



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Action Plan: Time to care: what helps women cope in prison?

Action Plan Submitted: 18th March 2025

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INTRODUCTION

HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Ofsted for England and Wales are independent inspectorates which provide scrutiny of the conditions for, and treatment of prisoners and offenders. They report their findings for prisons, Young Offender Institutions, and effectiveness of the work of probation, and youth offending services across England and Wales to Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). In response to the report HMPPS / MoJ are required to draft a robust and timely action plan to address the recommendations. Action plans provide specific steps and actions to address the recommendations, that are clear, outcome focussed, measurable, achievable, and relevant with the owner and timescale of each step clearly identified. Action plans are sent to HMIP and published on the GOV.UK website. Progress against the implementation and delivery of the action plans will also be monitored and reported on.



ACTION PLAN: Response to the HMIP thematic review: Time to care: what helps women cope in prison?

1. No	2. Concerns	3. Response Action Taken/Planned	4. Responsible Owner	5. Target Date
1	<p>Although officers were keen to support women, we found significant weaknesses in the care provided. For example, some women described feeling overlooked as staff focused their time and attention on others who were more obviously in crisis. One woman said she had self-harmed to get officers to take her seriously.</p>	<p>A training needs analysis will be prioritised to identify further training and development packages required to enhance opportunities to learn and build confidence and the capability of staff and managers working in women's prisons.</p> <p>The Enable Programme team will work with the Women's Group to ensure all workstreams, including the Core Capability Packages, take account of the needs of working with women. This work will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From April 2025 rollout nationally the new 'Core Capability Package' for Band 3 prison officers in women's prisons to enhance opportunities to learn, develop, build confidence and capability. • The HMPPS Women's Group has been given early access (from February 2025) to Custodial Manager Portfolio packages, to support the work being undertaken to increase the confidence and capabilities across this grade. These packages will support the emphasis placed on relational ways of working, decency, wellbeing, procedural justice, and rehabilitation across front-line delivery in women's prisons. • Active development, testing and process evaluation of a staff induction package that is bespoke based on establishment need and focussed on better supporting new staff as they enter the complex environment of a prison. HMP/YOI Downview has been identified as an early adopter site. 	<p>Lead HR Business Partner, Women's Group</p> <p>Deputy Director Transforming Delivery Directorate and Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p>	<p>September 2025</p> <p>April 2025</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>September 2025</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an early adopter site for the Enable Programme, new staff at HMP/YOI Downview have facilitated guided reflective conversations to support them into role and embed their learning. <p>To further support staff working with women, HMPPS are currently delivering Behind the Behaviour (BTB) training at HMP/YOI Styal and HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. This will be rolled out for staff working in all other public sector women's prisons commencing in April 2025. The speed and pace of delivery will be determined by spending review funding.</p> <p>Governors of public sector women's prisons have now completed Behind the Behaviour Training.</p> <p>Four women's prisons have received bespoke support from the Standards Coaching Team (SCT) to date.</p> <p>An application will be submitted for further deployment of the SCT to HMP/YOI Eastwood Park and HMP/YOI Foston Hall who have the largest rates of Prison Officers in their first two years of service in the women's estate. If successful, the SCT will work with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for 16 weeks and develop a targeted action plan with the overall purpose of developing confidence, competence and empowering staff in their roles.</p> <p>Women's Estate Psychology Service (WEPS) has created Trauma-Informed and Responsive Practice Guidance for women's prisons, to provide practical actions to support the enablers and address the barriers to trauma-informed care. An implementation plan will be developed with Governors and Directors across all women's prisons.</p> <p>Implementation of Staff Space – an approach where all operational staff at HMP/YOI Styal are provided with monthly reflective practice sessions with a registered forensic psychologist will be implemented. A four-year evaluation is being</p>	<p>Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service</p> <p>Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service and Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>April 2025</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>August 2025</p> <p>Staff Space implementation began in February 2025</p>
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		<p>undertaken which will examine the impacts of this on the culture and perceptions of safety of staff and women at the prison. It is hypothesised that if staff can feel cared for, then they will be more resilient and able to provide better care for women in custody.</p> <p>Building on the £14m allocated between 2022 – 2025 to improve women's safety in custody, projects to improve support for women during their early days (The Early Days Service), as well as testing an enhanced model of support for young adult women, will continue into 2025/2026. HMPPS will submit bids for continued funding of these projects for 2026 onwards.</p> <p>A review of underpinning workforce models within the public sector Women's estate will test if baseline resources are sufficient for the effective delivery of regimes and services. Review outputs will be considered in the context of the wider estate and will be subject to a system wide impact assessment prior to final decision-making on implementation. The impact assessment process will specifically consider findings of the HMIP thematic review alongside the broader resource package.</p> <p>HMPPS will build upon the introduction of gender specific training available for new Prison Officers, and the Working with Women e-learning package, by considering the views from staff who have completed the training to date and incorporate into a review of content. In addition, HMPPS will further evaluate women specific Band 3 POELT and refresher training to ensure that training is appropriate.</p>	<p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p> <p>Head of Prisons Workforce Delivery Project</p> <p>DD MoJ People and Capability and Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p>	<p>June 2025</p> <p>Review May 2025</p> <p>November 2025</p>
2	<p>Support to maintain relationships with children and families was not good enough. Despite this being the top priority for women in our survey there was too little creativity in the range of help available.</p>	<p>Building on current Spending Review funded additional roles to support children and families, HMPPS will submit a Spending Review bid (2026 onwards) to increase prison-based social workers, Family Engagement Worker provision and baseline funding for Health and Perinatal Leads.</p>	<p>Deputy Director HMPPS Women's Group</p>	<p>June 2025</p>



		<p>The HMPPS Family Services Team are currently working to create new data sets, which will provide information around the current delivery of family services, highlighting both areas of good practice and opportunities for development. This data will inform the work of the Women's Group, enabling the development of effective approaches to support the delivery of the family provision.</p> <p>The Head of Reducing Reoffending in the Prison Group Director's (PGD) team will meet with the HMPPS Families Team to develop the Families Performance Measure for 2025/26, which will ensure continuous improvement around supporting family ties for women in custody.</p>	<p>Deputy Director, Rehabilitation Directorate</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group and Deputy Director, Rehabilitation Directorate</p>	<p>November 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p>
3	<p>Women's ability to cope was hindered by the prison regime. Many spent too long locked in their cell or without purposeful activity. There were few opportunities for women to seek support from each other, for example exercising or eating meals together.</p>	<p>The Prison Group Director has set clear expectations for improvements and driving regime delivery plans throughout 2025/26, including minimum requirements for evening domestics/association and a minimum of 1 hour in the open air daily.</p> <p>The PGD has instructed the Governor of the one prison that was not running evening domestics to re-establish as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>A review of underpinning workforce models within the public sector Women's estate will test if baseline resources are sufficient for the effective delivery of regimes and services. Review outputs will be considered in the context of the wider estate and will be subject to a system wide impact assessment prior to final decision-making on implementation. The impact assessment process will specifically consider findings of the HMIP thematic review alongside the broader resource package.</p> <p>Key Work is one of the core priorities for HMPPS in 2025/26. The expectation will be that key work delivery will increase in this cycle of Regime Planning aligned to each establishment Regime Management Plan. The Prison Group Director of Women has</p>	<p>Prison Group Director Women's Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director Women's Group</p> <p>Head of Prisons Workforce Delivery Project</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Review May 2025</p> <p>March 2026</p>



		<p>made clear the minimum expectation for key work delivery will be 2 sessions every 4 weeks. This will be monitored through quarterly assurance and performance meetings with each prison.</p> <p>Improving regimes is a core priority for HMPPS in 2025/26. The Prison Group Director of Women will establish a strategic priority workstream to improve allocation capacity, improve attendance at purposeful activity and seek to increase the quality and quantity of purposeful activity, share best practice, drive innovation and oversee development of regimes across women's prison to include a focus on creating more enabling environments for rehabilitation to occur. This will look to improve opportunities for women to provide peer support and activity and set targets for full-time and part-time activity which we will look to improve where possible. Whilst many residential units in women's prisons have the provision for communal dining, this is not available for all women. The strategic workstream will also consider how the prison regime can be adapted to support increased levels communal dining where facilities allow.</p> <p>The PGD has instructed Governors to ensure purposeful activity is used as a tool to support women at risk of self-harm through weekly Safety Intervention Meetings.</p> <p>A review of escorts, bedwatches and constant supervision across all prisons in England and Wales is looking at ways of improving prisoner access to health services, whilst reducing reliance on in-person medical appointments. The project will take account of the gender-specific issues that impact on health need. Work will consider the sufficiency of resources for both planned and unplanned escorts with an aim to reduce impact on regimes. Separately, a Spending Review bid to increase resources available for constant supervision has been developed, which if successful will reduce the instances of regime closures to enable this support.</p>	<p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Head of Workforce Modelling (Prisons)</p>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>October 2025</p>
4	The prison environment did not always help women feel safe. For example, some found the	HMPPS continue to research Gender Specific and Trauma informed practices and, although there are currently no live build	Deputy Director, MoJ Property	Ongoing



	<p>level of noise and communal showers distressing, and there was a lack of therapeutic space.</p>	<p>programmes in the women's estate, these would be considered in any technical design standards for future new builds. A number of improvements to the physical spaces in women's prisons have been made in the last few years which has enabled improvements including provision of therapeutic spaces at five women's prisons. HMPPS will continue to seek improvements to the physical environment as funding becomes available.</p> <p>Staff in prisoner facing areas will be required to wear earpieces attached to their radios to avoid the warble from their radios being audible to prisoners. This will commence March 2025 following procurement of equipment.</p> <p>Governors will ensure they have appropriate assurance and processes in place to ensure that all cells are 'room ready' when a woman moves into that cell, that they are clean, and they have sufficient appropriate equipment and bedding.</p> <p>MOJ Property will conduct a review to consider how to lessen noise on residential units in public sector women's prisons.</p> <p>Governors will undertake a self-audit against the Living Conditions Audit baselines, if they have not had an audit in the last 12 months.</p>	<p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, MoJ Property</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p>	<p>December 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p> <p>November 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p>
5	<p>Too little attention was given to some very basic elements of decency. Women were given prison-issue clothing designed for men, and they did not receive enough underwear. They were not allowed to wash their own underwear in a washing machine.</p>	<p>The Prison Group Director has instructed Governors that all women must be issued with seven pairs of underwear on arrival, and these can be washed in machines.</p> <p>A Band 7 Assurance Advisor has been appointed in the HMPPS Women's Group, with a start date of April 2025, to increase capacity to assure decency across the 10 public sector women's prisons. This will include availability of basic decency items and women specific clothing.</p>	<p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>April 2025</p>



		<p>Prison Industries HQ will distribute internal stock of women specific clothing across women's prisons.</p> <p>HMPPS Women's Group and Prison Industries HQ will jointly review the clothing offer for women, recognising the unique needs of women in prison. This review will also consider the ordering and production process of women specific clothing to improve/expand where required. Guidance on ordering will be given to prisons. Ongoing assurance on stock and availability will be conducted by the Women's Group Assurance Advisor through quarterly assurance visits.</p> <p>HMPPS will build upon the learning from the access to razor pilot at HMP/YOI Eastwood Park. This will include a review of local safe systems of work with the aim to develop a consistent approach to the management of razors for women to enable them to practice self-care. An individualised approach will continue to be taken for women at high-risk of harm.</p> <p>HMPPS Women's Group will develop and introduce a basic facilities list across all women's prisons to improve consistency of access to items.</p> <p>Whilst hair salons are in place at many women's prisons, to build on this HMPPS will seek funding to introduce a facility at sites that do not have salons, where infrastructure allows.</p> <p>Hairdryers and straighteners are available at most women's prisons; however, Governors will be instructed to ensure they are available on all residential units.</p>	<p>Prison Industries HQ</p> <p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group and Prison Industries HQ</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group and National Safety Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p>	<p>March 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p> <p>July 2025</p> <p>July 2025</p> <p>Review in December 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p>
6	Women had too few opportunities to complete interventions, such as the HOPE programme, to develop coping skills.	<p>HMPPS will review the delivery model of HOPE at the eight existing sites, in order that more women are able to access the programme during their early days in custody.</p> <p>Additionally, plans are being developed at sites where the Early Days Service exists to enable HOPE graduates to work as first</p>	<p>Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service</p> <p>Lead Psychologist, Women's Estate Psychology Service and</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>July 2025</p>



		<p>night orderlies / peer supporters to support women new to custody.</p> <p>The 'My Experience' (ME) document has replaced the Support Through Enhanced Management (STEM) plan. This is based on the need to target resources more effectively to meet the needs of more women. When women have ME plans, this enables staff to support them more effectively cope whilst in custody. Support will be provided to enable sites to embed the new processes.</p> <p>As part of the spending review bid HMPPS are seeking to expand HOPE to all women's prisons which serve the courts.</p> <p>HMPPS will build upon the success of Compass, a programme that uses Compassion Focussed Therapy to support women with complex trauma needs to enable them to develop coping skills, at HMP/YOI Low Newton, by extending this to HMP/YOI Styal, with additional resources for the expansion of WEPS therapy services at HMP/YOI Drake Hall.</p>	<p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service</p> <p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p> <p>Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service</p>	<p>May 2025</p> <p>June 2026 contingent on Spending Review funding</p> <p>Implementation is contingent on successful recruitment, which is underway. Delivery planned from August 2025 once staff are recruited.</p>
7	The lack of formal peer support roles was a missed opportunity to enhance the care provided.	HMPPS will expand the use of peer support roles across women's prisons. This process will begin by conducting a review of current roles. This review will include the lived experiences of women in prison so that we can further develop the roles that provide them with the most support. HMPPS will use this review	Deputy Director HMPPS Women's Group	May 2026



		<p>to identify and share best practice and innovation across women's prisons.</p> <p>Whilst all women's prisons have Listeners schemes, not all currently provide 24-hour cover. The Governors of prisons that don't have a full service will ensure that the schemes are fully operational by March 2026.</p> <p>Mental health ambassadors will be introduced at HMP Send and HMPPS will take learning from this new initiative and share best practice across the women's estate.</p> <p>HMPPS Women's Group have introduced Domestic Violence Link Worker peer champions in all women's prisons where there are Domestic Violence Link Workers. HMP/YOI Downview is piloting an approach to enhanced peer workers. HMPPS will take learning from this work and share best practice across the women's estate.</p>	<p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p>	<p>March 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p>
8	<p>The use of restrictive and punitive responses to women in crisis was far too common. Too little effort was made to de-escalate situations and decisions to use force were not always justified.</p>	<p>At HMP/YOI Styal the Women's Estate Psychology Service (WEPS) Establishment Lead Psychologist works with operational staff to review incidents where situations were successfully deescalated, to support staff to implement the skills from the Behind the Behaviour training. To build on this work, WEPS have identified a senior member of staff from within the team to undertake a review of the available evidence about Use of Force across women's prisons to explore factors impacting high rates of use of force and over-reliance on restrictive measures, and will then work with the Use of Force Insights and Assurance Lead (see action below) to identify strategies to reduce inappropriate use.</p> <p>The Women's Group will seek funding for a dedicated Use of Force Co-ordinator for 12 months, to provide specialist oversight in the prisons with greatest need of support.</p> <p>In addition, a Use of Force Insights and Assurance Lead dedicated to improving practice in women's prisons will be</p>	<p>Lead Psychologist Women's Estate Psychology Service</p> <p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group,</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p>	<p>May 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p>



	<p>funded/introduced by HMPPS Women's Group for an initial 12-months period to accelerate progress in this important area.</p> <p>The HMPPS Operational Response and Resilience Unit (ORRU) will undertake a review of the incidents involving Use of Force that HMIP have included as case studies.</p> <p>The HMPPS ORRU will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the delivery of Use of Force Instructor revalidation courses at National Centres exclusively for instructors in women's prisons • Together with HMPPS Women's Group, ORRU will drive implementation of the new Use of Force curriculum, seeking funding to undertake an evaluation to consider if the new curriculum appropriately meets the needs of women in custody, and consider next steps as appropriate • Together with ORRU, HMPPS Women's Group will explore the development of an Independent Restraint Review Panel as an additional level of oversight • Offer Health care staff the opportunity to undertake Use of Force training to better understand medical risks associated with techniques and responsibilities of medical professionals during incidents <p>HMPPS have piloted strengthened governance arrangements regarding Use of Alternative Clothing, that re-affirms Alternative Clothing is only used as a last resort. This will be rolled out across the women's estate from April 2025.</p> <p>There is no approved alternative anti-rip clothing available in shorts and tops. HMPPS Women's Group are reviewing</p>	<p>HMPPS Operational Response and Resilience Unit</p> <p>Operational Security Group Director</p> <p>Operational Security Group Director / Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p> <p>Operational Security Group Director / Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group</p>	<p>April 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p> <p>April 2025</p> <p>July 2025</p>
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	<p>alternative clothing to consider how this can be available as shorts and tops as well as just a one piece in all women's prisons.</p> <p>Building on progress in reducing the levels of use of force (23.7% January to December 2024), the Women's Group and HMPPS Safety Group will convene a forum with Governors/Directors in the Women's Estate, and wider partners, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and share promising practice for the delivery of safer outcomes in women's prisons, and. • work with colleagues from across MoJ Policy and HMPPS Directorate of Security and Drug and Alcohol Group to develop an evidence-based approach to target the allocation of national and local safety support, in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ ensure support is effective to reduce violence, self-harm and suicide across the women's estate ➢ explore the role of healthcare professionals in supporting women who require force to be used to keep them safe <p>The National Safety Group will provide written clarification on the expectations of staff during constant supervision duties, to emphasise the need for this to be a supportive interaction.</p> <p>Whilst only found at one site, all Governors have been instructed to ensure that alternative clothing is not pre-determined in any written or other plan.</p> <p>HMPPS will develop a cross-organisational workstream to oversee the work to drive down the Use of Force across the women's estate. Membership will include Women's Group, ORRU, National Safety Group, operational representation and Learning and Development Team.</p>	<p>Deputy Director, HMPPS Women's Group, HMPPS National Safety Group / ORRU / Health teams /</p> <p>HMPPS National Safety Group</p> <p>Prison Group Director, Women's Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, Women's Group</p>	<p>May 2025</p> <p>April 2025</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>April 2025</p>
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