021/22, £4.4m of this funding was invested to pay the core costs of community services working with women at risk of offending or already in the criminal justice system. More than 40 organisations have benefited from this core costs funding. The decision to fund core costs responded directly to calls from organisations to improve the financial sustainability of the sector which, provides essential holistic support for vulnerable women, including as part of a local whole system approach models.*
- *Anawim – a women's centre serving around 800 women annually in Birmingham – was awarded a total of £150,000 over the two rounds of core costs funding. This investment enabled the centre to launch a new helpline and an online chat service and to strengthen its infrastructure by helping to create new roles of Chief Operating Officer, communications and Fundraising Officer. These core roles, as well as Anawim's CEO have, in turn, enabled them to start developing a 5-year plan with their staff and trustees. This will include working to raise awareness of Anawim's work locally and women's centres Nationally, championing the expertise of the women's community organisations in the criminal justice system and support expansion of*

Action 9: Local Investment

What we said we would do

- Where appropriate, co-signatories to collate and share learning from existing Whole System Approaches to illustrate the benefits of pooled funding at a local level.

What we have done

- **The MoJ has developed a series of events on WSA best practice, which have taken place in January 2023, with resources subsequently published online.**
 - Through regular engagement with areas such as London, Greater Manchester, Sussex, Norfolk and Wales the MoJ has identified some of the challenges and opportunities facing female offenders and are using the new governance structures and the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan to respond to issues such as funding community provision and domestic abuse services for women
 - The Women in the Criminal Justice System Delivery Board is working with WSA leads to share learning, highlight how they can ensure that the funding streams that they manage are targeted and accessible by the right people.

Next Steps

- The MoJ will identify areas where trusts and foundations can enhance and improve existing and new WSAs.
- WSA areas that receive funding from the MoJ's Integration Services Funding will be required to share evaluation data of their projects with the MoJ. Where appropriate, this analysis will be shared with other WSAs to inform areas of best practice and learning.

Action 10: Progress report

What we said we would do

- Publication of a “One Year On” report online.

What we have done

- **This Progress Report is being published alongside the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan.**

Next Steps

- The MoJ and co-signatories will continue to evaluate the progress of the Concordat, using forums such as the Women in the Criminal Justice System Ministerial Board and official level Delivery Board to drive forward further work and hold signatories to account.
- The further actions that have been highlighted in this report will underpin many of the commitments made in the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan, particularly under the first objective of that plan.
- Progress will be reported on as part of the wider reporting on implementation of the Delivery Plan.

Case study of local investment: Complex Needs Project at Nelson Trust

The Nelson Trust is delivering a pioneering gender-responsive and trauma-informed service co-commissioned by several stakeholders (councils, police, clinical commissioning group, housing). The project supports 20 women a year who have experienced a combination of domestic abuse, childhood abuse, drug and alcohol problems, poor mental health, money issues, homelessness and involvement in the criminal justice system or social care.

Through a relational and restorative approach, a dedicated keyworker supports each woman to engage with the service to help her overcome any barriers she may face when accessing support. The service helps each woman build resilience, to acknowledge her strengths, providing her with strategies to create a more positive future for her and her family.

The intensive, trauma-informed working and the collaborative multi-agency approach help women in addressing their unmet needs and achieving transformational change.

For example, a woman who had her toddler removed prior to involvement in the project, was supported to keep with her new-born baby and is now volunteering as a peer mentor to other women.

Next Steps

One of the central aims of the Concordat was to improve cross-agency working to ensure that efforts are aligned, so that all of the organisations that a vulnerable woman might come into contact with would recognise her multiple and complex needs and ensure she is able to access the most appropriate support, rather than focussing on the particular issue that that is within their remit. There are good examples of this happening at the local level, as highlighted throughout the report. However, as well as this bottom-up cooperation at local the level, we need to continue ensure that there is greater alignment at the top – between government departments and agencies. Co-signatories to the Concordat have made important steps towards this through the commitments that they made but, to ensure we are achieving the best outcomes for women, it is important that we continue to work closely with local and national organisations through fora such as the Women in the Criminal Justice System (WCJS) Expert Group and Female Offender Minority Ethnic working group (FOME) as well as on a regular bilateral basis.

As the National Audit Office noted in their 2022 report whilst there have previously been gaps in our governance these have been largely resolved as, in early 2022, the MoJ undertook an internal review of the governance surrounding the Female Offender Strategy. Following this, the MoJ has put in place new arrangements, headed by the ministerial level cross-government WCJS Board, to ensure clarity on shared objectives and the role of each co-signatory.

The 3 year Spending Review settlement will allow us, as government, to plan over a multi-year period allowing the sector to have greater certainty over their funding arrangements, thereby allowing them to invest in staff, training and resources. We have already begun this by launching grant competitions to support organisations working to deliver for women in the CJS.

The Concordat will now be carried forward through the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan, with a particular focus on:

Further supporting the development of Whole Systems Approaches at the local level

- As noted in previous sections, the Whole Systems Approaches appear to be bringing great benefits to areas like Greater Manchester, London, South Wales and Norfolk, where they are most advanced. We now need to continue rolling out this approach to new areas and encourage further embedding in areas where they are already developing.
- Many of the actions in the Concordat were aimed at making this happen and so completing the action plan is an important step. The MoJ has published resources and best practice on setting up a WSA and will continue to promote the benefits of this approach.

Doing more to offer support women with complex needs before they offend

- Women who offend are likely to have multiple and complex needs and are likely to have had contact with multiple public bodies. This presents an opportunity for all of these organisations to work together to identify those women most at need, to share information, and to ensure that the women are able to access tailored support that goes beyond addressing the immediate problem that brought them to the attention of public officials.
- While there are great examples of information sharing and collaboration of this type happening at the local level, particularly in those areas with WSAs, there needs to be better national level coordination around setting strategic objectives, funding and resourcing decisions and, commissioning of services. The WCJS ministerial board is a first step in setting this direction, with the WCJS Delivery Board and Expert Group providing a vehicle for delivery.