

## The evidence at a glance on women's centres – why short prison sentences make no sense.

*If I had known about the women's centre before I got into trouble I never would have*  
**"Sally" Mother of Four.<sup>1</sup>**

1. Historically, outcomes for women sentenced to imprisonment have been poor. **48% of women are reconvicted within one year of leaving prison and this rises to 61% for sentences of less than 12 months.**
2. **The cost of keeping a woman in prison can reach an average annual cost of £42,765.** The costs of community options vary according to length and intensity but MOJ figures indicate that a typical Community Order costs £2,800. **The estimated projected cost of providing a woman with standalone holistic community based services through a Women's Community Service has been costed at £1,360 per annum.<sup>2</sup>**
3. The overwhelming majority of women will comply with a community order or conditions of licence. The NOMS Annual Report for 2013/14 **found that women were much more likely to successfully complete their community sentence or licence period on release than men - 95% of women compared with 76% of men.** It is of concern that since then the percentage of women successfully completing their order has fallen by around 15%. However it is still the case that most women complete their order.<sup>3</sup>
4. **A careful analysis by Hedderman and Jolliffe (2015) found that women released from prison are twice as likely to reoffend as a comparable cohort of women given community orders.** Twelve months after release those from prison were found to have committed significantly more and more costly offences and also to be more likely to be sent back to prison. The overall additional cost of prison in this sample was conservatively estimated to be £3.6 million.<sup>4</sup>
5. Women's centres can provide a centre of excellence for helping women with multiple and complex needs. Many of the women who can benefit also commit crime. In 2015, the Ministry of Justice Data Lab assessed the impact on re-offending of support provided to female offenders by Women's Centres throughout England. **The one year proven re-offending rate for 5973 offenders who received support provided by Women's Centres throughout England was 30%, compared with 35% for a matched control group of similar offenders from England.** This was based upon analysis of information that has been supplied by 39 Women's Centres throughout England to NOMS.<sup>5</sup>
6. A follow-up Justice Data Lab analysis of the Brighton Women's Centre looked at the re-offending behaviour of 44 women who were supported by Brighton Women's Centre's Inspire programme after receiving a community sentence. **The overall results show that those who received support had a lower frequency of re-offending than those who did not.<sup>6</sup>**
7. In 2010 Revolving Doors developed a 'Financial Analysis Model' which identified the public costs incurred when people move towards or become trapped in a 'revolving door' cycle of crime and mental health problems. Interviews with service users and staff were held at three women's centres: Anawim in Bingham, Women Outside Walls (Wow) in Newcastle and ISIS in Gloucester. Each project submitted a range of anonymous client data and analysis if this information **demonstrated that an investment of £18 million per year in women's centres could save almost £1 billion over five years<sup>7</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin L, Epstein R (2017) Short But Not Sweet: A study of the impact of short custodial sentences on mothers & their children <https://www.dora.dmu.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2086/14301/Final%20Research%20Report%20LB%20RE%202017%20.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice (2012) A distinct approach: a guide to working with women offenders London: MoJ

<sup>3</sup> National Offender Management Service Offender Equalities Annual Reports 2013/14 p.22, 2014/15 p.20 2015/16 p.35

<sup>4</sup> Hedderman, C. & Jolliffe, D. (2015) 'The impact of prison for women on the edge: paying the price for wrong decisions', Victims and Offenders: An international journal of evidence-based research, policy and practice DOI.

<sup>5</sup> MOJ (2015) Justice Data Lab Re-offending Analysis: Women's Centres throughout England

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/427388/womens-centres-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/427388/womens-centres-report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> MOJ (2017) Justice Data Lab analysis: Re-offending behaviour after participation in the Brighton Women's Centre Inspire programme

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/608283/brighton-womens-centre-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608283/brighton-womens-centre-report.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Revolving Doors Agency (2011) Counting the Cost: the financial impact of supporting women with multiple needs in the criminal justice system.

<http://www.revolvingdoors.org.uk/documents/counting-the-cost>