Female Offending Blueprint for Wales

The minority of offenders in England and Wales are women, yet many of these women are victims of crime themselves, often having experienced physical or emotional abuse. Baroness Corston’s Report, Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System (2007) identified that women can present as extremely vulnerable with a range of complex needs that have been found to be distinct from the needs of men who commit crime. Involvement in the Criminal Justice System can have far-reaching and long-lasting effects on the women themselves, their families and the communities in which they live. The challenges they face are at risk of being exacerbated by a short custodial sentence (often for low risk offences) that can disrupt important social bonds with children and family members, contributing to social exclusion and having an adverse impact on future generations. The challenge is to provide a joined-up approach that acknowledges the gender-specific needs of women, promotes positive wellbeing and supports successful long-term outcomes to reduce reoffending.

To achieve this, Welsh Government, UK Government and policing in Wales are working together with justice partners to develop Blueprints for delivery of Female Offending and Youth Justice services. This Blueprint for Female Offending sets out the ambition to accelerate the transformation of services to create a fairer, more equal society with better outcomes and justice for all. It will create sustainable community-based solutions to keep women and communities safe and free from criminal behaviour.

Our aspirations are:
- Support women to live crime free, positive and healthy lives, improving well-being and making communities safer.
- Reduce the number of women in the system by intervening earlier to keep them safe and address the vulnerabilities that often lead to crime.
- Deliver a bold ambitious approach with transformative, sustainable services that are distinct to Wales and locally-led, building on and learning from the successful Women’s Pathfinder Whole System Approach model.
- Create safe environments in which children and women are protected/guarded from harm and supported to thrive.

What success looks like
- Women and children will live in a safe and secure home and as a result will be less likely to commit crime. Women will have the skills they need to look after themselves and their children, enabling them to live rewarding, fulfilled and positive lives within their communities.
- Our joined-up approach will result in better emotional, physical health and wellbeing, building positive, supportive relationships within families and strengthening our communities.

Our guiding principles
- A focus on Victims: together with seeing perpetrators brought to justice, Victims tell us they want to know this will never happen again. We are learning all the time about models of reducing reoffending. This evidence-based, innovative approach is guided by our desire to:
  - ensure fewer people are victims of crime
  - highlight that women who offend are often victims themselves – as outlined in the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
  - understand the ripple-effect of crime in creating victims outside those directly involved
- Welsh Government’s well-being objectives and cross-cutting priorities in the national strategy Prosperity for All, maximise the contribution of partners to the well-being goals.
- A Public Health approach applying the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Sustainable Development principle of improving Economic, Social, Cultural, Environmental well-being using the five ways of working:
  - Long-term: breaking intergenerational cycles of crime, creating a fairer society with more equal outcomes for all
  - Prevention: safeguarding women and children, tackling root causes of offending behaviour
  - Collaboration: working together to deliver transformative services
  - Integration: understanding the links across policy areas and how this approach can improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our communities involving people – ensuring the right approach to delivering effective services by involving those affected (victims, women, children and communities)

Our Whole-system approach will focus on:
- Early Intervention & Prevention in addition to working with partners to tackle root causes of crime:
  - Diverting women, where appropriate, away from crime and into women-centred, community-based, sustainable support services that meet their needs
  - Explore options for trauma-informed services which can best meet the needs of vulnerable women, and families, affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and at risk of entering the system, learning from the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) approach.
- Courts & sentencing Building confidence in alternatives to short-term custody and remand by:
  - Working with courts & sentencers to build a clearer understanding of community services available to directly tackle causes of offending
  - Training front-line professionals to recognise & respond to women and families experiencing trauma.
- Community-based solutions Supporting women, including those at risk of offending, to engage with services in the community by:
  - Developing women-focused services, including meaningful working relationships with a trusted key professional, building strengths and recognising the trauma or adverse events women may have experienced, understanding and addressing how this relates to their offending behaviour.
- Custody and Resettlement Supporting women in custody and resettlement back into the community by:
  - Working with rehabilitative services to deliver effective pre and post-release interventions in prisons where women from Wales are located
  - Establishing services to improve and maintain links with children and families
- Research and Evaluation Further develop a Welsh evidence-base, with reference to existing national and international evidence of what works, to better understand the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of women who offend by:
  - Evaluating the Women’s Pathfinder whole system approach to inform future design and delivery of services for women at risk of offending;
  - Working with the Early Action Together Policing and Partnership Programme to research impact of ACEs on women in Wales and how trauma-informed services can best meet the needs of vulnerable women and families.

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What our shared success means is that women will have a better start in life, reducing the impact of adverse childhood experiences such as domestic abuse or having a mother in custody.

The All Wales Criminal Justice Board will oversee delivery of the Blueprint implementation plan through specialist programme and advisory groups commissioned by the All Wales Women in Justice Group, driving delivery at local levels through Local Criminal Justice Bards