

Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee - women's experiences across the criminal justice system – Welsh Government submission

Women's experiences of the justice system are a crucial topic and we welcome this inquiry. We believe that every woman and girl in Wales should have access to the services and support they need to thrive, and we are committed to doing everything we can to support women in the justice system as well as ensuring we do what we can to help women avoid contact with the justice system wherever possible.

The main body of this response highlights how we are working together under the collectively owned Women's Justice Blueprint. The response sets out how we are delivering integrated, system-wide work to improve outcomes for women and girls in Wales.

Alongside this collective view of our current work with partners, we also want to set out our longer term aspirations for women's justice in Wales. This is part of our overall vision of a trauma-informed, preventative justice system in Wales.

In May 2022, we published [Delivering Justice for Wales](#). Within it, we set out our commitment to pursuing the devolution of justice and policing, and what we believe are the 'core components' of a devolved justice system. This includes having a prevention focus and working to reduce the size of the prison population.

Some of these values can be realised in the ongoing partnership work outlined within this response. However, this collaboration is intrinsically made more complex by the 'jagged edge', especially where this means policies require the agreement of two governments elected on different mandates for different geographical areas.

We endeavour to not let this stand in our way, and there are several commitments within our justice work programme that will improve outcomes for Welsh women in the justice system. However, without devolution, justice policy will never align wholly with the operation of the devolved services that are key to reducing pressures on the justice system. Policies on justice will continue to be developed by ministers whose focus is primarily on England and while the ambitions of the Women's Justice Blueprint go some way to mitigate against this, there remain ever-present risks that changes to the operation of the justice system will be imposed which undermine its effectiveness.

The Welsh Government believes that it is in the interests of justice, of good decision making and empowered communities for decisions to be made by Welsh decision makers, with an eye to the views and interests of Welsh residents and communities. This will be good for women in Wales who are in the justice system or at risk of coming into contact with the system, and for their families and communities.

Devolved services such as housing, mental health, substance misuse and employability have an incredibly important role to play in helping these women to thrive and live crime-free lives. They are also the services which will help us reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences and break the intergenerational cycle of offending.

Under the current system, the justice system and these fundamentally important services for women in Wales are split over two separate governments and two separate mandates. Despite our current effective partnership working, only the devolution of justice will allow us to take a truly integrated approach to supporting women and girls in Wales.

It is important that our vision for the future of justice in Wales is co-produced with experts and those with lived experience. We are therefore undertaking a programme of engagement, seeking feedback on our justice work programme and early vision of a devolved justice system outlined in *Delivering Justice for Wales*. We will use this feedback to help us build on the recommendations of the Thomas Commission and to set out how we might deliver even better outcomes for women in Wales if powers, and the appropriate levels of funding, were to be transferred to the democratic institutions of Wales.

Women's experiences across the Criminal Justice System – response to Senedd inquiry headings

The progress being made, if any, by the Welsh Government in realising its ambitions for the transformation of services for female offenders including implementation of the Female Offending Blueprint

The joint Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Welsh Government Women's Justice Blueprint (2019) seeks to build on and accelerate the transformation of services for women in Wales to help keep women and communities safe and free from crime. The Blueprint aims to achieve this by reducing the number of women in the criminal justice system whilst better meeting the needs of those already in the system, through a whole system approach focus.

A full update on progress against the Women's Justice Blueprint is provided through the most recent [implementation plan update](#) which was published on 25 May 2022. This provides a complete view of plans and achievements against each of the objectives of the blueprint. There is also an implementation plan update against the Youth Justice Blueprint, this will provide benefits for girls and young women in Wales a part of the youth cohort.

Significant progress has already been made in designing and testing approaches that support the whole system approach vision of the Blueprint, it has already illustrated the benefits of a more collaborative approach between devolved and non-devolved agencies and Non Government Organisations (NGOs). The approach has enabled a real sense of shared drive and ambition and vision, driving forward activities with pace. As such it has provided evidence of the benefits of adopting a blueprint approach to delivery in other complex areas such as VAWDASV, providing the opportunity to join up significant and challenging programmes of work to support a whole system approach.

Adopting a Whole System Approach generates scope to join up policy and drive practice, reducing the tendency for working in isolation. It has created a way of working whereby opportunities to better understand, join up and connect work is common practice and informing and linking into associated VAWDASV activities to best meet the needs of women.

The Blueprint approach has provided scope to identify, reflect, cross reference and better understand the recognised drivers for criminal activity and enhance understanding of the impact of being a victim of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence / exploitation and how quite often these experiences can increase a woman's vulnerability.

Blueprint activity is being taken forward under six thematic focus areas:-

1. Early Intervention and Prevention
2. Courts and Sentencing

3. Community Sentences
4. Custody and resettlement
5. Systems and governance
6. Research and evaluation

Across these areas, the Blueprint has also provided focus on:-

Developing insights and understanding

- **Developed integrated data-set /single repository of evidence in relation to women** – We have established quarterly pan Wales partnership report produced to improve understanding and monitoring of trends in relation to women in the CJS. This is being supported by regular deep dives into data, where there is a need to further understand critical issues/areas.
- ***Women from ethnic minority backgrounds or racially diverse background*** - We have commissioned research to better understand the needs of women from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds.
- **ACEs literature review**– We have undertaken an ACEs literature review to better understand profile, prevalence and impact of ACEs on women in the justice system.
- **Evaluation of Women’s Pathfinder Whole system Approach** – We have commissioned an independent evaluation of Women’s Pathfinder WSA (and 18-25 |Early Intervention Service) in South Wales and Gwent (Cordis Bright). The final report was produced in June 2022.
- **Evaluation of gender-informed practitioner skills training package** – this work has provided an understanding of effective approaches to raising awareness, skills and expertise of multi-agency professionals in applying a gender informed approach.
- **Blueprint Evaluability Assessment**- We have commissioned an independent Evaluability Assessment of the Women’s Justice and Youth Justice Blueprints by Opinion Research Services. The report is due to be published in November 2022.
- **Involvement model** – We have established an involvement model to support a co-production approach with women with lived experience of the justice system. Sharing learning with other programmes looking to do involvement work involving women to identify opportunity for join up.

Service design, commissioning and delivery (spanning early intervention, support for women in the community, support for women in custody and those resettling into Wales):

- **Launching Future 4 Women’s Pathfinder Whole System Approach and 18-25 Early Intervention Service** – This service is now fully established in South Wales and Gwent (Oct 2019), complementing the wider diversionary offer for

women across Wales which has been established under the Blueprint. Detailed description of this service is provided in later questions however, examples of innovation relating to this service include:-

- **Youth to Adult (Y2A) Pathway currently being piloted in** Cwm Taf, Cardiff, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly
- **Women from ethnic minority backgrounds or racially diverse background pathway** - providing frontline specialist support and a tailored early intervention service to women from minority ethnic backgrounds through a part-time specialist worker.

Other examples of service development have included:-

- **Developing a Psychologically Led Model** in consultation with partners, which aims to support organisations to deliver services to women through a gender and trauma-informed lens. This model has recently been tested within the diversion scheme context in North Wales prior to wider roll out.
- **Establishing pan-Wales Gender-Responsive and Trauma-Informed Multi-Agency practitioner skills training programme**, following pan Wales training needs assessment undertaken in 2021. This training package is being delivered in collaboration with Welsh Women's Aid, and is designed to equip staff with skills and expertise in gender and trauma informed practice.
- **Commissioning accommodation solutions work** - This bespoke piece of work will map the accommodation needs of women to inform the design of an accommodation model proof of concept for women. The work being undertaken by Llamau and Bangor University is in the very early stages and unlikely to be completed before the New Year.
- **Launching PACT Visiting Mums Service** in HMP EWP and HMP Styal in 2021 to support mothers in prison to maintain contact with their families and children in the community (where in the child's best interest to do so).
- **Establishing a new IDVA/IDSA role** – to specifically support Welsh women in prison and resettling back into Wales from HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal. This role has been embedded within the WSA Service.
- **Embedding a Trauma Practitioner Role** proof of concept to support women in the community who have experienced ACES and are at risk of CJ involvement, in collaboration with ACEs workstream within Welsh Government. The scheme seeks to support the strategic priorities of the ACE Support Hub, the Youth Justice and Female Offending Blueprints and the Welsh Government and Criminal Justice in Wales' priorities around early intervention and prevention. Funding has been awarded to 'Include' and 'Faith in Families'.

- **Funding grassroots organisations supporting women and children affected by ACEs.** Joint funding is being provided from Welsh Government Blueprint and ACEs budgets to fund grassroots organisations that seek to build resilience amongst women who are at risk of entering the CJS, who have experienced ACEs. Funding has been awarded to Valleys Kids £34,147; Hafan £7,416; Nelson Trust £38,663 and The Centre for African Entrepreneurship £9,774.
- **Establishing seven Multi-agency Women’s Pathfinder Case Conferences** across Wales, covering each probation delivery unit footprint. There were approximately 270 women referred into Women’s Pathfinder Case Conferences across Wales in 2021. The Blueprint team are working with partners to explore options for expanding the case conference model, in line with the evidence-base around local need/demand.
- **Introducing six Women’s Pathfinder Partnership Integration Coordinator Roles** hosted by Probation Service Wales to support inter-agency collaboration in relation to delivering WSA for women across Wales and help unblock barriers to women accessing support.
- **Designing a flexible, tiered court engagement model** to support an evidence-based approach to responding to the data around female custodial sentencing trends.

Influencing and informing (national and UK)

- **North Wales Women’s Justice Strategy (local delivery level)** – It has been identified that the development of a local strategy for North Wales will provide an opportunity to further strengthen engagement and investment from local partners and ensure a clear mechanism for implementation and delivery of outputs from the national programme. It also offers a key opportunity to act as a formal test case for local strategy development.
- **Courts/Sentencer engagement (Wales level)**- We have delivered a series of engagement events, focused on raising awareness and confidence in community-based options for women amongst sentencers, legal advisors and key court decision makers (reached 270+)
- **ACEs agenda/ Traumatic Stress Wales Framework (Wales level)** – We have fed into design and consultation on the traumatic stress Wales framework to help to ensure the new Framework is developed with a women’s lens.
- **Championing changes to language and terminology (Wales level)** – trail blazing improvements in how language and terminology is used when communicating about and with women in contact with the criminal justice system in Wales.

Embedding and sustaining via a systemic approach

- The Blueprint has already attracted investment from core partners and the Blueprint Team is currently costing out aspects of delivery across the whole system to enable investment partners to make longer-term commitments.

Additional planned activity for 2022/23 (subject to confirmation of funding)

- **Brain injury research** - Research to better understand the prevalence and impact of brain injury on women in Wales who are in scope of the criminal justice system. Funding will inform a programme of activity to take forward recommendations on a multi-programme basis (including new VAWDASV Blueprint, with opportunity to support Welsh Government ministerial advisory group on neurodiversity).
- **Racial Disproportionality research** - Commence research to identify touchpoints and processes within the CJS that may be contributing to racial disproportionality, creating barriers to accessing early intervention support.

Update on work on diversion and the Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach

Women's Pathfinder

The innovative Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach (and 18-25 Early Intervention Service) is one example of how the Blueprint vision is being operationalised into practice in South Wales and Gwent. The significant investment made by the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, HMPPS and Welsh Government into the Women's Pathfinder WSA and 18-25 Service reflects the commitment of commissioners to delivering sustainable improvements to the outcomes and experiences of women throughout their justice journey in Wales, in line with the Blueprint vision. Commissioners set the ambition of designing a service that could work seamlessly to support women at all stages (including key transition points) of the CJS, thereby avoiding fragmented service delivery and enabling better consistency in support improving the lives of vulnerable women, children and young people. The service is delivered by Future 4, which is a consortium made up of G4S, Safer Wales, Include and Llamau.

Commissioners were keen to establish a service that could work seamlessly to:

- Support women at all stages of the CJS, including key transition points, to avoid fragmented service delivery and provide consistent support to women who are in or at risk of entering the CJS from the earliest opportunity and through their journey.
- Integrate and knit around the statutory service offer by providing an early intervention and prevention service (for those outside the scope of statutory services)
- Provide a function to join up agencies and stages of the system by supporting transition arrangements and providing continuity throughout the system,

coordinating the multi agency response to support where more than one agency is involved with a service user.

Support is available for:

- Women at risk of re-offending/offending
- Women at point of arrest (including women eligible for diversion)
- Women at pre-sentence stage
- Women serving statutory orders (community or custody), and
- Women being released from prison back into the community.

Future 4 support is available to women any time during their involvement with Police, Courts Probation and prisons and offers guidance and advice, signposting, onward referral, practical and emotional support. Identified needs are provided via one to one, group based and online interventions, and the support women who are both in (or at risk of entering) the justice system.

The Service provides a range of person-centred, needs led support to women including one to one support, interventions, signposting and referrals to specialist agencies. The below table provides an indication of the volume of women, who were supported by the Women's Pathfinder WSA across each of the key stages of the Justice System from April 2020 to March 2022. As can be seen from the table below, there were 2,239 referrals into the WSA Service during this period. This included referrals from a range of sources, including for example:

- Police Custody Suite
- Police Voluntary Attendance
- Other police referral routes (Neighbourhood, PPU, Response Team
- Arrest Referral Worker
- Self-Referral - Cell Sweep
- Walk in Self-Referral
- Prison
- Probation
- Criminal Justice Substance Misuse Referral
- Other services (e.g. Courts, local authority, third sector)

Timeframe	South Wales	Gwent	Total
Apr-Jun 2020	196	74	270
Jul-Sept 2020	193	100	293
Oct-Dec 2020	160	76	236
Jan-Mar 2021	185	108	293
Apr-Jun 2021	211	123	334
Jul-Sep 2021	235	75	310
Oct-Dec 2021	214	88	302
Jan-Mar 2022	137	64	201
Total	1,531	708	2,239

Table 1. Number of referrals to the Women's Pathfinder WSA in South Wales and Gwent (inclusive of diversion referrals).

Since the Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach Service went live in South Wales and Gwent in October 2019, the Service has provided an effective example of how a whole system approach for women (and earlier intervention service for young adults aged 18-25) can be operationalised in Wales. An independent evaluation of the Women's Pathfinder WSA and 18-25 Early Intervention Service undertaken by Cordis Bright (2022) highlighted a number of positive findings around how the service has supported women to address needs and vulnerabilities linked to offending, across a number of areas. This evaluation found that those referred engaged well with the service and that they might not otherwise have engaged at that point in their involvement with the CJS. Key features that enabled positive engagement included support being perceived as independent from the CJS and a tailored approach to location, type, intensity and formality of engagement. The evaluation also identified improvements in personal outcomes for those referred, including improvements in mental health and wellbeing, physical health and family relationships. As part of this evaluation the following feedback was provided by women supported through the WSA Service:

Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach Client Feedback

- *'[Caseworker] wrote me a letter for court and that really helped... she explained to them how remorseful I was and how much it was affecting me. It helped the people at court to understand my situation better.'*
- *'[Caseworker] has given me a sense of pride and helped me to come along and be where I am now, where I never thought I'd be. I wouldn't do anything to jeopardise this.'*
- *The timing was a massive factor... [caseworker] reached out at just the right time. If I hadn't been given support in the cell that day, I would have lost all hope.'*

Throughout the current period of delivery, there has continued to be significant innovation and development in the whole system approach, in response to emerging evidence around the needs of women. Examples of this include:

- **Y2A pathway**- WSA alongside Safer Wales Inclusive Service established referral pathway for young females), with particular focus on those transitioning from youth to adult services to support young females to make positive lifestyle choices. The services offers support to young females aged 16-17 who are being supported by Youth Offending Services or are transitioning to adult services in Cardiff, Bridgend, Cwm Taf and Gwent.
- **Women from ethnic minority backgrounds or racially diverse background pathway** – Established pathway providing frontline specialist support and a tailored early intervention service to **Women from ethnic minority backgrounds or racially diverse background** involved with or at risk of involvement with criminal justice services. Part-time specialist **Women from ethnic minority backgrounds or racially diverse background** worker

recruited (working from Cardiff Bay) to engage, support and safeguard women involved in the Criminal Justice System.

- **Mentoring service** -Introduced new Safer Wales Volunteer and Mentor Support Officer to provide additional support to develop, recruit, train and place volunteer mentors within the service. A number of mentors are now in place.
- **IDVA/IDSA** support for Welsh women in prisons in England (HMP Styal and HMP EWP) who are resettling back into Wales.
- **Transport for Wales Employment pathway** – working with probation and Transport for Wales to design an employment pathway for women in contact with the justice system.
- **Revolving Door pilot** - a joint initiative involving South Wales Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales, Gwent Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, HMPPS and Future4. Provides targeted approach for those who have committed a number of low-level offences and where there is risk in escalation of offending behaviour. The pilot was launched from July 2021.

Other diversion schemes in Wales

Separate diversion schemes, of which women are in scope, have also been established in Dyfed Powys and in North Wales. In Dyfed Powys, the 'Offender Diversion Scheme' funded by the Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Commissioner went live in November 2019, with intervention support provided by Pobl. In North Wales the 'Checkpoint' diversion scheme also went live in November 2019, funded by the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner. Both diversion schemes incorporate specific support pathways for women. The table below provides an indication of volume of diversion referrals across each of the regions.

Area	Apr – Jun 20	Jul – Sep 20	Oct - Dec 20	Jan - Mar 21	Apr – Jun 21	Jul - Sep 21	Oct - Dec 21	Jan - Mar 22
North Wales	87	97	73	93	60	63	55	61
Dyfed-Powys	11	9	*	13	8	*	8	13
South Wales and Gwent	92	124	102	115	131	132	91	80
Total	190	230	177	221	199	200	154	154

Table 2. Number of diversion referrals across Wales.

In delivering the system-wide vision of the Blueprint in Wales, there has also been a focus on establishing approaches that seek to improve opportunities for Welsh women in prison to maintain contact with their children. There are no women's prisons in Wales, therefore women who receive custodial sentences are held on average, 100 miles from their homes and family support networks. Supporting women from Wales to build and maintain positive family relationships and to help mitigate the impact of parental imprisonment on children (as one of the 9 recognised Adverse Childhood Experiences), is a key priority within the Blueprint. In response, Welsh Government and HMPPS have jointly funded an innovative service, known as the Pact Visiting Mum Service, to specifically support women from Wales who are serving prison sentences in England to maintain contact with their children (where in the child's best interest to do so). A link to an earlier evaluation of the Pact Visiting Mum Service can be found below:

[Final-PACT-report-Final-version.-12.7.17.pdf \(cardiff.ac.uk\)](#)

Next steps for diversionary services in Wales

Commissioners (including Welsh Government, the four Police and Crime Commissioners and HMPPS) have recognised that there is an opportunity to build on the significant learning to date in relation to these key Blueprint developments in the design and delivery of the next generation of women's services across Wales. The vision, through the current commissioning exercise, is to drive greater consistency in the service offer for women who are in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system in Wales, through a collaborative Wales procurement approach. This will enable better integration of key women's contracts (tying in the new Probation Commissioned Rehabilitative Service contract for Women's Services), whilst continuing to enable local innovation to ensure there is flexibility in the delivery model to respond to the needs of the local demographic.

The Blueprint has also committed to exploring options to strengthening the network of accommodation options for women in Wales who may be in, or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. To achieve this delivery ambition, the Blueprint has commissioned a discrete piece of work by a specialist housing provider working alongside an academic partner, to help build the evidence-base and inform a proposal for developing and testing a housing solution model for women. The aim is to ensure that any new accommodation solution for women in Wales address the challenges that women can experience in accessing safe, secure and appropriate accommodation, and that this is appropriately integrated within the wider women's pathfinder and whole system approach partnership landscape.

Fully implementing the vision of the end to end, whole system approach model for women across Wales will require:

- **Investment from commissioners, Welsh Government and HMPPS** into the WSA model across the whole of Wales (spanning each of the four force areas), so as to provide consistency in access to support for women regardless of the geographical area in which they reside and to avoid returning to a proliferation of fragmented service delivery.

- An **appetite to build a sustainable and resilient commissioning approach** to support long term delivery of the model across all areas of Wales, based on shared principles of keeping women safe and reducing crime and reoffending.
- A desire for a **model that is flexible and able to keep pace with emerging evidence**, including changing demands and needs profile of women in local communities.
- A **recognition of the statutory delivery elements of the model**, and the need to manage this element in line with national requirements.
- An appetite to **support capacity and resilience building within the Welsh partnership delivery landscape**, whilst not excluding opportunities for learning and innovation from partners outside of Wales, and a
- A desire for a model that can **seamlessly integrate and align with new developments/initiatives**, such as the new Residential Women's Centre (see next section for more detail), in order to provide continuity of support for women and avoid a fragmented service delivery landscape.

The evidence for the development of Women's Rehabilitation Centres and arguments for reducing custodial sentences for women in Wales, including views on the Women's Centre that will open in Swansea

Reducing the number of women sentenced to custody, with a particular focus on short –custodial sentences (where a community-based alternative is a feasible option) is a key priority of the Women's Justice Blueprint. Evidence suggests that the majority of women who receive a short custodial sentence in Wales have committed non-violent offences. Women also tend to commit less-serious offences than men, so are more likely to receive a short prison sentence. Short-prison sentences often do not provide sufficient time to enable the full complement of rehabilitative activity to be undertaken. Short-prison sentences can present a significant challenge for Welsh women, who are held an average of 100 miles from their homes, creating additional barriers in being able to maintain contact with children and families, and exacerbating impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, of which parental imprisonment is one.

The Women's Blueprint project is seeking to reduce the number of women sentenced to short-term custody through a whole system approach focus. This has included strengthening early intervention and diversion opportunities so as to reduce escalation in complexity and prevent formal entry into the Criminal Justice System, whilst also strengthening the wider community-based provision for women to ensure there are robust community-based solutions in place to address needs relating to female offending.

Research suggests that many of the solutions to female offending lie in community based support. Commissioners have therefore designed the end to end Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach Service, with the ability to support any woman in the community, including those serving statutory sentences. The WSA has the ability to knit around and complement existing provision, providing the option of continuity in support for women following a statutory sentence.

Part of the WSA community model has included establishing six new Women's Pathfinder Partnership Integration Coordinators hosted by Probation Service Wales, to help strengthen pathways and remove barriers into support for women. The WSA vision has also been enabled through the development of seven multi-agency Women's Pathfinder Case Conferences across Wales, which bring partners together to take problem solving approach to supporting women involved in the Criminal Justice System who have complex needs and vulnerabilities.

In order to better monitor data and trends in relation to the sentencing outcomes of women across Wales, the Blueprint project has also established a new, multi-agency pan Wales Women's Partnership report. Evidence gathered through this work has enabled the team to identify individual court areas, such as Swansea Magistrates Court and Merthyr Tydfil Magistrates Court, where targeted activity to reduce female custodial sentences would be beneficial. Evidence gathered through this exercise has helped to inform the decision to pilot the new Residential Women's Centre in Swansea. The data has also helped to inform local targeting of the next phase of

Blueprint work to design and test an enhanced court engagement model, which will seek to focus activity and resource within those courts where the evidence suggests there would be benefit in providing enhanced engagement support.

Residential Women's Centre

The new Ministry of Justice Residential Women's Centre will complement the aims of the Blueprint in strengthening community-based provision for women, and keeping women closer to their homes and their community whilst addressing the root cause of their offending behaviour. The Residential Women's Centre is pioneering an approach to women who commit low level offences by offering bespoke support to around 50 women a year who have been diverted from a potential prison sentence of up to 12 month that addresses the root causes of their offending. Women who are diverted to the centre will have one to one mental health therapy and counselling to address trauma and addictions, as well as long-term support to secure employment and maintain family relationships when transitioned back into their community from the centre.

The Centre will keep local women close to home while providing a safe, secure, homely environment with intensive rehabilitative support as part of a community sentence to enable them to break the cycle of re-offending and access a wider range of support and rebuild their lives. This will be offered on a residential and non-residential basis. If women in the local community can still benefit from the services provided, on a non-residential basis. The focus will be for women who pose a low to medium risk of re-offending and will attempt to either divert from the CJS entirely, or where subject to a community based penalty, work collaboratively to reduce the risk of further offending.

The Ministry of Justice has worked closely with Welsh Government, Local Authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners and other local partners to find a suitable site, which is currently subject to planning permission. The Blueprint team is working closely with the RWC team to ensure that any new provision is integrated within the wider whole system approach delivery landscape, providing an opportunity for continuity in support for women who access RWC provision, throughout their justice journey.

Latest position on the Swansea Residential Women's Centre

The site for the Residential Women's Centre in Swansea was announced on 20 May, and full planning permission was submitted on the same date. A drop-in event for residents and Swansea Councillors was held to 25 July.

On 6 September Swansea Council's Planning Committee met and the application was voted against. Final decision has been deferred until the 4 October to allow planning officers to write up reasons for refusal. Once received next steps can be considered.

Currently, women in Wales who are sentenced to custodial sentences, are held in English Prisons as there is no prison for women in Wales. Statistics show that Welsh women, especially from some areas across Wales, receive short custodial sentences

that could be avoided with a more targeted response either at the point of arrest or at court sentencing hearings. The Welsh Government position is that we would not want a women's prison in Wales as community and diversion-based approaches should always be the default approach.

There is a focus through the HMPPS Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) pilot, that, all women ought be considered for a Pre-Sentence Report, to ensure that an individual, trauma informed approach is taken from the outset. This would encourage alternatives to custody to be considered and imposed. For those women who pass the custody threshold, and receive custodial sentences, then they ought to have better access to services within the Prison Estate. Through the Women's Blueprint, partners are working closely with the receiving prisons nearest Wales to allow for better service provision and better resettlement services. Those closest to Wales, HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal account for approximately 75% of all Welsh Women held in custody or held on remand, with the remaining 25% scattered across all other prison estates.

Repeat offending accounts for the vast majority of short-term sentences for women in Wales, for example, repeat shoplifting, and given the length of the custodial sentence is often very short, on average 7 weeks, of which 3 and a half would be spent in custody, is insufficient to allow proper release arrangements to be made, both in terms of health care, accommodation, etc. Thus, creating a revolving door situation.

Prison sentences should be reserved for those women who pose the greatest risk of harm and who cannot be safely managed in the community.

The Custody and Resettlement Workstream of the Blueprint is working closely with the MOJ and HMPPS to improve resettlement services for Welsh Women, including maximising the use of bail hostels to avoid unnecessary remands, considering alternatives to Approved Premises referrals, and making better use of existing accommodation for Welsh Women and prison leavers.

It is also working closely with health colleagues to ensure that there is a smooth transition between community to custody to community and that Health Boards and local home arrangements do not impact upon the continuity of care for Welsh Women's health needs.

Through the workstream, we work closely with the 2 main prisons, HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal to identify barriers for Welsh Women, including access to interventions, access to the Visiting Mums Provision and consider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for all women, including those held in other prisons and transgender women.

The availability of appropriate custodial provision and support for different groups of women including girls under the age of 18, disabled women, those with mental health problems, women from ethnic minorities, those who have experienced sexual violence or domestic abuse, women with alcohol or drug problems and Welsh speaking women.

The Women's Justice Blueprint (2019) is seeking to take a system-wide focus to improving outcomes for women from Wales across **each stage** of the criminal justice journey. Custody and Resettlement is one of the thematic areas of the Blueprint. This workstream is providing a specific focus on Welsh women in prison and those being resettled back into Wales, including:

- Working with rehabilitative services to deliver effective pre and post-release interventions in prisons where women are located
- Establishing services to improve and maintain links with children and families
- Strengthening pathways into support for Welsh women leaving prison and being resettled into Wales - this includes building on the existing women's pathfinder infrastructure in Wales
- Working with health partners to ensure the health needs of women are met with released from custody – this continues to be a priority for the Blueprint as we move into phase 2 of Blueprint activity.

In recognition of the challenges that women can face when held in prison establishment significant distances from their homes, the Women's Justice Blueprint team is working with relevant authorities to identify opportunity to positively influence policy in relation to the distribution of Welsh women across the prison estate, with the aim of keeping women closer to home.

Whilst a key aim of the Blueprint is to reduce female imprisonment, where a community-based alternative is a viable option, it is recognised that for a small number of women, due to the nature of the offence, a custodial sentence may be required. For women who receive a custodial sentence, the Blueprint has committed to ensuring that appropriate provision is in place to support women to maintain family contact. Lord Farmer's Review into the importance of strengthening female offer' family and other relationship to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime (2019), highlighted that for women, relationships were particularly important and affected the likelihood of reoffending 'significantly more frequently than is the case for men'. In recognition of this (and as outlined in Q1), HMPPS and Welsh Government has commissioned a bespoke 'Visiting Mum' Service for Welsh women in prison. This Service was recognized as good practice by Lord Farmer, who highlighted the significant value of the Service to women, their children and carers, and to wider society.

More information of the range of provision available is presented below. Many of these areas provide services to women and girls as part of the wider offending cohort, but we have included them here as the services provide substantive and important provision for women and girls in Wales.

Support for women and their children – Visiting Mum

The Welsh Government jointly funds the ‘Visiting Mum’ service, together with HMPPS. The Pact Visiting Mum Service has gone live in HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal.

The maintenance of positive familial relationships between mothers in prison and their children is crucial for both mother and child. These relationships help aid women’s rehabilitation, reduce anxiety in prison, reduce self-harm and contribute to good order and discipline in prison. These relationships also have a significant impact on the children’s emotional wellbeing, their attainment at school and the risk of going on to become offenders themselves.

The current system adds to the existing disruption of avoidable prison sentences for women and their families by creating significant practical barriers for children’s visitation due to the cost of travel, lack of transport and the availability of a suitable adult to take them. The Visiting Mum Service was introduced to remove these barriers and support families to maintain a positive relationship with imprisoned mothers when in the child’s best interest. The service is designed to support Welsh women and their families by arranging visits, offering parenting and relationship programmes to women, offer transport to children, and provide ‘wraparound care’ for children after their visit. Volunteers, who are instrumental to the running of the service, also encourage families to engage with schools to support the wellbeing of children.

During the pandemic remote [‘purple visits’](#) were introduced to ensure continued and remote contact between mothers in the criminal justice system and their child/children.

More information about Visiting Mum is available here: [Visiting Mum | Prison Advice and Care Trust](#)

Mental Health Support for those in the Criminal Justice System

Work being taken forward through a [Partnership Agreement for Prison Health](#) is also important to the mental health and wellbeing of women and young people in the criminal justice system in Wales.

Two of the key priorities in the Partnership Agreement for Prison Health are focussed on mental health and substance misuse. Welsh Government is currently consulting on a new draft Substance Misuse Treatment Framework (SMTF) and new standards for mental health services in the prisons in Wales, both of which include a specific focus on transition from prison into the community (and are therefore – for example – relevant to the needs of women returning to Wales from prisons in England).

The development of the SMTF and the new standards for mental health services are particularly important within the context of recovery from the pandemic, and ongoing support and rehabilitation for people in prison and the community. The SMTF and the new standards for mental health services for the prisons are aligned with other work being taken forward – including new funding to tackle homelessness and to provide effective and sustainable housing solutions to those most at risk, and ongoing action to support those with complex needs (including those with co-occurring substance misuse and mental health problems). They also align with the

principles set out in the Youth Offending Blueprint and the Women's Justice Blueprint, as well as the work of Traumatic Stress Wales and their Prison and Criminal Justice workstream.

[Traumatic Stress Wales](#) is funded by Welsh Government (£1.2million annually) and aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages living in Wales at risk of developing or with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). The initiative covers children, young people and adults, and is co-produced, co-owned and co-delivered by all relevant stakeholders, including people with lived experience of PTSD and CPTSD. Traumatic Stress Wales have a number of different workstreams – focussing on sexual assault, criminal justice, forced migrants, perinatal, adults, young people, and assessment and outcomes.

The [prison and criminal justice workstream](#) is leading on the development of an effective trauma care pathway for people in the criminal justice system in Wales. Evidence suggests that a disproportionate number of people in the criminal justice have experienced childhood abuse or trauma. However, they can face multiple barriers to accessing effective treatments for traumatic stress. The workstream is comprised of people who work within the prisons in Wales and the new women's residential centre, as well as the probation service, health services, voluntary sectors and public health. The workstream will support the training of frontline staff in trauma-enhanced practice, and will support effective transitions back into community services. The workstream will also develop research links to ensure that the pathway is evaluated.

Health boards also provide Criminal Justice Liaison and Support for the early identification and assessment of a mental disorder or learning disability need as early as possible in the criminal justice pathway.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

In Wales, as in the rest of the world, too many people experience violence against women and gender based violence, including domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV). We recognise and understand the additional complexities associated with being a victim of violence and abuse, such as involvement within the criminal justice system or experiencing substance misuse issues. These can amplify abusers' power and control and increase the risk to victims.

Through the Blueprint Project, Welsh Government has funded Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA's) to specifically support Welsh Women in prison who have experience domestic abuse. Evidence suggests a high proportion of women in prison have previously experienced domestic and or sexual abuse or violence. Mapping work has identified a need for specialist support to safety plan in this area, to offer support and expertise, and to link with resettlement and accommodation planning for women.

The Welsh Government remains committed to improving the quality of services and support for individuals and the families of those who are victims of violence and

abuse. We are working with specialist domestic abuse services to provide support and safe accommodation to all those who need it.

VAWDASV specialist services work tirelessly to ensure that no victim falls through the gaps of service provision, and especially those at higher risk. VAWDASV services adopt a whole system approach to providing support, specialist services working in a coordinated multi-agency approach; using existing systems, avoiding gaps or duplication and providing individualised support from targeting a multitude of needs. We welcome a long term collaboration and partnership working between VAWDASV services and criminal justice services; working together to deal with the complexities of the trauma experienced.

Welsh Government VAWDASV commissioning guidance advocates for commissioning of services that are needs led. This allows for flexibility in funding services across the diverse landscapes we live in.

We will continue to work in partnership with specialist services to raise awareness of the inequality and safety issues faced by women and girls, and to end all forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Our new Blueprint approach to VAWDASV includes a sub-group addressing children and young people's experience which will further develop our approach in this area.

Taking an Anti-Racist approach to Criminal Justice

Welsh Government Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and Criminal Justice

The [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#) (ARWAP), launched on Tuesday 7th June, is built on the values of Anti-racism, and shows the action we are taking to tackle racism and end discrimination through our policies and ways of working. This includes ending discrimination for women from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The Plan has been co-created with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, drawing from their lived experience, and developed in collaboration with a wide range of communities and organisations across all parts of Wales and informed by evidence.

The Goals and Actions in the plan cover policy areas across government, including, health, culture, homes and places, employability and skills and education. We are putting in place governance arrangements to implement the goals and actions in the Plan, including an External Accountability Group which will advise, support, co-design with, and challenge Government and wider public services to ensure effective and timely delivery of the Plan and its vision for an anti-racist Wales.

ARWAP includes a specific chapter on Crime and Justice. It outlines the work we are taking forward as Welsh Government, including delivering work on hate crime, setting up the Race Disparity Evidence Unit and highlighting the importance of anti-racism whenever we engage with the UK Government on justice issues. It also includes the work outlined in the Women's Blueprint section above to commission research on the experiences of racially and ethnically diverse women in the justice system.

Criminal Justice in Wales Anti-Racism Action Plan

The ARWAP chapter also highlights joint work being taken forward by Criminal Justice Board for Wales partners, including Policing in Wales, Welsh Government and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service in Wales, on a specific anti-racism plan for the criminal justice system in Wales.

The [Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action Plan for Wales](#) launched on 8 September, and it will be jointly led and owned by Criminal Justice in Wales partners (including Welsh Government). It is being taken forward by a taskforce led by Emma Wools (Deputy PCC, South Wales Police), Pam Kelly (Chief Constable Gwent Police) and Chris Jennings (Executive Director of HMPPS in Wales). The Plan sets out seven commitments to:

Challenge racism
 Build an ethnically diverse workforce
 Involve, listen and take action
 Be transparent, accountable and co-ordinated
 Educate the workforce
 Promote fairness
 Focus on prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation

Criminal Justice in Wales have engaged with the Black Police Association as part of their approach to co-producing the Plan and ensuring it is grounded in lived experience. The plan will address embedded discrimination in the justice system, including the discrimination faced by women from ethnic minority backgrounds,

Youth Justice Blueprint

- The Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales, published in July 2019, sets out our vision for youth justice in Wales, taking a 'children first' rights approach. This means working in a child-centred rather than service-focused way, meeting the individual needs of children in the justice system or at risk of coming into contact with it. The Blueprint supports women and girls in Wales as part of the wider youth justice cohort.
- The Youth Justice Blueprint is jointly owned and delivered by the Welsh Government, Youth Justice Board, Policing in Wales and Ministry of Justice, working in partnership with leads across Wales. The Blueprint workstreams focus on prevention, pre-court diversion, community, custody and resettlement. We are embedding preventative, child-centred approaches across these areas, helping children across Wales to thrive.
- The Youth Justice Blueprint is aligned with the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy and will be taken forward through the prevention workstream as part of the development of the Youth Justice Prevention Framework for Wales which will maximise preventative outcomes for VAWDASV particularly among young girls.

- Enhanced Case Management (ECM) is now available to all YOTs in Wales for children in voluntary and statutory contact with YOTs. The mapping of YOT health provision across Wales has been completed to establish what services YOTs have access to in their local area and where there are gaps. Support has been provided to the youth justice sector with resources, training and qualifications to deliver trauma-informed practice (TIP).
- More information on the Youth Justice Blueprint, including the latest Implementation Plan which offers a complete view of the work being taken forward, is available here: [Supporting young offenders | GOV.WALES](#)

Mental health support for young people

- Women and young people in the criminal justice system in Wales have access to mainstream mental health services. In 2021/22 Welsh Government provided an additional £42 million for mental health support and our *Programme for Government* makes it clear that we will continue to prioritise investment in mental health services.
- Mental health continues to be the highest area of spending by the NHS in Wales. In 2022/23 the ring-fenced Mental Health budget provided to Local Health Boards is over £760million. As part of the Welsh Government's budget published on 1 March 2022 we have outlined additional resources to support mental health and well-being with £50million in 2022/23 rising to £90million in 2024/25. This funding will continue to support a number of priority areas set out in the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan including CAMHS, Crisis Care and perinatal mental health. Welsh Government has also provided additional mental health service improvement funding to all health boards to support improvements in a number of areas, including CAMHS. This funding aims to support health boards to recover waiting times and to build future, sustainable capacity.
- In March 2021 the [Framework for embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being](#) was published. It is statutory guidance for schools, educational providers and partners to ensure all pupils' wellbeing needs are supported through a non-stigmatised approach and regardless of circumstance.
- The [Young Person's Mental Health Toolkit](#) is also available, this links young people, aged 11 to 25, to websites, apps, helplines, and more to build resilience.
- There is also mental health and emotional support 24 hrs every day, via our Community Advice and Listening Line (CALL) helpline, which provides specific information and advice about looking after mental wellbeing.

The Welsh Government Programme for Government confirms that an additional £50m is being made available in 2022-23 to support mental health and wellbeing. This investment rises to £90m in 2024-25. This funding will continue to support a number of priority areas set out in the Together for

Mental Health Delivery Plan, including improving support for children and young people's mental health, crisis and out of hour services, and increasing psychological services. These services are available to all children and young people in Wales.

- More specifically and in terms of young people in the Youth Justice System in Wales, G4S Health Services UK Ltd continue to be the main health care provider for Young Offender Institutions (YOI)Parc. The All Wales Forensic Adolescent Consultation and Treatment Service (FACTS) provide a specialist child and adolescent mental health in-reach service (CAMHS).
- The Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee commissions FACTS on behalf of the 7 health boards in Wales. As of September 2021, FACTS has commenced a pan-Wales service offer to YOTs which will provide psychology liaison and consultation and Enhanced Case Management (ECM).

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework is there to ensure that 11 to 18 year olds at risk of disengaging from learning, or who are at risk of youth homelessness, are identified and offered support. The Framework is in place to support girls and boys. Being supported by the Framework can prevent young people from entering the youth justice system or ensure young people within the youth justice system get the support they need to progress into education, employment or training and avoid becoming homeless.

Strengthening the Framework is a Programme for Government commitment, and as part of this work updated guidance on the Framework is scheduled for publication on the 22 September. By strengthening the Framework we want to ensure:

- When young people finish school age education, that more of them progress to a destination that is right for them, whether that is education, employment, training or self-employment (including by taking up opportunities under the Welsh Government Young Persons Guarantee).
- Young people are prevented from becoming homeless.
- Young people's emotional mental health and well-being is improved because they feel that they are doing something that is meaningful to them, and where they feel they are on the right path.

Looked After Children and Care Experienced Young Children

Social Services and Integration Directorate in the Welsh Government provide a range of grants to third sector organisations who through the funding provided offer support to young women who may have had experience of the criminal justice system or be at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. These include:

Ar Trac project - delivered by Welsh Women's Aid this supports children and young people who have experienced or witnesses domestic abuse, and who are exhibiting difficulties with their family and peer relationships.

The Ethnic Youth Support Team Wales (EYST) project - supports Black and Minority Ethnic Children and Young People in Wales and provides a referral based service for children and young people with 'additional' or 'multiple' support needs. The service aims to improve the wellbeing outcomes of the children and young people referred with social care needs, through a race, faith and culture-sensitive, person-centred and rights-based support service.

Platform's Young People's Project – based in Neath, Port Talbot and Swansea it provides a wellbeing programme, peer support and one-to-one support for young people aged 13-16 years to pause, breathe and connect, exploring what mental health and wellbeing means to the young people on the programme.

Advocacy

MEIC is a Welsh Government funded confidential, anonymous, and free bilingual helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales providing information, useful advice and support need and are open 8am - midnight, 7 days a week, by phone, SMS text and instant messaging.

The Welsh Government provides funding to fund the “Active Offer” element of the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for Children and Young People (NASA) to enable Local authorities to provide a national consistent approach to advocacy support. Children and young people are entitled to an active offer of advocacy from a statutory Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) when they become looked after or become subject of child protection enquiries leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference.

The ChildLine service provides a free, confidential 24 hour service to young people until the age of 19 in the UK. The Welsh Government has provided a contribution of £90,000 in 2022/23 to support the NSPCC to deliver the ChildLine project, which supports the Welsh Government's strategic agenda for social services.

All Wales Protocol – reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People

- Since January 2021, work has been underway to develop an All-Wales Protocol to reduce the criminalisation of care experienced children and young people. The majority of the draft Wales protocol builds on an [existing DfE/HO/MoJ protocol](#) which was published in 2018.
- The All-Wales Protocol was jointly published by Welsh Ministers, UK Government Ministers in the Home Office and Ministry of Justice on 28th March 2022. The protocol will help those who come into contact with care experienced children and young adults while carrying out their work, in sharing a common framework of principles and expectations informed by an approach that actively promotes children's rights and which safeguards and promotes their wellbeing.
- The Deputy Minister for Social Services and Minister for Social Justice issued a Written Statement to support the publication of the All Wales Protocol.

[Written Statement: All Wales Protocol reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults \(28 March 2022\) | GOV.WALES](#)

Link to the protocol:- [Reducing the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers: all Wales protocol | GOV.WALES](#)

The Additional Learning Needs system

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring an equitable and inclusive education system. As part of our education reforms in Wales we are changing the way in which children and young people are supported. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act and accompanying ALN Code for Wales came into force in September 2021 and is gradually being implemented across Wales over three years.

Chapter 19 of the [ALN Code for Wales](#) sets out how the ALN Act applies to children and young people who:

- a) are subject to a detention order in relevant youth accommodation in Wales and England
- b) are subject to a detention order and detained in a hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 in the course of criminal proceedings or for sentence.

The new ALN system will help ensure learners aged 0-25 with ALN have their views, wishes and feelings identified early and placed at the heart of the process to identify and meet their needs. All children and young people with ALN, regardless of the severity or complexity of their learning difficulty or disability, will generally be entitled to a statutory support plan called an individual development plan (IDP). Children and young people with ALN will receive support called additional learning provision (ALP) which will be set out in their IDP. The ALN Act and the Code make provisions for detained children and young people.

Detained children and young people

Whether or not a detained person has an IDP before they are detained, the person's home authority must promote the fulfilment of that person's learning potential during detention and on release.

Upon detention, the child or young person will undergo an assessment where their needs for education or training will be recorded and developed into an education plan to support their needs for the duration of their detention. These plans are further informed through sentence planning meetings, where a multi-agency approach is taken involving the detained person, the child's parent when the detained person is a child, and other partners such as the youth offending team, the local authority's educational representative and other appropriate services such as Health and Social Services.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

If the home authority in Wales decides that a detained person has ALN and that it will be necessary for an IDP to be maintained on their release, it must prepare an

IDP for that person (unless in the case of a young person, they do not consent to the plan being prepared).

Where a detained person had an IDP maintained for them immediately before the beginning of their detention, or a home authority has prepared an IDP during the period of their detention, the home authority, if in Wales, must keep the IDP whilst the person is detained.

Where the home authority keeps an IDP, it must arrange appropriate Additional Learning provision to be provided to the detained person. If the IDP specifies that ALP should be provided in Welsh, the home authority must take all reasonable steps to secure that the appropriate ALP is provided in Welsh.

Girls in the Children and Young People's Secure Estate – Out of Sight overview

(Published 5th October 2021) [Out of sight | Centre for Mental Health](#)

The Children and Young People Secure Estate (CYPSE) provides placements for children aged between 10 and 17, either for a young person's welfare or through the youth justice system. Centre for Mental Health was commissioned to review the needs of girls in the CYPSE by NHS England and NHS Improvement in partnership with the Youth Custody Service. The review is informed by interviews with girls who had been in the CYPSE, conducted by Leaders Unlocked.

Out of sight finds that girls entering the CYPSE are a highly vulnerable group, with high levels of trauma and poor mental health. Girls from racialised communities are over-represented in the CYPSE but may be less likely to have their needs recognised and met. Incidents of serious self-harm are more common among girls than boys in the CYPSE, and of particular concern in single gender settings. This is the most common reason for the use of force or restraint with girls, which can be traumatic and erode trust in staff.

Girls experiencing such high levels of adversity and multiple needs require support that is gender-responsive and trauma-informed, and these approaches are being employed in some settings. At the same time, gaps in community support for vulnerable girls increase their risk of being placed in the CYPSE. There is a crucial need for earlier intervention to support girls who are facing trauma and adversity, and for more community-based alternatives to the CYPSE.

This report provides an overview of key concerns and issues for girls in the CYPSE, and makes recommendations of changes needed to better support girls' needs.

Based on the findings from the report and subsequent stakeholder engagement, the Youth Custody Service has in place a programme of work to improve services for girls. Work is underway to set up a forum to bring together practitioners across all sectors of the (justice only) secure estate caring for girls to consider the findings from the report, share, network and discuss current trends, lessons-learned and best practice.

