



Home Office
BUILDING A SAFE, JUST
AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

Women's Offending Reduction Programme

Action Plan

Community Provision
Prisoner Resettlement
Sentencing
Crime Prevention
Bail and remand
Women Offender Management

March 2004

Contents

Introduction	3
What is the Women's Offending Reduction Programme?	5
How did the Programme come about?	6
What are the Programme's main priorities?	7
– Community interventions more appropriate for women	7
– Meeting mental health needs	8
– Dealing with substance misuse	10
– Building up the evidence base	11
– Communicating, training and guidance on gender	13
Delivering and measuring the success of the Programme	14
– Mainstreaming gender within existing initiatives	14
– Timescales for delivery	14
– How will success be measured?	15
Building on good practice	16
– How you can contribute	17
Annex A: Summary of Action Points contained in the Programme	18

Women's Offending Reduction Programme

Introduction

Inequalities between men and women still persist in many areas of our society and the treatment of women offenders is no exception.

Statistics show that the courts have been using custody more frequently for women over the last few years, even though the nature and seriousness of their offending has not, on the whole, been getting worse. Magistrates' courts, for example, used custody three times more frequently for women in 2002 compared to 1994. The evidence suggests that courts are imposing more severe sentences on women for less serious offences.

The *Women's Offending Reduction Programme* (the Programme) co-ordinates work across departments and agencies to ensure that policies, services, programmes and other interventions respond more appropriately to the particular needs and characteristics of women offenders.

This is an important element of the Government's wider push towards improving gender equality. On 12 June 2003, Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Minister for Women, launched the Government's report *Delivering on Gender Equality* which highlights the whole range of work going on across government to tackle issues around gender.

The publication of the Programme is also timely following the Home Secretary's announcement of the reforms to correctional services. The publication on 6 January 2004 of *Reducing Crime – Changing lives* contains the Government's plans for transforming the management of offenders, including the creation of a new National Offender Management Service (NOMS) from June 2004. The emphasis will be on greater use of community sentences for lower risk offenders and reserving custody only for serious, dangerous and

highly persistent offenders. The use of case management will also be a key feature of the new Service, with end-to-end management ensuring a co-ordinated and joined-up response to offenders' needs throughout the criminal justice process. The approach taken by the Women's Offending Reduction Programme supports this new direction and will ensure that these objectives are delivered for women offenders.

Responses to offending have generally been developed with male offenders in mind. But the fact that women make up only a small proportion of offenders – 6% of the prison population and 14% of offenders on community sentences – does not reduce the importance of addressing their particular needs and characteristics. If we fail to do this, we will continue to see the women's prison population increasing disproportionately and at a far greater rate than the male population. Children's lives will also continue to be damaged by having mothers who offend and women themselves will not receive fair and equal treatment from the criminal justice system. The custody rate and sentence lengths have been increasing for men as well, of course, with the male prison population increasing by 50% over the last ten years – but over the same period the female prison population has increased by 173%.

The Programme aims to uncover the reasons behind this trend and to take steps to ensure that custody is used only for those women offenders who really need to be there because of the seriousness of their offence or for public protection.

By ensuring the delivery of a co-ordinated multi-agency response to women's offending, the Programme will tackle the variety of factors which can affect why women offend, including poor housing, mental health problems, substance misuse, abuse, child care, education and employment. The ultimate

Women's Offending Reduction Programme

measure of success of the Programme will be a reduction in offending by women and fewer women held in custody.

Good progress has been made over the last few years to highlight the issue of women's offending and to identify what needs to be done to tackle it more effectively. Responses to the *Government's Strategy for Women Offenders* (published for consultation in 2000), reports by the Prison Reform Trust, Revolving Doors and Nacro, Home Office statistics and other research have all contributed to identifying the current gaps in provision and have been used to inform the Programme.

In particular, the Home Office produces *Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System*, published annually under section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The 2003 report co-incides with the publication of the Programme and provides the latest and most comprehensive information available about the nature and characteristics of women's offending.

But there are still gaps in the information we have about what approaches work best with women, particularly within the community, and improvements will not happen overnight. One of the initial priorities of the Programme will be to improve gender breakdown when agencies collect data and to develop the evidence base. Without these basic 'building blocks' further long-term improvements cannot be made.

There are also other priorities that will be pursued in the Programme's initial stages – increased diversion of women from custody at the pre-court and pre-sentence stage and providing better alternatives in

which the courts can have confidence. This will be supported by improvements in the availability and appropriateness of community interventions and programmes that are better tailored to meet the needs of women.

There will be a particular focus on meeting the needs of women with mental health and substance misuse problems. Establishing links between the Programme and other initiatives (for example, the Department of Health's Women's Mental Health Strategy and the National Drug Strategy), will ensure that women offenders have access to, and are retained in, services and treatment appropriate to their needs. Understandably, sentencers sometimes see prison as the 'safe' option for women offenders who may be a risk to themselves or to others because of a mental health or drug problem. By ensuring the availability of effective community-based facilities and services, sentencers will have a credible and effective alternative to custody.

I am grateful to all the departments, agencies and other organisations who have signed up to deliver the necessary changes and actions within the Programme. I am confident that the realistic and tangible actions that have been agreed, together with a joined-up and co-ordinated response, will make a real difference.



Paul Goggins
Minister for Correctional Services and
Reducing Re-offending

What is the Women's Offending Reduction Programme?

The Women's Offending Reduction Programme is a multi-agency strategic plan of action to deliver a distinct and joined-up response to the needs and characteristics of women offenders. It runs over three years, with annual reviews and a final evaluation to inform what needs to happen beyond the period of the Programme.

Its purpose is to reduce women's offending and the number of women in custody, by providing a better-tailored and more appropriate response to the particular factors which have an impact on why women offend. The intention is not to give women offenders preferential treatment but to achieve equality of treatment and access to provision.

A number of government departments, agencies and organisations are 'stakeholders' in the Programme. These include the National Probation Service, Prison Service, Youth Justice Board, National Treatment Agency (NTA), Drug Strategy Directorate, Department of Health, Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA), Court Services and a number of Home Office units. They have agreed the actions they will take to ensure that the policies, services, programmes and interventions they deliver are appropriate for women and address the factors – including mental health, substance misuse, accommodation, childcare, abuse, education and employment – which have been identified as relevant to their offending behaviour.

The Programme Delivery Plan was issued to all stakeholders in July 2003 and work on a number of the action points is already underway. A summary of the action points contained in the Delivery Plan is at **Annex A**.

The Programme looks at how women offenders are dealt with at every stage of the criminal justice process, from arrest through to sentencing and then resettlement. The Action Points have been arranged chronologically, according to when they occur in

the process, so that the different stakeholders can identify how, and at which point, their actions impact on each other and how delivery can best be co-ordinated. The Delivery Plan is, therefore, divided into the following sections:

- Bail and Remand
- Sentencing
- Community Provision
- Prisoner Resettlement
- Women Offender Management
- Crime Prevention

There is a broad range of actions across all of these areas. For each of these, the Delivery Plan sets out the process the stakeholders will need to go through and the timescale in which it is expected each action point will be delivered. A number of actions within this framework have been identified as the Programme's priorities, either because they are the necessary building blocks that need to be put in place before any further progress can be made, or because they respond to the most pressing needs of women offenders.

The initial focus is on greater diversion of women at the pre-court and pre-sentence stages, and encouraging greater use of community disposals, so that custody is only used for women who really need to be there. These priorities contribute to the wider Home Office aims of reducing offending and re-offending and will also reflect and support the objectives of the new National Offender Management Service when it comes into operation from June 2004.

How did the Programme come about?

- Since 1992, 173% increase in the women's annual average population in custody (4,299 in 2002) compared to a 50% increase for men (66,562 in 2002).*
- 144% increase in sentenced female prison receptions between 1992 and 2002, compared to 31% increase for men.#
- 196% increase in female prison receptions on remand between 1992 and 2002, compared to a 52% increase for men.#
- 71% of women sentenced to prison in 2002 received less than 12 months. *
- 59% of women held on remand do not go on to receive a custodial sentence.*

(See page **27** for references.)

The Government recognised the need (with a rapidly increasing female prison population) to develop a more distinct and appropriate response to women's offending, and published in 2000, for consultation, its *Strategy for Women Offenders*. This reviewed the then existing initiatives aimed at reducing women's offending and sought views on how the criminal justice system dealt with women offenders, how it might be improved and what the main gaps were.

The outcomes were published in *The Government's Strategy for Women Offenders Consultation Report*, in September 2001, which signalled the intent to develop the Women's Offending Reduction Programme. The key messages from the consultation responses highlighted the need to strategically link efforts across government to reduce women's offending and to pursue alternatives to custodial sentences for women.

Since then, the Programme's action points were developed through discussion and negotiation with identified stakeholders. This established what actions were realistic and achievable given available resources, those which should be given priority and timelines for delivery.

What are the Programme's main priorities?

Making community interventions and programmes more appropriate and accessible for women

Since the majority of offenders are male (over 80%), interventions and programmes have generally been developed with male offenders in mind and are designed to respond to their needs and characteristics. While some interventions and programmes may work equally well with male and female offenders, there are, nevertheless, significant differences between their types and patterns of offending behaviour, the underlying factors and personal circumstances which call for a different and distinct approach for women.

Even in circumstances where women have similar needs to men, such as treatment for drug misuse, it can be counter-productive for some women to be placed on the same programme with men if, for example, it causes them to feel uncomfortable or intimidated, or if it fails to address the underlying factors influencing their drug use, which could include violence or abuse. Providing interventions and programmes that recognise and respond to women's needs is not about giving them special or preferential treatment but about maximising the potential for women to benefit from equal treatment and access to appropriate provision. This does not necessarily mean women-only, although in many cases this would be the best approach.

Key Actions:

- All probation areas will have strategies and practice guidelines to ensure women have access to community sentences that are appropriate to their needs.
- Probation 'What Works' Centrally Led Action Networks (CLAN) Boards will ensure content and delivery styles of programmes and other interventions are appropriate for women.
- Pilot programmes will be delivered in the community and evaluated to assess their impact on and benefits for women (including the 'Real Women' Programme, a Women's Emotional Management Programme, Case Management pilots, and young women going through the Intensive Control and Change Programme (ICCP) pilot).
- Innovative accommodation schemes will be developed and piloted that not only meet the housing needs of young women involved in, or at risk of offending, but also provide access to a whole range of additional support services that can respond to their other needs ('Accommodation Plus' pilots).
- The possibility of piloting multi-agency community based work using 'one-stop shop' access to services and support will be explored, building on existing provision at women's centres.
- Probation and other government and non-government agencies will develop partnership arrangements and access to community facilities which meet women's specific needs in support of community interventions (including health, housing, benefits, employment, training and childcare).

Good Practice Example:

Probation Area Strategies for Women Offenders

Both Humberside and West Midlands Probation Areas, thanks to supportive Chief Officers and the enthusiasm and commitment of core groups of staff, are building on the good work already underway with women offenders. Both are working to achieve local delivery of the actions identified in the Women's Offending Reduction Programme, by matching appropriate interventions to the profiled needs of women offenders and communicating these to sentencers.

Humberside, using the Services for Women Offenders Task Group, have already developed a local Action Plan. Priorities for the first year include: detailed profiling of women offenders; analysis of data on pre-sentence reports, concordance and breach; a qualitative review of pre-sentence reports on women and tracking of delivery of Bail Information Schemes – leading to the development of Practice Guidelines for report writers. A review and assessment of local provision and multi-agency interventions will produce a Directory of Services for Women in the area.

West Midlands, building on their good track record in relation to gender, such as Crowley House hostel and piloting of the Real Women Programme, have undertaken a comprehensive review of service provision for women. This also included an important qualitative element with the read-through of a sample of case files. Recommendations from the review will inform the local Action Plan and will include: improved inter-agency work and partnerships in gender specific interventions; improved communication with magistrates on sentencing options for women and making better use of sentencing liaison structures.

A priority for the Programme is to develop community-based interventions and programmes, which recognise the particular needs and characteristics of women offenders and which are appropriate and accessible by them. If it can be demonstrated that this approach is successful at tackling women's criminogenic needs within the community, and the evidence of this is shared with sentencers, it will increase confidence in the use of community sentences for women offenders. The Good Practice Example, below, describes how Probation Areas can achieve this through a combination of developing community interventions and programmes for women offenders and communicating to the courts how these packages meet their particular needs.

Meeting Mental Health needs

- 40% of women prisoners compared to 20% of men reported receiving help for mental or emotional problems in the 12 months prior to imprisonment.*

(See page 27 for reference.)

A large number of women with mental health problems are ending up in custody rather than being diverted into community based mental health services. One of the Programme's priorities, therefore, is to take forward joint work with the Department of Health (DH) on improving community based mental health services for women offenders and developing mental health diversion schemes which are better equipped to identify and respond to mental health issues presented by female defendants.

Key Actions:

- Mental Health Diversion Schemes designed specifically to meet the needs of women will be developed, including providing workers with gender-specific guidance and information on mental health services and support for women in their area.
- Work will be taken forward with the Department of Health, to ensure criminal justice staff can identify women offenders with mental health problems, and have access to appropriate services, including women-only day services and low and medium secure units where necessary.
- Steps will be taken to identify women prisoners in need of transfer to an NHS facility, and to ensure continuity of care and appropriate support for those returning to the community, including access to primary care and GP services following release.

Good Practice Example:

Calderdale Well Woman Centre – mental health provision

The Centre is a good example of how high quality community mental health support services for women can be provided within the more general setting of a women's centre. It opened in 1985 to provide a holistic approach to health services for women in Calderdale. It now has over 8,000 service users a year and has developed a comprehensive range of advocacy, support, information and advice services. Housing, welfare/benefits, debt, domestic violence, and access/contact in relation to children, are some of the services offered.

By 1996 over 40% of the issues dealt with at the Centre related to mental health. Currently their innovative Legal Advice and Guidance project delivers services to women from vulnerable groups, including those with mental health needs.

The Centre's Management Committee includes representatives from probation and the magistracy and the Centre itself is a good referral point for probation staff wanting to access counselling, support, information and learning for women offenders, whose needs may include mental health issues. The early interventions on offer can also have a preventative role for women at risk of offending.

Case study

Marie, a sex worker and occasional drug user with two children aged 3 and 7, was referred to the Women's Centre by the Police Domestic Violence Co-ordinator following a series of assaults against her by her drug-using partner. She was allocated a support worker from the Centre's Domestic Violence Team and, over a 12 month period, was able to access legal advice, housing support, safety equipment, a nursery place for her younger child, sexual health advice and support at Social Services Case Conferences for the children. She also made good use of regular informal support at the Centre's drop-in sessions and of learning opportunities to improve her confidence and self esteem.

Despite ongoing difficulties with her partner and other crises, Marie has coped increasingly well. She has not seen her partner for several months and recently enrolled on an IT course at the local college. As she says: "I am still frightened when I think about what he could do but I don't want my kids to see any of that again. I want to be a mum they can be proud of".

The Programme will operate in tandem with the DH Women's Mental Health Strategy to ensure that there are close links between the criminal justice system and mental health services. The objective is to ensure that women offenders who have a mental health problem are identified as early as possible and have access to community based mental health services that meet their particular needs.

The Women's Mental Health Strategy Implementation Guidance, published by DH on 22 September 2003, includes specific targets and objectives for delivering an 'early intervention approach for women offenders in the community'. This includes the co-ordination and joining up of services aimed at developing tailored community packages of care for women offenders. The Strategy should also lead to better provision of primary health care for women with less severe mental health problems (who currently do not fall within the remit of specialist mental health services). It is particularly important to be able to respond to problems such as eating disorders, self-harming and other emotional and psychological damage caused by sexual and physical abuse, which are often experienced by women offenders. The Women's Mental Health Strategy also aims to provide tailored support for women prisoners on release to ensure their resettlement needs are met in their home areas.

Anecdotal reports suggest that women are sometimes sent to prison "for their own good" but this practice must be challenged. By improving mental health services and support for women in the community, and ensuring that the courts are provided with better information about what is available, the Programme aims to dispel the outdated notion that prison is the 'safest' place for women with mental health problems and encourage greater use of community sentences.

Dealing with substance misuse

- 45% of female arrestees tested positive for opiates and 30% for cocaine.♦
- 43% of women reported using crack cocaine and 44% heroin in the year before coming to prison.●

(See page **27** for references.)

Women with substance misuse problems have been identified as another priority group for the Women's Offending Reduction Programme. They are currently under-represented in treatment services and those that do access treatment often do not complete it. This is of particular concern given the prevalence of serious heroin and crack cocaine misuse among women and the increase in women's drug driven offending. In response to this, the Programme dovetails with the National Drug Strategy and Criminal Justice Interventions Programme (CJIP) which recognise that women have specific and different needs: issues such as pregnancy and child-care, sex working, sexual and physical abuse and dual diagnosis, as well as the need to feel comfortable and supported within the treatment environment. The aim is to increase the number of women entering and retained in treatment and for that treatment to be more responsive to their needs.

The focus is also on improving drug services for women within the community, and to ensure good liaison between those services, criminal justice agencies and the courts so that sentencers are provided with options other than prison for drug misusing women offenders.

Key Actions:

- National Treatment Agency (NTA) Models of Care will require Drug Action Teams (DATs) to review whether their service provision is adequate and appropriate for women (e.g. provision of childcare) and to fill any emerging gaps.
- Under the Criminal Justice Intervention Programme (CJIP), 25 DATs (covering areas with highest levels of acquisitive crime) will deliver an 'end to end' approach from arrest through to sentence and beyond with the aim of increasing the number of women entering and retained in treatment.
- Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) pilots will be geared to offer improved treatment response to crack cocaine users, which will particularly benefit women who represent a large proportion of these users.
- The Probation Service will commission services for DTTOs appropriate for women, including detoxification, day programmes and rehab programmes.
- DSD, NTA and ACPO will monitor the commissioning and delivery of Arrest Referral Schemes to ensure they are appropriate for women.

Building up the evidence base

'Today women receive more severe sentences for less serious offences'

- Theft and handling remains the most common offence category (40%) for which women are received into prison.*
- The use of custody for women by Magistrates' Courts rose from 4% in 1994 to 11% in 2002. In Crown Courts it rose from less than 30% in 1994 to just over 43% in 2002.*
- Focus groups in a recent study found that 6 out of 11 magistrates thought that women's offending had become more common and more serious in recent years.o

(See page **27** for references.)

Notwithstanding the many reports, studies, research and consultations that have addressed the issues for women offenders, there remain significant gaps in the evidence base. For example, statistics show that the courts are making increasing use of custody for women, even though their offences are not, on the whole, getting more serious or prevalent, but we do not have the evidence showing the reasons for this increase. Without such baseline information it is difficult to be confident about the action needed to reduce the number of women being sent to custody. That is why the Programme includes action points which establish the basic 'building blocks' needed to improve awareness and consideration of gender issues. It will provide the knowledge and evidence base to identify and inform the approaches needed (and which work best), for women offenders. It will also identify if, and where, improvements in performance are necessary.

Key Actions:

- NPD and YJB Business Plans will ensure that monitoring and performance data is broken down by gender.
- A Research Working Group will undertake a review of the evidence on the criminogenic needs of women and girls.
- Information on the reasons why courts use custody for women offenders will be gathered and analysed.
- The reasons for the under-utilisation of women's bail hostel places will be examined, including whether courts are aware of and have sufficient confidence in the places that are available.

Good Practice Example:

HMP Styal Bail Information Scheme and Adelaide House

Evidence already exists that even where women are initially remanded in custody, and where serious charges are involved, it **is** possible to secure bail and to make good use of the time prior to sentence.

- The Bail Information Scheme at Styal prison consistently achieves good results both in the number of women interviewed and assessed and in the positive decisions for bail subsequently made by the courts. Assessments are thorough and risk and public protection issues are addressed alongside suitability for bail.
- Adelaide House, a 20-bed, women-only hostel in Liverpool, is well placed to offer appropriate interventions for medium to high-risk women who might otherwise be remanded in custody facing the prospect of a prison sentence. Held in high regard by the courts, it maintains a 95% occupancy rate and has built up an impressive programme of activities within a supportive but controlled regime. Groupwork includes assertion skills, dealing with domestic violence and addressing substance misuse. Access to education and training facilities in the community is arranged.

Case study

Sarah B, aged 25, charged with attempted robbery and Dawn H, aged 27, charged with Section 18 wounding/GBH were recently remanded in custody to Styal prison. Both had previous convictions. They were seen by the Bail Information Scheme Officer and at their next court appearance were bailed on condition that they reside at Adelaide House. Their bail conditions also included: abiding by the Hostel Rules, a curfew of 6.00pm to 7.00am and agreement to address their substance misuse, including random urine tests and participation in the programme of activities.

Communicating, training and providing guidance on gender issues

- 8,000 children a year have their living arrangements disrupted by their mother going to prison.♣
- 92% of fathers in prison reported their partner was looking after the children, compared to only 25% of mothers.♣
- 12% of women prisoners have children who go into fostering, care or adoption, compared to 2% of male prisoners.♣
- 55% of women in prison have at least one child under 16.♣

(See page 27 for references.)

Policy makers, practitioners, police, courts, voluntary organisations, and others who have a role to play in the way that women offenders are dealt with, need to know what the particular issues are for women (including the impact on their children and families), how best to deal with them and what will have the biggest impact in terms of addressing the factors that increase their risk of offending.

For example, women are more likely to be the primary carers but are much less likely than men to have a partner to look after their children if they are sent to prison. Research shows that these children suffer not only as a result of separation from their mothers but also, particularly for those who end up in care, their own lives are subsequently disadvantaged, with the increased risk of social exclusion for the next generation.

The Programme aims to:

- broaden knowledge and understanding, and promote gender consideration more widely, through the delivery of training and guidance, and by including issues for women offenders in communication strategies;
- increase awareness of and confidence in the use of community based interventions, services and support which can meet the needs of women offenders without having to resort to custody; and
- reduce the numbers of women remanded in custody or given short prison sentences.

Key Actions:

- The Judicial Studies Board will be invited to review training and guidance for sentencers to ensure it includes gender specific issues that should be taken into account in the sentencing process.
- Gender specific training and guidance will be developed and delivered to probation and Yot staff preparing reports for court (including Pre-Sentence Reports and Bail Information), identifying issues that are relevant to women and girls and including information on how best to respond to those issues.
- Probation Service Communications Strategy will include comprehensive gender specific information on all elements of community provision to improve knowledge and awareness among sentencers of how community sentences can meet the needs of female offenders.

Delivering and measuring the success of the Women's Offending Reduction Programme

Mainstreaming gender within existing initiatives and strategies

The Programme draws together various strands of work, including best practice, from across government and the public and voluntary sectors, which are relevant to women's offending. It provides the framework within which everyone involved in dealing with women offenders and their offending can see the whole picture, share their learning and experiences of how best to meet the complex needs of women, and can co-ordinate the delivery of their commitments to best effect.

The action points contained in the Programme build, as far as possible, on work that is already underway for women, or are linked in with other initiatives or strategies that need to be adapted to ensure they account for women's needs and characteristics. It is about mainstreaming gender consideration rather than developing entirely separate systems and approaches for women offenders. It is also about recognising existing examples of good practice and developing them to inform what approaches work best for women. It cannot, therefore, be viewed in isolation. Clear links exist between the Programme and:

- The National Drug Strategy
- The Department of Health's Women's Mental Health Strategy
- The National Rehabilitation Strategy

The dynamic nature of the Programme, with its built-in system of annual reviews, means it can be adapted and amended to take into account the gender implications of future developments such as the new sentencing powers in the Criminal Justice Act 2003, current work on the National Strategy on Restorative Justice and the Government's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

The creation of the new National Offender Management Service (NOMS) from June 2004 will have a significant impact on the way all offenders are dealt with. The new service will be responsible for improving the enforcement and credibility of community punishments so that custody is not used for less serious offenders. The intention is to develop robust, intensive community programmes and intensive supervision monitoring to replace prison sentences for the increasing number of relatively low risk and first time offenders who have been given prison sentences in recent years. The objective, therefore, is to increase the numbers of lower risk offenders given community sentences.

There will also be an emphasis on end-to-end case management which will provide a more co-ordinated approach to steering offenders through the criminal justice process. It will ensure a more effective and joined-up response to individual needs and enable progress to be built on at each stage.

The Programme supports this approach and shares the same objectives, with a similar focus on pre-court diversion and greater use of community penalties. The recognition of women as individuals with different patterns of offending, risks and needs will also underpin the new approach to offender management. In particular the Programme will ensure that there are the mechanisms and initiatives in place to enable the NOMS to deliver community interventions and case management systems which meet the particular needs and characteristics of women offenders.

Timescales for delivery

The Programme will run initially for three years. Priority actions have been identified for year one (2004-05) and progress on delivery will be monitored and reviewed at the end of year one and each subsequent year. The review at the end of the first

year will inform and set targets for achievement in the following year and also identify future priorities. The final evaluation (at the end of year three (2007)) will determine the success of the Programme, the extent to which gender consideration has been mainstreamed and whether further action is necessary to sustain the Programme's objectives.

How will success be measured?

The long-term success of the Programme will be measured in terms of:

- a reduction in women's offending; and
- a reduction in the number of women in custody.

However no single element of the Programme will achieve this on its own. Many of the first year action points focus on agencies gathering data broken down by gender or developing the evidence base for 'what works' for women offenders. Although this alone will not result in a reduction of women's offending and women's imprisonment, they are essential first steps in helping to inform and shape the future actions necessary to deliver these goals.

A number of mechanisms will be used to monitor and evaluate the delivery of the Programme's action points:

- Each of the stakeholders will monitor the delivery of the action points they have signed up to and assess whether they have achieved their objectives;
- The Women's Policy Team will monitor the overall delivery by stakeholders and year-end reviews will be used to:
 - assess what has been achieved;
 - identify barriers to progress and what needs to be done to overcome them; and
 - identify which areas of the Delivery Plan should progress to the next phase.
- The Women Offenders Programme Board, which includes senior representatives from the key departments and agencies with overall responsibility for delivery of the action points, provides governance of the Programme.

Building on good practice

There are plenty of good examples of services, programmes, and other initiatives that are designed to respond to the particular needs of women and which will contribute to the overall aims of the Programme. But they tend to take place in very localised and isolated pockets, often depending heavily on the determination and commitment of the individuals involved and local funding arrangements. Fundamental to the success of the Programme will be the ability to identify what is already underway in this area, pooling that information to create an overall picture of what is happening and where, and using the learning from those existing initiatives to inform what will work best when building a more coherent and strategic approach to tackling the factors affecting women's offending.

The action point on creating a 'Best Practice Register' underlies the commitment to link up the work of various organisations to deliver a distinct and joined-up response to the needs and characteristics of women offenders. A central database will be established of identified local good practice for all criminal justice agencies, which can be used as a reference point and source of information to help support and encourage the development of future

projects for women. The intention is not to reinvent the wheel but to build on existing good practice. The register will also emphasise the importance of the voluntary sector and non-government agencies in the Programme.

A mapping exercise is underway of all programmes, initiatives and centres addressing the complex issues in women's lives, such as childcare, mental health and substance misuse problems, accommodation issues and education, training and employment needs. The Gender and Justice Policy Network (GJPN), which was set up by the Fawcett Society to provide expert outside-in advice, have provided input to this first phase. Members of the network will also contribute to the aim of developing existing multi-agency community-based work into a one-stop-shop approach for the whole range of women's criminogenic needs.

Please contact the Women's Policy Team if you would like further copies of this publication or would like to know more about the Women's Offending Reduction Programme.

This publication is also available on the Home Office website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Good Practice Example:

Asha Women's Centre, Worcester

The Asha Centre is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary community resource centre. It aims to benefit women from Worcester and the surrounding areas who are isolated by disadvantage. To help users achieve their potential, the Centre offers a range of advice surgeries including free legal advice, welfare benefits and housing advice, counselling, citizen's advice, advice on jobs and training, a wide range of educational and recreational classes and childcare for centre users. Women offenders have access to the centre where they can also receive help to address their offending behaviour.

How you can contribute

Contributions to the Best Practice Register are welcome from anyone involved in the provision of services, programmes, research studies or other initiatives that aim to meet the particular needs of young and adult women offenders, or those who may be at risk of offending.

As part of this process, the Women's Policy Team are interested in visiting centres and other projects to gain a better understanding of workers' and service users' views on what works well and where gaps exist. One such visit has been to the Asha women's centre in Worcester.

The Team is keen to build on their knowledge and to widen the best practice register and to hear of other such programmes, interventions and initiatives. If you are able to contribute to this, or would like to know more, please contact:

The Women's Policy Team
Adult Offenders and Rehabilitation Unit
Home Office
11th Floor (Tower)
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT
Tel: 020 7273 2940
E-mail: womenspolicyteam@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Summary of action points contained in the Women's Offending Reduction Programme

This Annex gives a general overview of the Programme's Delivery Plan. The tables below summarise the action points contained in each section of the Delivery Plan and indicates which stakeholders have signed up to delivering them. Before each table is listed the key outcomes the action points within that section are designed to achieve. A glossary of the acronyms follows.

Bail and Remand

Outcomes:

- Maximise opportunities for female defendants to be released on bail.
- Better information on the reasons why courts remand women in custody and then do not impose a custodial sentence.
- Improved gender-specific information available to the courts to assist with remand decisions.
- Reduction in the damage caused by custody, especially disruption to childcare and accommodation.

Action Points:

Bail Information Staff Training/Guidance	Bail Advice/Support for Juveniles	Women's Bail Hostel Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Probation and Prison Services to develop and implement gender awareness training and guidance for bail information staff. ● Identify ways of improving information exchange for women offenders throughout the bail and remand process. ● Relevant information on the impact and consequences of remand decisions to be fed back to the courts. <p>WPT, NPD, HMPS, CPS, YJB, Court Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include gender issues in YJB bail advice and support services. ● Produce gender guidance on bail advice for Youth offending teams and magistrates. ● Highlight the particular needs of girls and young women in remand management training. ● Aim to reduce the number of girls under 17 being made subject to secure remands. <p>JOU, YJB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Examine the reasons for the under-utilisation of women's bail hostel places. ● Examine courts' awareness and confidence in bail hostel provision for women. ● Extend foster remand arrangements to include highly supported/supervised foster placements for persistent young offenders on bail. <p>NPD, YJB</p>

Sentencing

Outcomes:

- Better information and understanding of the reasons behind the courts' increasing use of custody for women.
- Sentencers influenced to consider credible alternatives to custody.
- Perception challenged that prison is the 'safest' place for women with mental health and substance misuse problems, supported by increased opportunities for women to access appropriate community provision.
- Sentencing Guidelines Council invited to consider guidance and instructions on how the new sentencing powers in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 may impact differently on women.

Action points:

<p>Training and guidance for court report writers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gender specific training and guidance for all probation and Yot staff that write Pre-Sentence Reports and deliver specific local community provision for women. 	<p>Training and Guidance for Sentencers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review training and guidance for sentencers to take account of gender specific issues within the sentencing process. 	<p>Mental Health Diversion Schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve availability of Mental Health Diversion Schemes, equipped specifically to deal with female defendants. ● Equal access for women offenders to improved gender specific (local) mental health services. ● Women specific guidance for workers in Mental Health Diversion Schemes. 	<p>Probation Service Communications Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Probation Service Communications Strategy to improve sentencers' knowledge and awareness of how community sentences can meet the needs of female offenders. 	<p>Reasons for custodial sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research the reasons for custodial sentences for women and girls. ● Identify ways of addressing the causes and therefore reducing the use of custody. 	<p>Gender Mainstreaming in the Criminal Justice Act 2003</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment of gender issues in the implementation guidance for the Criminal Justice Act 2003, to include consideration of the impact of the new sentencing powers on women offenders.
<p>NPD, YJB</p>	<p>DCA, WPT, SPPU, JSB, GJPN</p>	<p>DoH Local Health & Court Services</p>	<p>NPD</p>	<p>RDS, SPPU, Court Services, WPT</p>	<p>SPPU, RDS, AORU,</p>

Community Provision

Outcomes:

- Improved evidence base on which community programmes and interventions work best for women offenders.
- Improved availability and access to programmes and interventions geared to meet the specific needs of women – especially those with mental health and drug problems.

Action Points:

<p>Access to Appropriate Sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure access to women-appropriate community sentences, monitored in relation to gender and race. ● YJB Effective Practice Guidelines on working with difference to monitor delivery performance in relation to gender and race. 	<p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access for women offenders to improved gender specific mental health services, including day services, low and medium secure services. ● Arrangements for young women reviewed and any shortfalls in assessment and treatment identified. 	<p>Substance Misuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commission improved, appropriate community provision for women with substance misuse problems. ● Commission and deliver appropriate Arrest Referral Schemes. 	<p>Accommodation Plus for Young Women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and pilot accommodation schemes that not only meet the housing needs of young women but also provide access to a range of additional support services. 	<p>Research Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A review of the evidence on the criminogenic needs of young and adult women and identify gaps. ● Research to inform the development of future programmes and interventions for women.
<p>NPD and HMI Probation, YJB</p>	<p>NPD, NPS local areas, DH, YJB, Home Office WPT</p>	<p>NTA, NPS, ACPO and DSD</p>	<p>WOPB Working Group members: YJB, NPD and HMPS</p>	<p>WOPB, YJB, NPD, HMPS, RDS and DSD</p>

Action Points: (continued)

<p>Case Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluation of Probation case management pilots to address issues arising for women and gender awareness training developed for case managers. 	<p>Programmes</p> <p>Probation programmes and community interventions to be made appropriate for women by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guaranteeing appropriate content and delivery styles of all accredited programmes and interventions; ● Expanding the provision of women specific interventions; ● Ensuring sufficient number of women participants to obtain meaningful results; ● Developing effective delivery in areas with small numbers of women; and ● Reviewing arrangements for women with childcare responsibilities. 	<p>Access to other community facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop partnership arrangements and links between probation and other agencies to improve access to facilities which focus on women's specific needs and support delivery of community interventions. 	<p>Community Interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand provision of programmes and access to other community facilities which meet women's specific needs and support the delivery of community sentences. 	<p>One-stop-shop Access to Services and Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore potential to develop existing multi-agency community-based work into a one-stop-shop approach for the whole range of women's criminogenic needs.
<p>NPD: Offender Assessment and Case Management Board, AORU</p>	<p>NPD</p>	<p>NPD, NPS with government and non-government agencies</p>	<p>NPD, local areas and HMPS</p>	<p>WPT, RDS, NPD, HMPS, YJB</p>

Prisoner Resettlement

Outcomes:

- Delivery of a co-ordinated Women’s Estate Resettlement Strategy to meet the range of women’s resettlement needs and ensure effective community re-integration.
- Targeted work to reduce homelessness among women leaving prison.
- Better continuity and co-ordination of care and treatment for women leaving prison with mental health and substance misuse problems.
- Fewer women re-offending.

Action Points:

<p>Women’s Estate Resettlement Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Issue Interim Women’s Estate Resettlement Strategy (2003/04) and final full-term Resettlement Strategy (2004/05) with performance measures on housing, employment/training, family ties and healthcare. 	<p>Mental Health Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identification and assessment for young and adult women with mental health problems and in need of transfer to NHS facilities at the earliest point of sentence. ● Ensure appropriate treatment, continuity of care and appropriate support on release. 	<p>Women’s Estate Strategic Review/Strategic Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resettlement and better use of facilities within the Women’s Estate to be key focuses of Women’s Estate Strategic Planning 2003/04. 	<p>The National Rehabilitation Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The particular resettlement needs of women prisoners to be addressed in the National Rehabilitation Strategy, with gender and ethnicity included in outcome targets and performance measures. 	<p>Drug Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and improve access by young and adult women prisoners on release to appropriate community drug treatment interventions, to build on work achieved in custody and ensure continuity of care. 	<p>Foreign Nationals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and implement a specific resettlement strategy for female foreign national prisoners. ● Include gender consideration in future initiatives to tackle reducing the number of foreign national prisoners.
--	---	--	--	--	--

Action Points: (continued)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disseminate good practice for use in women's prisons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Full-term Resettlement Strategy to develop procedures for closer working between the healthcare, prison departments and community agencies. 				
<p>DoH, HMPS, YJB</p>	<p>HMPS, YJB, DH</p>	<p>HMPS: Women's Estate Area Managers: Strategic Planning Group</p>	<p>AORU</p>	<p>DSD, Prison Service: Women's Estate Area Drug Co-ordinator and DSU, NPD, NTA, DH, YJB and DATS.</p>	<p>WEPU, Strategic Planning Group, HO, IND, Customs and Excise, Foreign Office and non-government organisations</p>

Women Offender Management

Outcomes:

- Gender consideration mainstreamed in the development and delivery of all policies, programmes, services and other interventions to ensure equal outcomes for men and women – an important building block needed to achieve a sustained reduction in women’s offending.
- Statement of Expectations established by all agencies working with women offenders to ensure their policies, programmes and interventions include provision for the needs of minority groups within the female offender population.
- Gender consideration included as a requirement in the business plans of key stakeholders.
- Improved understanding of the links between abuse and offending to inform how best to respond to women offenders who are also victims of violence.

Action points:

<p>Probation Provision for Women Offenders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identified Probation lead on women’s issues to co-ordinate work across the Directorate and take forward service delivery issues related to women. 	<p>Business Plans/Diversity Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specific targets and commitments on improving provision for women and girls to be included in Business Plans and Diversity Targets. ● Business Plans to include a particular requirement for performance to be monitored by gender. 	<p>Statement of Expectations on needs of Minority Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Statement of Expectations on provision for the needs of minority groups within the female offender population to be developed and delivered by all CJS agencies working with women. 	<p>Promoting Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish a central database of local good practice as a resource for all criminal justice agencies. ● Identified good practice to be used to produce guidance on what works well, which will support and encourage the development of future projects for women. 	<p>Offender Assessment Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data on offenders’ criminogenic needs and risk factors captured by offender assessment tools to be disaggregated by gender and reviewed to assess whether the particular criminogenic needs of women have been identified.
<p>NPD</p>	<p>NPD, YJB</p>	<p>HMPS, NPD, YJB</p>	<p>WPT, WEPU, NPD, YJB, RDS</p>	<p>NPD, HMPS, YJB</p>

Action Points: (continued)

<p>Guidance on achieving Gender Mainstreaming across CJS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information and guidance produced for CJS staff to highlight the need for gender consideration in all policy and practice and for collected data to be broken down by gender. 	<p>Non Prison Accommodation for juveniles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remove all 15 and 16-year-old girls from adult prison accommodation by increasing the number of girls in non-prison provision. ● Review mother and baby provision for girls and young women within the secure estate. 	<p>Restorative Justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include gender consideration in all current and planned work on Restorative Justice. 	<p>Victims of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of the National Strategy for victims and witnesses to consider the needs of women offenders who are also victims. ● Future local Domestic Violence Strategies to include consideration of the needs of women offender victims. ● Outcomes of NPD's future victim satisfaction survey, which are relevant to the needs of women offender victims to be fed into the WORP.
<p>WPT, RDAT, HMPS, NPD, YJB</p>	<p>YJB</p>	<p>AORU, YJB</p>	<p>VU, POCIU Domestic Violence Unit, NPD, WPT</p>

Crime Prevention

Although crime prevention is recognised as a key factor in reducing offending (rather than re-offending) the focus of the first phase of the Programme is on diversion and increased use of community disposals for women offenders. The priority is also to identify and build on existing work and initiatives that can respond to the most pressing needs of women offenders. Current crime prevention initiatives, however, are not targeted on issues that are priority areas in relation to women’s offending and do not, therefore, provide immediate opportunities to develop women-specific initiatives.

Action points in this section lay the building blocks for achieving the Programme’s longer-term aim of reducing women’s offending through improving social inclusion of women at risk, and a greater consideration of gender issues in developing and delivering crime prevention initiatives.

Action Points:

<p>Gender Mainstreaming in Crime Prevention Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future crime prevention initiatives/early interventions to show differential impact and gender breakdowns on those targeted. ● Needs of girls and young women, including black and minority ethnic girls/women, to be addressed and evidenced in all future initiatives. 	<p>Neighbourhood Renewal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop the promotion of gender consideration in Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes and New Deal for Communities Initiatives. 	<p>“Children at Risk” Green Paper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlight in the consultation process the need for gender consideration within the full range of proposed initiatives for children’s services. ● Include in the consultation process the need for gender consideration in the development of a wider sentencing framework for juveniles.
<p>CRDT, GORs, Crime Reduction Teams, Safer Communities Initiatives, Crime and Disorder Partnerships, YJB</p>	<p>ODPM-Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and GORs</p>	<p>YJB, JOU, WPT</p>

Glossary of Acronyms

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers	JOU	Juvenile Offenders Unit, Home Office
AORU	Adult Offenders and Rehabilitation Unit, Home Office	JSB	Judicial Studies Board
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service	NPD	National Probation Directorate, Home Office
CRDT	Crime Reduction Delivery Team, Home Office	NTA	National Treatment Agency
DATs	Drug Action Teams	ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
DCA	Department of Constitutional Affairs	POCIU	Public Order and Crime Issues Unit, Home Office
DH	Department of Health, Mental Health Branch	RDAT	Race and Diversity Action Team, Home Office
DSD	Drug Strategy Directorate, Home Office	RDS	Research Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office
DSU	Prison Service Drugs Strategy Unit	SPPU	Sentencing Policy and Penalties Unit, Home Office
GJPN	Gender Justice and Policy Network	VU	Victims Unit, Home Office
GORs	Government Offices of the Regions	WEPU	Women's Estate Policy Unit, Prison Service
HMI Probation	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation	WPT	Women's Policy Team, Home Office
HMPS	Her Majesty's Prison Service	YJB	Youth Justice Board
IND	Immigration and Nationality Directorate		

Statistic References

- * *Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System*, a Home Office publication under Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (2003 version).
- # Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 2002
- ◆ Drugs and crime: the results of the second developmental stage of the NEW-ADAM Programme, 2000 (Home Office Research Study 205).
- Differential Substance Misuse Treatment Needs of Women, Ethnic Minorities and Young Offenders in Prison: prevalence of substance misuse and treatment needs (Home Office Online Report 33/03).
- ♣ Social Exclusion Unit Report (July 2002): Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners.
- o 'The Decision to Imprison: Sentencing and the Prison Population' Mike Hough, Jessica Jacobson and Andrew Millie (University of Southbank/Prison Reform Trust, 2003).



Community Provision
Prisoner Resettlement
Sentencing
Crime Prevention

Bail and remand
Women Offender Management