

PRISON
REFORM
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Transforming Lives - Scotland

reducing women's imprisonment



Soroptimist International (SI) is the only women's service organisation with general consultative status at the United Nations. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through their programmes and voluntary work. Members are women of all ages, cultures and ethnic groups, who join their local clubs to give service to women and girls. Each club identifies the needs of its community, then establishes specific projects to address those needs. Clubs are grouped into Regions within the UK. The UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) provides help and guidance on project work to Soroptimist clubs in the UK.

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The work of the Prison Reform Trust is aimed at creating a just, humane and effective penal system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing Parliament, government, and officials towards reform. The Prison Reform Trust's three year programme (2012-2015) to reduce women's imprisonment in the UK is supported by the Pilgrim Trust: www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/women

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FOREWORD

Soroptimist International is a women's voluntary organisation "Inspiring Action and Transforming Lives" around the world. Since the UK Programme Action Committee took the decision in December 2011 to mount a campaign in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust to reduce women's imprisonment, members from all of our 17 Regions across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have been working to increase awareness of how women are treated in the criminal justice system. We hope that the information gathered in this report will inspire the changes necessary to provide more community-based solutions to women's minor offending. This would reduce the damage and disruption to the lives of so many women and children. Preventing violence against women has been at the core of Soroptimist project work for many years, and having learnt that it is so often an underlying factor in women's offending, we welcomed this opportunity to provide a voice for women who, very often, are victims themselves.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this report and look forward to ensuring that it does help inspire action and transform the lives of women whose needs have been overlooked and unmet in the past.

Kay Richmond

Kay Richmond, Chairman
Soroptimist International UK Programme Action Committee

This report is a distillation of the wealth of information on the state of women's justice that Soroptimists have gathered since the launch of the Reducing Women's Imprisonment Action Pack in 2013. It presents a mixed picture, profiling some excellent local practice whilst highlighting a lack of consistency and a dearth of services in many parts of the UK that would enable women to address the causes of their offending and get out of trouble. It is invaluable in mapping some critical gaps in service provision for vulnerable women, and in identifying disconnects between policy and practice.

The recommendations that we make reflect the evidence gathered strategically by Soroptimists and cross-refer to other work to reduce women's imprisonment, including our *Brighter Futures* report. Trustees and staff are delighted that the Prison Reform Trust's partnership with Soroptimist UKPAC is proving to be such a productive one. Soroptimists not only have impressive local and regional reach through their many active clubs across the UK but they also have a reputation as effective lobbyists nationally and internationally on behalf of women. I am therefore confident that this report will be a spur to action that will see long overdue reforms to women's justice.



Juliet Lyon CBE, Director,
Prison Reform Trust

...[T]he government is committed to a vision of fewer women offending, and to more women being punished in the community where it is safe and appropriate to do so. I was therefore very interested to learn of the Soroptimists' and Prison Reform Trust campaign...

... if we are to rehabilitate female offenders, we must take proper account of the realities of their lives and ensure that resources are best targeted to help more women turn their lives around.

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Justice¹

As a result of their nature and levels of offending women are disproportionately affected by short term custodial sentences...The IOM Cymru Women Offender Pathfinder has been established...to ensure the development of a whole system approach to reducing female offending across Wales.

Wales Reducing Reoffending Strategy 2014-2016²

For me, it is not necessarily about creating new pilots or short-term initiatives; it is about ensuring that we recognise and respond to the particular needs of women as a normal part of everything we do within the justice system...

David Ford MLA, Minister of Justice in Northern Ireland³

I share the [Angiolini] Commission's determination to improve the outcomes for women offenders across the criminal justice system. It is, however, important to recognise that there are a number of areas where progress will require substantial input and support from services outwith the criminal justice system if we are to deliver the changes the Commission recommended.

Kenny MacAskill MSP, then Cabinet Secretary for Justice in Scotland⁴

Transforming Lives

reducing women's imprisonment

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

In December 2011 the Soroptimist International UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) took the decision to work in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust to reduce women's imprisonment across the UK. The decision reflected concern that women who have committed petty and non-violent offences are unnecessarily and disproportionately imprisoned when community solutions are often more effective and less damaging for children and families. The project also ties in with Soroptimists' flagship project Violence Against Women – Stop It Now,⁵ as abusive and coercive relationships are a significant driver to women's offending, and a majority of women in prison report having been abused at some point in their life.

In April 2013 the Soroptimists' *Action Pack on Reducing Women's Imprisonment* was launched at Westminster, followed by launches at the Pierhead in Cardiff and Holyrood in Edinburgh, with a call for renewed efforts in each UK nation to improve justice outcomes for women. As Jan Hemlin, then Chair of UKPAC, said:

The Soroptimists are uniquely placed to gather much-needed information and add a strong voice from communities across the UK to press for, and achieve long-awaited change. Our members are committed to ensuring more constructive responses across the country to women who come into contact with the criminal justice system, many of whom are involved in non-violent, petty offending and have been victims themselves.

This report, based on information gathered by Soroptimists across the UK in 2013-14 about what happens in their local areas to women who offend, or are at risk of offending, highlights progress and good practice whilst identifying constraints, gaps and shortcomings in local service provision. We are grateful to the hundreds of Soroptimists who have done so much to raise awareness of the over-imprisonment of women in the UK and the consequences for children and families, and contribute to progress towards a more effective and humane approach to women's justice.

The Soroptimists' 2013-14 inquiry

In 2013-14 Soroptimists belonging to 139 SI clubs across the United Kingdom asked police officers, probation officers, criminal justice social workers, magistrates, sheriffs, health professionals and managers of community services for women for the following information:

- What systems and safeguards are in place, at each stage of the criminal justice process, to ensure appropriate responses to women who have committed, or are suspected of committing, an offence?
- What women-specific services are available in the local community to support those processes, and to help women avoid getting into trouble in the first place?

The agreed objectives of local information gathering by clubs were to:

- find out if there is effective multi-agency work being done in their area to reduce the number of women who end up in prison for petty non-violent offences
- identify local examples of good practice that deliver positive outcomes for women and their children, families and communities
- establish whether there are robust alternatives to custody available to and used by local sentencers
- explain what may be inhibiting the development or spread of good practice.

Information was obtained through face-to-face or telephone interviews, at local meetings and regional conferences organised by SI clubs, and by means of postal questionnaires and Freedom of Information Act requests. In particular, Soroptimists sought to identify the extent to which training, protocols, procedures and services are tailored to meet the needs and characteristics of women offenders.

The information gathered by SI members is not exhaustive, but it gives a unique snapshot of variable practice and uneven progress across the country as well as the insights of frontline professionals into what improvements are needed. The project served to raise awareness amongst Soroptimists themselves of the difficulties faced by vulnerable women in their local community. SI members have in turn raised awareness amongst local politicians, other community groups and the wider public through letters, meetings and local media coverage.

This is in addition to voluntary work, donations and awareness-raising that many Soroptimists across the country are engaged in to support vulnerable women in their local communities who have become involved with the criminal justice system.

Achieving change

In addition to local awareness raising and information gathering, Soroptimists have played a key role in achieving, for the first time, a statutory foothold for women-specific provision in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. Letters from Soroptimists to their local MPs helped to secure support for a 'women's amendment' to the Crime and Courts Bill in England and Wales in 2012-13. This resulted eventually in a government amendment to the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 (Section 10) which commenced on 1 June 2014 and will help ensure women's needs are identified and addressed in the criminal justice system.

During the course of the Soroptimists' inquiry, in response to the questions frequently asked of

them, the Prison Reform Trust produced *Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment?* a briefing which has proved a valuable resource for work in England and Wales and is regularly updated.⁶ In Scotland, Soroptimists joined with the Prison Reform Trust, the Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending (SWGWO) and the eight Scottish Community Justice Authorities to publish and disseminate a leaflet entitled *Women in the Criminal Justice System in Scotland: the Facts*⁷ as a tool to raise awareness.

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) has special consultative status at the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) enabling it to submit information to any of ECOSEC's committees and commissions. Members met with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women during her mission to the UK, which included visits to a number of women's prisons. The Rapporteur issued a statement emphasising the need to "develop gender-specific sentencing alternatives and to recognise women's histories of victimisation when making decisions about incarceration."⁸

How the report is organised

This report is an excerpt from Transforming Lives: reducing women's imprisonment report. It provides an introduction to the UK wide research carried out by Soroptimist International while providing more in depth information on women's imprisonment in Scotland.

The facts and information in table 2: Scottish female prison population by home Community Justice Authority on page 13 has been updated since the original report to include 2015 and 2016 figures.

Information gathered, findings and recommendations are presented in distinct country reports for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and within each country report the material is organised thematically. The Annexes at the end provide further detail of activities undertaken and work done by individual SI Clubs and regions, from lobbying local MPs and councillors about funding for women's services and providing voluntary support to these services, to organising workshops and conferences and engaging with local media.

KEY FINDINGS

Whilst Soroptimists encountered differences in governance and approach to women in the criminal justice system between the four nations, a number of themes (many of them inter-linked) were common across the UK.

UK-wide themes

Leadership is needed to bridge the disconnect between policy and implementation

Despite commitments to reforming women's justice voiced by politicians of every stripe, a leadership deficit has meant UK-wide change has not been delivered. This is all the more surprising given the degree of political consensus that exists over the effectiveness of women-specific responses to offending and the case for reducing the women's prison population. Failure to capitalise on this consensus is indicative of the need for high-level political leadership across each of the UK nations.

Gender-specific approaches are the exception but should be the rule

Equality law requires specific treatment for groups with protected characteristics where this has been shown to be more effective in meeting their needs. Despite the evidence that women-specific responses to offending are cost-effective and reduce reoffending, enabling women to live healthier, more productive lives, most women in contact with criminal justice agencies across the UK are still subject to generic systems and practices which have evolved in response to men's offending. Soroptimists encountered instances, particularly in their dealings with the police, where equality law was routinely misinterpreted as requiring a gender neutral approach. If gender-specific approaches to women's offending are to be mainstreamed, all agencies and frontline staff working with women in trouble must understand and accept the basic principle that equal treatment does not mean the same treatment for everyone. Public sector duties and anti-discrimination law should be clarified and enforced.

Uncertain funding of services working with women in trouble is counter-productive

Despite operating across jurisdictions characterised by their differences rather than similarities, the community services identified in the course of Soroptimists' inquiries shared an uncertain funding future and were at the mercy of budget cuts and short-term funding decisions. In each of the nations, services were expected to do more with less. In some parts of the country, services women could ill afford to lose were at risk of closing. In others, last-minute funding extensions had been granted, but in the long-term, the expectation was that services would demonstrate their worth locally and be commissioned and funded from mainstream grants and budgets. Historically, services working with vulnerable women and women in trouble have been over-looked because of the minority status of women in the criminal justice system. It is unlikely that this will change without a coherent funding strategy.

Attitudes to women in trouble are perceived as barriers to progress

Soroptimists around the UK found evidence that political, media and some public attitudes towards women in trouble are barriers to reform. In England contributors noted that an emphasis on "being tough on crime", dispensing harsh justice and punitive sentencing reflected a lack of understanding of women's lives and had a distorting effect on criminal justice responses to women's offending. In Wales, practitioners thought women offenders were an

unpopular group and that a general unwillingness to look at the causes of, and solutions to, women's offending requires a cultural shift across criminal justice agencies and the wider public. Practitioners in Scotland also identified public perceptions of women offenders as one of the key challenges facing women's justice, with the need to challenge employers' attitudes towards women offenders cited. Despite these concerns, evidence from public opinion polling has found that attitudes towards women who offend, and support for effective responses, are more nuanced, with strong public support for community solutions to the drivers to women's offending.⁹ That this dichotomy exists suggests the need for strong leadership across governments and local agencies in making the case for women in trouble.

There are clear opportunities to reduce the women's prison population

Soroptimists identified common drivers to custody that if tackled, could deliver reductions in the number of women imprisoned in the UK. Whilst limited availability of women-specific community orders was cited as a reason sentencers felt they had no option but to impose custodial sentences, poor-information sharing about services available locally hampered take-up of women-specific orders where they did exist. Some services had sought to address this by involving local sentencers in management boards but a more systematic approach is needed if women's community services are to fulfil their potential as alternatives to custody. Simple practical measures, such as a local directory of services to which sentencers can refer women, would go a long way to addressing the information-deficit.

Whilst the small number of women (relative to men) in contact with criminal justice agencies is often cited as a barrier to reform, it also presents opportunities as small-scale but targeted action could lead to significant change. In each of the nations, the use of custodial remand in lieu of community alternatives was a significant driver to women's imprisonment, despite evidence that many remanded women are given community orders on conviction. Extension of the 'no real prospect' device introduced in England and Wales to Northern Ireland and Scotland would begin to address overuse of remand whilst strategic expansion of approved premises provision in England would address sentencers' concerns about women in insecure or unsafe accommodation. Likewise, restricting use of custody for non-violent crimes would go some way to addressing the disproportionate number of women imprisoned in the UK for such offences.

Soroptimists across the UK were particularly concerned by the large number of women in prison who were mothers, and found little evidence that criminal justice agencies made adjustments to accommodate women with dependents (e.g. childcare provision or interventions scheduled around nursery or school hours). Imprisoning mothers is counter-productive and costly to the state, both in the short and long-term, and could often be avoided if courts took proper account of primary caring responsibilities in sentencing decisions, and women were supported to stay with their children. Removing the availability of custody for breaching community orders where this is the result of women's child-caring responsibilities would be a step in the right direction.

Sharing learning across jurisdictions is important

As this report demonstrates, women in contact with criminal justice agencies across the UK have much in common, and it stands to reason that, despite different approaches and legal systems, lessons which are drawn from what works in one corner of the UK will apply equally across the rest of the country. In the course of their inquiries, Soroptimists uncovered pockets of interesting practice, innovative approaches to funding and examples of integration which need to be applied more widely. Sharing learning across jurisdictions would not only ensure the spread of effective practice, but also protect against the temptation to reinvent the wheel when working with women in trouble in different parts of the country. As this report finds, what works with women in the criminal justice system is in evidence across the UK. The challenge is now to take that learning and turn it into standard practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations have been developed by the Prison Reform Trust to reflect the evidence gathered by Soroptimists. They draw on Soroptimists' findings of both good practice and uneven spread of women-centred policy, practice and legislation already in operation in parts of the country and are designed to improve consistency across the UK. If implemented, these recommendations would reform women's justice and deliver welcome reductions in the imprisonment of women in the UK.

ENGLAND

- The Minister for Female Offenders (Ministry of Justice) and the Minister for Women and Equalities (Government Equalities Office) should promote a gender-informed approach to women in the criminal justice system and lead a cross-government strategy for reform of women's justice.
- Guidance should be developed by lead agencies, including the police, health and local authorities, to ensure policy and practice is compliant with equalities legislation. All mandatory staff training should include statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Criminal justice inspectorates and regulators should monitor and report on the provision of local women-specific measures, especially in light of Section 10 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 2014. The Joint inspectorate review *Equal but different?* is an excellent example.
- A national network of women-specific community services, including multi-agency one-stop shops and outreach services, should be funded by government, drawing on cross-departmental budgets on three to five year funding cycles and building in savings from the re-rolling or closure of women's prisons.
- Measures of effectiveness against which these services are evaluated should capture distance travelled by women accessing them, as well as binary reoffending rates, to ensure wider outcomes and cost benefits can be evidenced.

- Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), in consultation with the police, council and service providers, should develop directories of local services for women offenders. Information on services available locally should be shared with the National Probation Service to inform pre-sentence reports and sentence recommendations.
- Each Bench should appoint a women's champion responsible for ensuring that all magistrates are aware of local programmes and interventions for women offenders.
- Women's centres should take all possible steps to ensure regular contact and information exchange with local courts, and consider inviting members of the local judiciary to join their governance structures.
- All local courts but especially those with access to a women's centre should consider developing a problem-solving pilot for women's justice.
- All agencies should undertake gender monitoring, analysis and evaluation as part of routine data collection. This should be used to develop a detailed and robust analysis of the needs of women offenders and those at risk of offending in their area, and to evidence the case for co-ordinated multi-agency responses to women's offending, including women-specific services and community disposals in their area.
- Learning from successful multi-agency approaches in some areas should inform the national roll-out of coordinated responses to women in the criminal justice system.
- Health and Wellbeing Boards, Reducing Reoffending Boards, Local Criminal Justice Boards and other multi-agency partnerships, should appoint a women's champion with responsibility for developing effective partnership-working locally.
- The College of Policing should develop national guidance identifying good practice when working with women offenders. This should include appointment of a designated women's lead in each force, adopting a women-specific approach to risk assessment, staff training, diversionary measures and referral to local support services.
- Police training, protocols and diversionary measures concerning or aimed at vulnerable people more generally should take explicit account of women's specific needs and characteristics. Learning from protocols on the treatment of women victims of crime should be applied to the treatment of women offenders to tackle the artificial distinction often made between these groups, and improve outcomes for women.
- The Ministry of Justice should undertake an annual audit and evaluation of probation services provided in accordance with Section 10 of the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 to meet the particular needs of female offenders.

- The development of restorative justice options for women offenders should be explored, with a view to expanding its use for women at all stages of the criminal justice system. The Restorative Justice Council should be asked to put costed proposals to the Advisory Board on Female Offenders.
- A national review of Approved Premises for women should be undertaken urgently, with ring-fenced funding made available to plug gaps identified.
- Local authorities and housing associations should give housing priority to women with vulnerabilities that put them at risk of offending – including women affected by abusive relationships, drug or alcohol problems, or poor mental health.
- Local strategies to reduce women’s offending and imprisonment should take account of women’s housing needs, including the needs of those with dependent children and the consequences for children of lack of stable, secure homes, drawing on data identified in local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.
- The time limit for eligibility for housing benefit for sentenced prisoners should be extended from 13 weeks to six months to prevent short-sentenced women from losing their home.
- The government should develop a strategy to increase employment opportunities and programmes for women with a criminal record. This should include employer incentives.
- A model for providing services to women in rural areas should be developed, piloted and evaluated by National Offender Management Service (NOMS), in collaboration with existing service providers, drawing on the success of the hub approach and use of mobile facilities attached to regional women’s centres. Pooled budgets provide an opportunity to ensure cross-departmental buy-in, and long-term sustainability.
- Women attending court, and those subject to court orders in the community, should have access to childcare facilities if needed.
- Women should not be breached for failing to attend probation appointments where this is a direct result of their caring responsibilities.
- Much more regard should be had to the needs of children whose mothers are caught up in the criminal justice system and steps taken by all relevant agencies to mitigate the impact.

WALES

- A Welsh government Minister should be designated to lead development of the All-Wales Women's Pathfinder project, including ensuring it is adequately resourced, the pan-Wales roll-out happens as planned and its objective of improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system is met.
- The College of Policing should develop national guidance identifying good practice when working with women offenders. This should include appointment of a designated women's lead in each force, adopting a women-specific approach to risk assessment, staff training, diversionary measures and referral to local support services. Best practice models identified by the Women's Pathfinder should be applied pan-Wales as soon as possible.
- Police training, protocols and diversionary measures concerning or aimed at vulnerable people more generally should take explicit account of women's specific needs and characteristics. Lessons learned from protocols on the treatment of women victims of crime should be applied to the treatment of women offenders to tackle the artificial distinction often made between these groups, and improve outcomes for women.
- A national network of women-specific community services, including multi-agency one-stop shops and outreach services, should be funded by government, drawing on cross-departmental budgets on three to five year funding cycles.
- Measures of their effectiveness in working with women offenders and evaluation models should be built into funding agreements, taking account of the methodological difficulties inherent in building an evidence base with small numbers of women.
- Priority should be given to setting up adequate Approved Premises for women in Wales.
- Generic health, housing and other support services should monitor and evaluate take-up and impact by gender.
- Health services, including mental health and substance misuse, must recognise and address women's distinct needs and characteristics.
- The Welsh government should undertake an audit of Local Health Board provision delivered as part of criminal justice liaison services to ensure Boards are providing the minimum level of services required by guidance and the distinct needs of women are identified and met.
- Health services aligned to the Offender Mental Health Care Pathway should recognise women's journey through the criminal justice system as it differs to men's and provide access points reflecting this distinction.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) should adopt a clear force-wide strategy and protocols for working with women, and provide mandatory training for police officers and staff on women-specific approaches.
- PSNI should develop a directory of services to which women offenders can be referred.
- Every effort should be made to maintain and extend services based on the Inspire model, building on the project's success to date and developing valuable evidence of the effectiveness of provision in rural areas. A cost-benefit study by Department of Justice for Northern Ireland (DOJNI) would likely support expansion of this service.
- Funding to replace Ash House should be allocated as a matter of urgency and a date set for its closure and replacement with a small separate women's facility.
- A legislative vehicle to introduce a 'no real prospect' test should be sought at the earliest opportunity to tackle the overuse of remand for women.
- Drawing on the success of youth conferencing for young offenders in Northern Ireland, a restorative justice order should be developed for use by the courts as an alternative to custody for women.

SCOTLAND

- Police Scotland should develop force-wide training for all staff, particularly custody suite and frontline officers, which promotes understanding of the need for and legitimacy of a gender-informed approach to working with women offenders. Training should be underpinned by protocols and guidance, making clear the links between experience of domestic abuse and women's offending, and the likelihood that for some victims of domestic abuse, their first contact with the police may be as a suspect/offender.
- Women-specific diversionary approaches, working in conjunction with existing community provision including Community Justice Centres, should be introduced Scotland-wide.
- Following its acceptance of the Angiolini Commission's recommendation,¹⁰ the Scottish government should legislate to enable police to divert women offenders from prosecution and into rehabilitative services as part of a conditional caution. This should be done at the earliest opportunity and before the next election.

- The Scottish government should scale back its proposal to build a new national women's prison at HMP Inverclyde. Much of the cost of building a new prison would be better spent on embedding and expanding community alternatives to custody, and ensuring imprisonment is used as a last resort. If sufficient focus was given to community alternatives a smaller facility at HMP Inverclyde would be all that is required.
- Community Justice Authorities, in conjunction with Criminal Justice Social Work Services and women-specific service providers, should develop local resources for use by sheriffs and other court users, detailing the availability of local services and alternative sanctions for women offenders.
- The Scottish government should legislate to restrict the use of remand where there is no real prospect of the offender/defendant receiving a custodial sentence on conviction.
- The Judicial Institute for Scotland should review its training for JPs and sheriffs on women in the criminal justice system in accordance with the Angiolini Commission's recommendation.
- There should be a presumption against remanding into custody or imprisoning women with dependent children and against use of short sentences, which can lead to loss of housing and employment, in favour of community alternatives where appropriate.
- Local authorities should ensure their Criminal Justice Social Work Service provides women-specific services. In rural communities, virtual hubs or mobile outreach services should be developed.
- Following the extension of funding for the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund (RRCF) to 2017, the government should undertake an audit of funding for other services for women offenders with a view to providing ring-fenced funding, on a three-year basis, to ensure their sustainability beyond March 2015.
- Where a service model has a robust evidence base for reducing women's reoffending and achieving positive outcomes for women and their families, this success should not be jeopardised by 'diluting the model'.

COUNTRY REPORT - SCOTLAND

When I got told about 218 I just thought it was the same as [another criminal justice voluntary sector service]. This is nothing like that. It's brilliant in here - you do one-to-one meetings and you learn and learn and learn...

Service user, 218 Service Glasgow¹¹

FACTS

Use and effectiveness of prison and community sentencing

Numbers in prison - in 2014/15, the average daily women's prison population was 425 – half were held in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale with the others split between HMP Edinburgh, HMP Grampian and HMP Greenock. Women account for 5.4% of the total prison population in Scotland.¹²

Community orders – In 2013/14, 3013 Community sentences were given to females, 16.5% of the total number imposed. A further 9282 females were given a monetary penalty.¹³

Types of offence – In 2013/14, the highest percentage of women (30%) were sent to prison for committing crimes of violence, followed by 17% having committed crimes of dishonesty (shoplifting, fraud, etc).

Remand - At the end of December 2015, 22% (82 women) of the female prison population were held on remand, awaiting trial or sentence.¹⁴

Short sentences - Three-quarters (76%) of women sentenced to imprisonment receive sentences of six months or less.¹⁵

Table 2: Scottish female prison population by home Community Justice Authority

Community Justice Authority	Women and girls in prison		
	7 June 2013 ¹⁶	1 May 2014 ¹⁷	1 Feb 2016*
Tayside	36	43	44
South West Scotland	56	63	51
Fife & Forth Valley	49	47	43
Glasgow	77	92	71
Northern	54	55	47
Lothian and Borders	52	38	44
Lanarkshire	55	45	32
North Strathclyde	40	40	23
Unknown CJA	22	18	64**
Total	441	441	419

*Source: SPS monthly stats return to CJAs

** includes No Fixed Abode (48 women) & 8 women with addresses out with Scotland

About women in prison¹⁸

Children - Two-thirds of women in prison in Scotland have children under the age of 18. Since 2008, 38 babies have been born to mothers in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale - 22 of these babies were removed from their mother at birth by the authorities.

Domestic violence - More than half of women (56%) report having witnessed violence between their parents/carer when they were children.

Drug and alcohol addictions - Half of women surveyed in prison said they had been drunk at the time of their offence, a quarter (25%) reported that their drinking affected their ability to hold down a job, and 28% were worried that alcohol would be a problem for them on release. Over half of women surveyed (55%) said they had been under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence, 27% reported committing their offence to get money for drugs and a third (34%) said they were receiving treatment for drug use prior to their imprisonment.

Mental health – 80% of women in prison in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale have a history of mental health problems.¹⁹

Housing - Women are more likely than men to lose their housing while in custody, and then be homeless on release.²⁰ More than half (57%) of women surveyed were council tenants or living in housing association accommodation and many lost their tenancy as a result of their imprisonment. Nearly half (45%) did not know where they would be living on release.

Employment - Just 39% of women in prison who had accessed services to help them prepare for release had sought advice on employment, and 22% on training.

THE SOROPTIMISTS' INQUIRY IN SCOTLAND

Over 15 Soroptimist clubs in Scotland took part in the inquiry, collecting information through:

- visits to Cornton Vale and Edinburgh prisons
- visits to women's centres including Tomorrow's Women Glasgow
- speakers at club meetings and region meetings
- an action research event organised by SI Kirkcaldy and SI Dunfermline, attended by a number of Soroptimist clubs and expert speakers
- an open meeting organised by SI Greenock, with a presentation by Professor Michele Burman, Department of Criminology Glasgow University
- participating SI members at the launch of the Shine Mentoring Scheme and the Scottish Breaking the Cycle of Re-offending conference
- correspondence between SI members and various agencies
- membership of the Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending
- a national Scottish Soroptimists conference held on 26 April 2014 with speakers including Kate Donegan of the Scottish Prison Service, Maura Daly of Circle Scotland's FABI project, Pete White of Positive Prison? Positive Futures, and Sharon Stirrat of the Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Sacro) who spoke about the Shine scheme.

POLICY CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

Governance and key institutions and services

- Criminal justice in Scotland was devolved in 1998 and is the responsibility of the Scottish government - Michael Matheson MSP is Cabinet Secretary for Justice.
- There is a single police force, Police Scotland, established in April 2013.
- Probation services are known as criminal justice social work services and are delivered by teams working within Scotland's 32 local authorities.
- Area planning and commissioning of criminal justice services is the responsibility of eight regional Community Justice Authorities (CJAs). There are plans to restructure community justice, under which CJAs will be phased out by 2016-17.
- There is one national women's prison in Scotland, HMP & YOI Cornton Vale in Stirling. Women are also held in small units within male prisons in HMP Edinburgh (114 women) and HMP Greenock (50) in the West of Scotland and within Community Integration Units at HMP Grampian (50) in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire and HMP Inverness.
- Community services for women offenders are delivered by a range of local providers.
- The Scottish Prison Health Service became part of NHS Scotland in 2012.

Commission on Women Offenders and Scottish government response

In June 2012 the Commission on Women Offenders, chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini, set out a radical blueprint for reform of the Scottish women's justice system,²¹ picking up many of the themes raised in a series of earlier critical examinations of women's justice in Scotland since devolution.²² The Commission's recommendations were accepted in large part by the Scottish government, which committed itself to a programme of reform involving:

- **Ensuring community based sentences are effective, supporting women's community services**

The Angiolini Commission endorsed a holistic approach to working with women offenders across services by delivering interventions that address their needs and improve the quality of their lives. It recommended the establishment of community justice centres staffed by criminal justice social workers, nurse and addictions workers to support behavioural change. The Commission praised the work of the 218 Centre in Glasgow, the Willow project in Edinburgh, and the practice of Dundee Criminal Justice Social Work (CJSW) women-specific team.

In response, the Scottish government allocated just over £3m to deliver women-centred provision. At the same time the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund (RRCF), worth £18m from 2012-17, with £13.5m from the Scottish government, £500,000 from the Scottish Prison Service and £4m from the Robertson Trust,²³ saw the development of Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) in the justice field. PSPs pull together a range of third sector and statutory services.

*(PSPs) allow commissioning-free space to test different approaches, underpinned by a commitment from statutory partners to support future commissioned services based on evidence generated.*²⁴

Planning and Development Officer, Glasgow Community Justice Authority

The funding has supported:

- expansion of the Willow Project in Edinburgh
- creation of a new Women's Justice Centre, Tomorrow's Women Glasgow - modelled on Tomorrow's Women Wirral
- continued funding for the 218 Centre in Glasgow
- a new Women's Connections Centre for Aberdeen services for women offenders.
- expansion of Dundee women offenders team to enhance early intervention work and develop guidance on mental health, housing, employment and finance
- new projects in North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Fife & Forth Valley, Angus, Renfrewshire and Ayrshire/South West Scotland in 2013-14 and 2014-15²⁵
- development of a virtual hub in Aberdeenshire and a group work programme in Highland.²⁶

- **The establishment of mentoring services nationwide**

The Angiolini report recommended that intensive mentoring to support women's compliance with court orders should complement the work delivered by community justice centres. It provides practical support and guidance, progressing to social support via befriending to build women's self confidence, self-esteem and capacity for a productive life.

The Shine mentoring service was launched in September 2013, using £2.7m from the RRCF.²⁷ The service was designed, and is co-delivered across Scotland, by a Public Social Partnership (PSP) led by Sacro, the Scottish Prison Service, the Association of Directors of Social Work, the eight Community Justice Authorities and a number of other third sector agencies. Initially funded for a two-year period, in 2014 funding was extended to 2017. It is expected to serve 700 women per year.

In addition, the RRCF funds two other mentoring services that will include work with women offenders. Tayside Council on Alcohol has been supported to expand its award-winning mentoring work with women and men in Dundee, Perth and Kinross and Angus. A specialised project in Glasgow run by Includem will support young women offenders to access their intensive outreach and mentoring programme for those who are hard to engage.²⁸

- **Replacing HMP & YOI Cornton Vale with a national prison for women, and other changes to the prison estate**

The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) is implementing six recommendations in the Angiolini report, aimed at improving responses to the complexities of the female prison population, and in particular those of young women, women with mental health problems, and mothers and their babies; and to accommodate women as close to home as possible. HMP Inverclyde, a new, custom-built national women's prison with places for up to 350 women, including a community integration unit, is planned to open in 2017. The new prison at HMP Grampian which opened

in 2013 has a unit for female offenders including a Community Integration Unit with capacity for 50 women. The intention is that all women and female young offenders remanded or imprisoned from the Northern CJA area will be located in HMP Grampian. A new custom built unit for approximately 100 women and female young offenders is also being constructed at HMP Edinburgh, and will be open in 2017. This will replace the existing accommodation used at HMP Edinburgh to hold women primarily from the east coast of Scotland.

The Scottish government accepted the report's recommendation that most women prisoners on remand or serving short-term sentences should be held in local prisons to improve liaison with local communities and reintegration post-sentence, noting that this reflected the SPS's policy to develop a community-facing regime that gives communities opportunities to engage with offenders before their release.

- **Restructuring community justice**

Scotland has eight Community Justice Authorities (CJAs), devolved public bodies responsible for preparing an area plan for reducing reoffending, allocating funds to local authorities, monitoring performance and promoting good practice.²⁹ Following a consultation, the government has proposed a new model of community justice. The main features include local strategic planning and service delivery by Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), with duties on partner bodies such as local authorities, NHS boards and Police Scotland, to engage with this work. A national body, Community Justice Improvement Scotland will provide independent advice to Scottish Ministers. Subject to further consultation, implementation is expected in 2016-17.³⁰

- **Other reforms**

The Scottish government is implementing reforms in a number of other areas in response to the Commission's report, including piloting new approaches to mental health services for women in the criminal justice system; encouraging the introduction of inter-agency protocols on prison discharge and homelessness; and piloting a scheme to allow women to apply for benefits before release from prison. It has also committed to trialling a problem-solving summary criminal court.³¹

KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key themes emerging from the Soroptimists' inquiry included:

- 1 lack of women-specific approaches by police and conflation of gender equality with gender neutrality
- 2 sentencing policy and practice are not conducive to reducing women's imprisonment
- 3 over-use of remand leads to unnecessary imprisonment of women
- 4 detrimental impact of imprisonment on women and families
- 5 women-specific community services are limited in many areas but there are examples of good practice
- 6 support for the community justice centre approach is tempered by concerns about future funding and sustainability of services.

1) Lack of women-specific approaches by police and conflation of gender equality with gender neutrality

Although there is a single national police force, Police Scotland, Soroptimists found a variety of approaches in local practice.

Police in Glasgow reported that police action in response to a woman suspect or offender will be influenced not only by any obvious vulnerabilities such as substance misuse or an incident of domestic violence, but also whether the woman is known to the police officer, by the experience of the police officer and the nature and seriousness of the suspected offence.

Responses from other local police services indicated the lack of a women-specific approach, save for compliance with basic requirements in legislation or guidance.

Glasgow women offenders diversion pilot

A multi-agency partnership involving Police Scotland, Glasgow Criminal Justice Social Work, Community Safety Glasgow and the Crown Office/Procurator Fiscal Service, the Glasgow women offenders pilot was devised to increase the use of diversion for women who are arrested and detained by the police. Following a fast-track screening and planning support service, women who are suitable for diversion are identified in the police report which goes to the Procurator Fiscal. These women receive proactive tailored support to help them to comply with the terms of the pilot. Its aims include increasing the number of women diverted from prosecution; increasing engagement with mainstream services; and reducing reoffending.

Between December 2012-December 2013, 630 cases were referred to the Procurator Fiscal, 93 of whom (79 women) were diverted. During this period, 30 women successfully completed support programmes and avoided prosecution, whilst a further 15 women, who would not ordinarily have been diverted from prosecution, have received support. The response from service users has been positive, whilst outcomes across areas of social support have included reduced addictions, improved housing and reduced offending.

The Scottish government funded the first year of the pilot, with additional funding secured until March 2015. The sustainability of the pilot is under review, and it is hoped that a more long-term approach to funding will be approved. The pilot will be evaluated.

Some responses revealed confusion between gender equality and gender neutrality. Police in Crieff advised that because of the Equality Act all detainees are treated the same regardless of gender, unless a woman prisoner needs searching, in which case a female officer is required by law. Training for frontline staff covers drug, alcohol and mental health issues, but there is no training or designated local police lead on women.

A Chief Inspector of the Custody Division (Tayside HQ in Dundee) described the police approach to women offenders, indicating that certain requirements will be met, including segregation of male and female wash facilities, and that training equips police officers to deal with individuals who have differing, multiple and complex needs although it is not women-

specific. There is a named officer who is the designated lead on women for the police force, but no diversion scheme for women suspects and limited awareness of health, social care and women-only services in the local community.

This response is similar to that provided by police in Fife who reported that anyone suspected of committing a criminal offence is treated in the same way irrespective of gender, and that all police divisions in Scotland conform to the same standards. These include the Human Rights Act and the Code of Ethics for Police Scotland.³² The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) Joint Protocol on Domestic Abuse³³ makes no reference to women as detainees or the connection between domestic abuse and women's offending. Medical guidance is taken into account when determining whether a prisoner should remain in custody. For example, police in Fife would seek to avoid keeping a pregnant woman in custody and would only do so in consultation with the police doctor.

Dunfermline Police Station is piloting a generic service with Fife Alcohol Advisory Service aimed at detainees for whom alcohol is identified as a factor in their offending, who will receive advice and information from a counsellor. This should benefit women.

Police liaison and diversion scheme – NHS Lothian

A generic liaison and diversion scheme in Lothian and Borders has benefits for women. NHS Lothian (Custody Healthcare) reported that currently people taken into custody in Lothian and Borders are assessed by nurses. The specialist nurses assess mental health as well as drug and alcohol issues. They can make assessments about when people are able to be questioned, or leave custody, and can prescribe and treat people for pre-existing medical conditions. They can also do medical forensic examinations such as for sexual assault.

The service has been available in Lothian for eight years and is now nurse-led. Based in St Leonard's Police Station, the busiest in Scotland, the team go out to other stations as required. In the past the police were responsible for healthcare of anyone in custody, but this has now passed to individual health authorities. In the last year the service saw 8,000 people, more than 1,000 of whom were women. NHS Lothian reported that the service is running very well, ensuring that offenders are treated for any health issues at the earliest possible opportunity. It also means that the police do not use custody suites as places of safety as used to be the case.

The Lothian model has been hailed a success and the government is rolling it out throughout Scotland. Lothian has won a contract to form a regional service based on the success experienced in Lothian and Borders and the service is now up and running in Fife and Forth Valley, covering police stations and public protection units in Edinburgh, Livingston, Dalkeith, Hawick, Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline, Falkirk and Stirling with a team of 24 dedicated nurses and 18 part-time doctors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Police Scotland should develop force-wide training for all staff, particularly custody suite and frontline officers, which promotes understanding of the need for and legitimacy of a gender-informed approach to working with women offenders. Training should be underpinned by protocols and guidance, making clear the links between experience of domestic abuse and women's offending, and the likelihood that for some victims of domestic abuse, their first contact with the police may be as a suspect/offender.
- Women-specific diversionary approaches, working in conjunction with existing community provision including Community Justice Centres, should be introduced Scotland-wide.
- Following its acceptance of the Angiolini Commission's recommendation,³⁴ the Scottish government should legislate to enable police to divert women offenders from prosecution and into rehabilitative services as part of a conditional caution. This should be done at the earliest opportunity and before the next election.

2) Sentencing policy and practice are not conducive to reducing women's imprisonment

Some research suggests that sentencing is the fundamental cause of the increasing number of women held in prison, with a trend towards longer sentences.³⁵ Sentencing practices are regarded as inconsistent and many feel that women convicted of non-violent, petty offences should not be given custodial sentences.³⁶ Some consider that equality issues are difficult to address within the current sentencing guidelines, and are concerned that family responsibilities are not taken into account when women are arrested or sentenced.

Where women offend it usually turns out that at some stage they have suffered some type of addiction or abuse. We have failed to grasp that the problems of alcohol and drug dependency are widespread and the effects are wide reaching and expensive, with serious impacts on our society.

Sheriff, Scotland South

One local sheriff commented however that custody is only used when courts have no other option. Discussing cases of benefit fraud, this sheriff gave an example:

Particular care must be taken where women have been caught in the benefits trap. An example is a 30 year old mother with two children, who has been in a violent relationship, just getting by and wants part-time employment which has to be weighed against childcare costs. She gets a part-time job, does not tell the benefits office in case the job does not work out as benefit is usually stopped immediately. The situation continues and eventually she gets caught. Care has to be taken in assessing the amount of benefit actually obtained by fraud. Often in such cases the offender would have been eligible for benefits which she could have claimed but did not as she was waiting to see if the job worked out. In such a

case the offender should only properly be sentenced for the net amount of benefit fraudulently obtained. Usually in such cases sentence is deferred and the benefits agencies deduct the overpayment or she pays it back over a period. If she is of good behaviour during this process the result is often that she will be admonished.

Are women given prison sentences as a gateway to access services?

Fife Council Women Offenders' team had concerns that sentencers might be attracted to using custodial sentences as a way of helping vulnerable women access support:

It was cautiously suggested by practitioners in Fife that sometimes sentencers think prison can be a positive experience for women with chaotic lifestyles – can help them get sorted out a bit.

SI Dunfermline/ SI Kirkcaldy

This was reflected in comments from practitioners in Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy³⁷ and from the Project Executive of the Scottish Prison Service's Women's Offenders Project.³⁸

Concerns were raised by some that building a state-of-the-art new prison at Inverclyde, as well as the heavy investment in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale and new CIUs, will increase prison capacity for women when research shows that sending women offenders to prison is seldom proportionate or effective (see Rule 58 of the UN Bangkok Rules which calls for the use of diversionary measures and pre-trial and sentencing alternatives where appropriate).³⁹ There is a risk that sentencers view the prison as a gateway to accessing the specialist support that many women in the criminal justice system need. Coupled with the funding insecurity for many community projects and services, this could lead to an increase in the women's prison population with all the attendant personal, family and social costs.

Action to date emphasises the centring/prioritising of the prison, making it more attractive to sentencers. Without specific guidance/instruction, will sentencing practice change?

Michele Burman, Professor of Criminology at the University of Glasgow

A practitioner in the Highlands, meanwhile, noted that whilst it would offer a centre-of-excellence for women with complex needs, HMP Inverclyde would still lead to women being placed far from home, limiting their capacity to maintain contact with family (particularly children) and to build good relationships with the local services that would be essential to successful resettlement. It would also hinder relationship-building between women and criminal justice practitioners from their home authority who would struggle to visit them due to time and resource limitations.⁴⁰

In response to a question noting the significant investment in developing parts of HMP & YOI Cornton Vale since 2012, the Chief Executive of the SPS commented:

Our current position is that we will close Cornton Vale as we commission the facilities at Inverclyde and Edinburgh. However...a lot of water must flow under the bridge between now and then, and we will keep that plan under review as the months and years roll by.

Failure to use community alternatives

It was agreed by many that sentencers must make themselves aware of the alternatives to prison and utilise them in order to reduce the number of women in prison.⁴¹ Noting that the majority of women in prison are there for non-violent (often theft-related) offences, one local sheriff commented:

As with all offenders, the courts try to deal with first-time shoplifters by way of non-custodial disposals but if the offender will not engage eventually the stage is reached where the public interest requires that such offenders be imprisoned, not least because retailers cannot operate within a fixed cost base if this shoplifting goes unchecked and this activity is allowed to flourish.

Dundee Women Offenders Team – gaining the confidence of sentencers

A local sheriff stated that sheriffs “regard the mentoring scheme as having achieved some stunning results with a number of hard core, apparently immutable, drug-abusing women in their late 20s and early 30s, for whom we otherwise despaired...the team should know how highly we regard this service and how important it has become as having a real impact on re-offending and on changing lives.”

The Women’s Offending Team believes that the sheriffs’ confidence has contributed towards the marked reductions in custody. Case reviews in the Sheriffs Court also appear to have contributed towards improved compliance.

Community agencies, including social work and health, appear to be increasingly working in partnership, and can demonstrate some good practice, but their effectiveness is limited when sentencers do not use, or are unaware of, alternatives to imprisonment.

Restorative Justice Women’s Programme, Lanarkshire

The Restorative Justice Women’s Programme in Lanarkshire, delivered over a 10-week period, was designed with the aim of offering the courts a credible sentencing option that addresses the needs of women offenders within the community holistically.

Sessions are delivered by partners such as NHS Lanarkshire, which focuses on physical and sexual health, and North Lanarkshire Money Advice Service to address financial issues, debt awareness and budgeting.

Comments from service users include:

“[it has] changed my outlook’

“I think more about how my offending has affected my family life and health”

“the group has helped my confidence.”

Lanarkshire CJA reported that the use of community payback orders is increasing as confidence in this relatively new sanction (2011) grows. This may help account for the recent reduction in the number of women in prison from Lanarkshire (see table 2).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Scottish government should scale back its proposal to build a new national women's prison at HMP Inverclyde. Much of the cost of building a new prison would be better spent on embedding and expanding community alternatives to custody, and ensuring imprisonment is used as a last resort. If sufficient focus was given to community alternatives, a smaller facility at HMP Inverclyde would be all that is required.
- Community Justice Authorities, in conjunction with Criminal Justice Social Work Services and women-specific service providers, should develop local resources for use by sheriffs and other court users, detailing the availability of local services and alternative sanctions for women offenders.

3) Over-use of remand leads to the unnecessary imprisonment of women

Concerns were raised by many about the high proportion of women remanded in custody who do not go on to serve a custodial sentence (70%). Responding to the Scottish Parliament Justice Committee, the then Cabinet Secretary for Justice said:

Some of the planned services that have come out of the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund have specific plans to enhance provision of bail supervision...In addition, funding is provided to local authorities via the CJA grant allocation for the provision of both bail supervision and information services...

He went on to say:

We are looking to work with the judiciary to ensure that it realises that remanding people is not the best or kindest thing to do...we need to make it clear that other facilities will be available and that judges do not have to resort to remand and all the medication, addiction, housing and other issues that follow and the difficulties that the Prison Service has to cope with. In short, we are taking a multi-agency approach, working with the judiciary and ensuring that support facilities are available in the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Scottish government should legislate to restrict the use of remand where there is no real prospect of the offender/defendant receiving a custodial sentence on conviction.
- The Judicial Institute for Scotland should review its training for JPs and sheriffs on women in the criminal justice system in accordance with the Angiolini Commission's recommendation.

4) The detrimental impact of imprisonment on women and families

Some observed that to date, most research has been carried out on men in prison, making it difficult to achieve equality for women in the system. Current systems in place do not meet the needs of women offenders, who are dealing with different types of trauma, including abuse and bereavement and/or mental health problems, the effects of domestic violence, childcare and family responsibilities.

Separation from children

The harm that imprisonment causes to prisoners' children has been a major concern for Soroptimists. Separation from a parent, particularly a mother, who is held a long way from home, can be likened to the trauma of bereavement, with children of offenders being more likely to go on to commit crimes themselves. There is also a lack of financial and practical support for family members looking after children with a parent in prison, little understanding of the impact of feelings of shame, and the possibility of bullying. For mothers in prison, separation from children and other family members can lead to the breakdown of potentially supportive relationships.

Families Outside

Families Outside is developing a new Family Impact Assessment form, and advocates that this assessment should be carried out when anyone is arrested, as currently family commitments are not taken into consideration unless the police become aware of a formal child protection issue. Families Outside is in discussion with the Scottish government to ensure that the guidance under development for the Children and Young People's Act 2014 will allow wider scope for such assessments.

Impact on community support and housing

There is a lack of support on release from prison, with many community links broken by the period of absence. Homelessness is a common outcome, as offenders often lose their home when sent to prison. Women coming out of prison may find themselves rehoused in circumstances which put them at risk of reoffending, for example next door to drug dealers.

Distance from home

When held a great distance from home, the detrimental impact of imprisonment on family relationships and community support is exacerbated. Women, as the main carers, lose contact with dependants and, if their children are in care, they may lose custody.

Concerns were raised during this inquiry that women from the more remote parts of Scotland are not well served even with the introduction of regional women's prison units. For example, since the opening of HMP & YOI Grampian in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire in March 2014, most Northern CJA women serving custodial sentences are held in that establishment's women's unit. A small number are held in the Community Integration Unit (CIU) at HMP Inverness. This was established in 2010 for women coming to the end of their sentence who have been assessed as suitable to move to a unit nearer home and family, enabling them to engage with community services.⁴² There was some positive feedback about the impact of the CIU, with a local

Women's Criminal Justice Manager reporting that it had worked with at least one woman who maintained custody of a child who would otherwise have been put up for adoption. In another case, the service's intervention allowed a woman to maintain a tenancy that was on the cusp of being withdrawn by housing.

However, there were still concerns about how far from home many women from Highland are held. For them, the unit at HMP Grampian in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, will be little closer to home than HMP & YOI Cornton Vale in Stirling. Travel by public transport to the new prison at HMP Grampian is also more complicated from some areas when compared to travel to Cornton Vale. These concerns also apply for women from other remote parts of Scotland, including the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland and parts of Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway.

Effects of overcrowding

The overcrowding of the prison environment makes it impossible to deliver effective rehabilitation services. Women with mental health or addiction problems are particularly vulnerable within the prison environment as the high rates of self-harm testify.

Short sentences do not allow for interventions

Shorter sentences do not allow for meaningful interventions to be put in place or for women's complex problems to be addressed.

Lack of support for women attending court from prison

Staff at HMP & YOI Cornton Vale advised that women on remand experience varying support while attending court, including from voluntary organisations, family or friends. It was emphasised that many women had no support, with no formal process in place for them. Some described a postcode lottery determining whether or not a woman received support. If a woman had already been allocated a social worker then she would probably be accompanied to court but this was usually for women who had addiction problems.

Benefits of community alternatives

While there are a number of women in prison for crimes against society that will warrant a custodial sentence, there are a considerable number of women who could be given community payback sentences and an opportunity to repair the damage they have caused. This would perhaps help with the problem of reoffending, keep families together and also save money.

SI member, Scotland

Prison officers commented that many women would benefit more from community service than prison. An example given was of a young mother whose imprisonment meant her husband had to give up work to look after their child. She had no family available to help and because he wasn't working they were having trouble paying their rent. The staff at the prison felt she should not have been there in the first place as her crime didn't warrant a prison sentence and a community service order would have kept her family together.

One woman's comments highlighted another problem with imprisoning women for minor offences: "I was quite innocent and naïve when I came in here two months ago, I am not now."

The conclusion of our research suggests that in Scotland there are too many women being held on remand and too many women given a custodial sentence when community payback would be a better option.

SI Crieff

North Strathclyde CJA – Renfrewshire Women and Children First

The CJA is developing service provision for women leaving prison who have been the victims of abuse including domestic, sexual abuse and/or prostitution. Whilst the Scottish government is looking to develop Centres of Excellence that meet the specific needs of women prisoners, there would appear to be no new or additional money available to local areas for initiatives such as these.

Women and Children First actively participates within the Renfrewshire Gender Based Violence (GBV) Partnership Group facilitating a coordinated, integrated approach to address violence against women and children locally. The Group includes representatives from Police Scotland, Renfrewshire Council Housing, Education and Social Work departments, Greater Glasgow and Clyde CHP and drugs and alcohol teams, third sector organisations such as Barnardos, Renfrewshire Women's Association, Women's Aid and NSPCC.

RECOMMENDATION:

- There should be a presumption against remanding into custody or imprisoning women with dependent children and against use of short sentences, which can lead to loss of housing and employment, in favour of community alternatives where appropriate.

5) Women-specific community services are limited in many areas but there are examples of good practice

Criminal justice social work services

There were many examples of creative, women-specific approaches by local criminal justice social work services. Two examples are given here – Dundee and Fife.

Dundee

According to Dundee City Council, the local Criminal Justice Social Work (CJSW) team "has prioritised the development of services for women and...is...developing integrated approaches towards female offenders engaged in prostitution and/or who are victims of domestic abuse."⁴³

In the year ending March 2013, 830 men and 208 women had a full Criminal Justice Social Work report done at the Dundee office. Thirty-six women went into custody following a CJSW report. Two hundred and thirteen women underwent community orders.

Dundee Women Offenders Team report that Dundee has “the highest prevalence of female problem drug use and the highest one year re-conviction rate for females in Scotland” and notes, “it is clear that their needs are different to males.”⁴⁴

In Dundee Criminal Justice Services had previously failed to meet the distinct needs of women. The city had a high proportion of problem female drug users, high rates of re-offending, high rates of short-term custodial sentences and low engagement with community sentences. A dedicated and co-located multi-agency team of professionals able to address women’s needs was developed alongside a project plan to integrate the system and has led to marked improvements in engagement rates and positive feedback.

The team consists of social workers, support workers, an NHS Nurse, Tayside Council on Alcohol Mentoring Service and Apex Employability Workers. Links with children’s services are being developed and a new mentoring service has proved particularly important as a method to promote engagement. Mentors visit women at home, accompany them to key appointments, explore alternative behaviours and the potential consequences, motivate and model pro-social attitudes.

Over 60% of women referred by Dundee CJSW to a mentor reported increased confidence:

I’m more aware of consequences of my actions, make better decisions, able to build good relationships, gain trust and can be committed to my work experience.

I’m confident and feel ready to move away from the service.

I’m not drinking as much and not feeling the need to.

I’m not offending and aware I don’t want to offend. More focussed on positive future, attitude and think I have made more effort because of the mentoring service.

The service works with Dundee Women’s Community Justice Centre, to which all women are referred. There are no childcare facilities for women on community orders, but the centre will pay for childcare where necessary.

SI members visited East Port House, a 16-bed hostel offering supported accommodation to offenders from across Scotland (although primarily Tayside) as part of a suite of interventions available to address offending behaviour and promote safe and supported resettlement into the community. Four of the beds are for women, with capacity for one mother and baby.

The Dundee Women Offenders Team has reached across traditional working boundaries to create joined-up support for women offenders engaged in prostitution or who are victims of domestic abuse. A drop-in health centre for all client groups appears to have increased the profile of and access to health services. All women sentenced to custody are allocated a support worker whose role is to make contact with them in prison; support them to address issues such as housing and benefits; build and maintain a relationship for the duration of the

sentence; and help prepare post-release support. Partnership work with the Scottish Prison Service has been helpful, with joint-planning and review meetings pre-release, advance communication of discharge dates and gate pick-ups immediately on release from prison.

As a result of these changes the service is engaging with women far more effectively. As the table below shows, referrals from the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service to formal diversion schemes increased, there was a reduction in the number of women remanded and sentenced to prison, fewer nil reports submitted to the Court as a result of women’s failure to attend, and an increase in community sentence completion and resettlement.

With more women engaging, the service has gained the confidence of sentencers who are more inclined to use community alternatives.

Table 3: Outcomes for women, Dundee

	2011-12	2012-13
Diversion	8	13
Remands	69	45
Nil Reports (client failure to attend)	128	115
Custody	51	36
Completion of community sentences	58%	77%
Resettlement	19	36

The service is viewed positively at the Sheriffs Court and feedback from service users has been excellent. It is now being expanded with Scottish government funding. Priorities for the Dundee CJSW women offenders team include the use of Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) processes to provide informal support; further increases in the number of referrals to diversion; the development of an offence-focused programme to address anti-social attitudes; further services including guidance and advice on welfare benefits; mental health assessments and interventions; parenting programmes; and the extension of health services to include dentistry. The service is working with the third sector to develop a more sustainable approach to mentoring as part of RRCF, and Abertay University to develop a qualitative evaluation framework.

Dundee Women's Community Justice Centre

The existing Dundee Women's Community Justice Centre is housed with Social Work Criminal Justice Services in Dundee and offers women-specific interventions. It receives core funding from Criminal Justice Services Dundee for the social workers, social work support workers and one mental health nurse in the women's team. At the time of SI inquiries, this was at risk of reduction, due to restraints on local authorities. Funding from the Scottish government to provide additional multi-agency workers and partners, is secure until April 2015. The centre is collecting outcomes to demonstrate the need for the services it offers and working with partner agencies to look at building capacity.

Women involved with the centre can access the supported accommodation at East Port House if assessed as suitable, whilst NHS services are also offered, including drug treatment in women-only groups or one-to-one, plus women-only groups for alcohol misuse and mental health problems. The centre has two mental health nurses with experience in addictions and offers women-only relapse prevention groups. Social care is available for those with learning disabilities via referral to the Social Work Learning Disability Team, and is available for other health needs via referral to social work services or NHS services if required.

In 2012-13, the centre saw approximately 300 individual women who were on orders. Referrals can be made by the police, procurator fiscal, justice of the peace, Dundee Sheriff Court, High Court and prisons. Most women are referred for shoplifting.

The centre offers the following community orders:

- diversion from court
- community payback orders
- drug treatment and testing orders
- restriction of liberty orders.

Three-quarters (74%) of women complete their order, with 28 women who breached re-sentenced in 2012-13. The one-year reconviction rate for women sentenced in 2010-11 was 31.2%.⁴⁵

Fife

Fife Criminal Justice Service Women's Offender Team is multi-agency, comprising housing, nursing/health service and Sacro and offering women's mentoring services. The team spoke about the national Diversion from Prosecution scheme, which aims to:

- provide a disposal which, due to the personal circumstances of the person, is more satisfactory than prosecution; or
- offer a more effective means to prevent reoffending through early intervention.⁴⁶

While the scheme is not confined to women, they are a target group. A 2011 study found a significant variation in the use of diversion across Scotland that could not be accounted for by population size or crime rates. The report recommended that the availability of diversion in local areas should continue to be expanded, along with efforts to encourage reciprocal working relationships between local social work teams and Fiscal offices.⁴⁷

Fife women's offender team reported a substantial increase in use of the diversion scheme, from 17 requests for assessment in April-September 2012 to 73 such requests between April-Sept 2013. Women in the scheme are required to complete a 10-12 week programme. They are initially assessed to identify needs relevant to their offending, for example alcohol or other addiction or relationship problems and are given access to counselling, social work and addiction services.

The team asked their service users to complete a questionnaire, with a view to creating a one-stop shop arrangement where women can access the services they need. Childcare was not identified as a significant problem, perhaps because children were already looked after or were being cared for by grandparents or other family.

There are women-only unpaid work squads for Community Payback Orders, as some women reported being uncomfortable working in mixed-sex groups. Individual placements are also available (e.g. in charity shops, market gardens or food banks), which can give women skills for future work. Thirty per cent of their payback hours go into retraining to enhance their employability.

The women's offender team had concerns that sentencers sometimes use custodial sentences as a route to support:

It was cautiously suggested by practitioners in Fife that sometimes sentencers think that prison can be a positive experience for women with chaotic lifestyles – can help them get sorted out a bit.

SI Dunfermline/ SI Kirkcaldy

Regarding housing, and the problem of women losing tenancies if given custodial sentences, the team reported that the Council is restricted by statutory guidelines which affect what housing they can offer. If a tenant is out of a tenancy for a certain time, the tenancy lapses, but Fife is very proactive about re-housing women. There are a small number of houses for women in this situation, and Fife supplies a car to pick women up at the prison gate and take them to their new (shared) accommodation. Benefits are also a barrier to resettlement, as there is no central point of contact to co-ordinate payments. It is hoped that bringing benefit officers into HMP & YOI Cornton Vale will begin to address this.

Other examples of approaches by criminal justice social work services include the following:

- Stirling CJSW service has a dedicated women's worker who offers support through the prison gate, as well as to women finding it difficult to comply with their community order. It has close links with housing, the Benefits Agency and CAB.

- Scottish Borders have worked closely with partner agencies to develop a holistic programme for women for whom offending behaviour is or has been an issue. Over 12 weeks, the programme aims to increase participants' self-belief, sense of control and self-determination. The Almond Project is hosted within the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Team, which encourages links across health and social work, as well as other support services in the statutory and voluntary sectors to provide a support package for women offenders.
- in North Lanarkshire, the Head of Social Work Services commented:

*While we are...unable to run projects such as Willow or 218 within North Lanarkshire Council Justice Services, we recognise the impact for women involved in the criminal justice system and despite the lack of any additional funding, we have been proactive in developing and establishing programmes which address some of the areas of need specifically for women.*⁴⁸

- South Lanarkshire CJSW service has developed a group work programme that addresses some of the unique problems experienced by women offenders. The programme runs over 10 weeks, with weekly 4-hour sessions, and is delivered during school hours by dedicated female facilitators, treatment and programme managers. It includes input from other agencies and addresses self-esteem and confidence, personal goals, anger awareness, offending behaviour, relationships, finances, substance misuse, employment and health.
- the Lanarkshire POP, funded through Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership, works with the most persistent offenders within North and South Lanarkshire. This project targets those committing offences because of their dependency on drugs, alcohol or other substances. Since June 2012 only a small minority of referrals have been women (five women and 35 men). North Lanarkshire area became operational in January 2013 and has processed 21 referrals – though only one woman.
- integrated case management systems (ICMs) are also generally available in Lanarkshire. ICMs entail a holistic case conference approach that takes into account, for example: addictions; learning skills and employability and housing.

Members of SI West Lothian were told that agencies would like to achieve:

- better community support
- links to meaningful employment
- changing attitudes e.g. public perceptions of women offenders and employers attitudes to employing them.

Health and social care

It is clear that whilst there is an understanding that change is essential there are concerns over the long term viability of some on-going initiatives in the area and of multi-agency working long term. The information from NHS Lanarkshire shows...an attempt at providing joined-up services for women in general with an acknowledgement that women offenders may have specific needs.

Mental health provision

Soroptimists found little or no women-specific provision for women with mental health problems leaving prison, although there is good liaison with Community Mental Health Teams and Drug and Alcohol Teams. The Mental Health Team at HMP & YOI Cornton Vale advised that if a prisoner became acutely mentally ill they would be transferred to Stobhill Hospital, Orchard Clinic or Gartnavel Hospital in Glasgow. Criminal Justice Services in Perth were unaware of any women-specific mental health provision, but spoke about the benefits of the local Shine women's mentoring service, a more general well-being service for women. SI members felt that the lack of women-specific services for those leaving prison did little to address the problem of reoffending.

ENeRGI provides mental health support workers in North East Fife, Levenmouth and St Andrews. Their Housing Support Service covers the East Neuk and Leven only. There are no other similar services in North East Fife. The service is open five days a week at drop-in centres and through outreach and housing support. Police, social workers, community psychiatric nurses and other agencies can all refer women involved in minor offending. Self-referral is also available. ENeRGI offers Community Payback Order placements but also tries to support women with other aspects of their lives that are often related to their offending behaviour. As transport is a real problem for women in the East Neuk, ENeRGI can assist with transport and accessing services. They have a phone and internet access and also do home visits if required.

ENeRGI are interested in developing a network to assist women to move forward, citing evidence that a peer support model is effective. They could provide the training and support required, as well as more benefits advice, assistance with gas/electricity to add to emergency/crisis support already in place. Provision for training, volunteering and employment opportunities for women is constrained by limited financial resources.

The service commented further:

The one-stop shop in Leven is in the development stage. We are keen to assist in whatever way we can. They have requested...a weekly benefits advice session.

NHS Fife

Work with mentally disordered offenders is ongoing and NHS Fife operates a Court Liaison scheme, which identifies such offenders early in the criminal justice process and diverts them to NHS treatment. However, NHS Fife reported that they do not have a strategy for working with women offenders and there is nothing in place to identify and respond to the mental health needs of women offenders and ensuring that prison is not used as a gateway to support.

NHS Lanarkshire

NHS Lanarkshire explained that while they did not have a designated lead on women they have an executive lead director and gender-based violence manager advising the Board on good practice in this area. North Lanarkshire Council justice services have commissioned services for women leaving prison as part of their health and homeless service. NHS Lanarkshire provides social care for various health needs. The Alcohol and Drug Services commissioning guidelines

are inclusive of women offenders and services are provided to help meet their needs. An assessment and planning process is in place with Criminal Justice Services to assist women offenders to achieve better outcomes.

For women aged 16 and above who have experienced abuse (including women offenders and those at risk of offending) NHS Lanarkshire has a specialist service called EVA (Ending Violence and Abuse) offering advocacy and therapy from a woman-centred perspective. They also work with women with learning disabilities, linking with other services as required. Alcohol and drug services work closely with learning disability services to provide social care. They provide training, consultancy and operational guidance to NHS Lanarkshire and partner agencies.

A women-only group for drug addiction is provided in South Lanarkshire, based in the Hamilton area. Women's groups are provided by NHS Lanarkshire's mental health services, where a particular need is identified. This includes groups delivered by occupational therapists for women with severe and/or enduring mental health problems.

Learning disability services work to improve the health and wellbeing of adults with a learning disability, reduce health inequalities and discrimination and increase the opportunity for affected adults to lead independent, fulfilling lives. Programmes in place include parenting, pregnancy, communication and active therapy. Elements of social care are also interwoven in service delivery for women who have experienced gender-based violence.

Circle has been working in Lanarkshire since January 2004, providing support in schools to families affected by parental substance misuse, early years work and to Families Affected by Imprisonment (FABI). In 2008, the FABI team began supporting women with children who were returning to Lanarkshire from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale. FABI work with women and men to secure outcomes including improved literacy, improved physical and mental health and reduced or stabilised substance misuse.

The women's support worker in Lanarkshire received PSP funding for two years. Four staff work with mums and dads affected by imprisonment returning to Lanarkshire.

...through all the many ups and downs of women with a chaotic lifestyle e.g. debt, housing problems, benefits mix-ups, family relationships etc, the mentor sticks with them - quick fixes don't work.

SI Stirling

Sacro – women's mentoring services

Lanarkshire CJA reported that Sacro provided two women-only mentoring services. The local authority-funded service is voluntary, offered to women and girls aged 16 and above within the criminal justice system who want support to change. Referrals can be taken from many sources including criminal justice social work teams, addiction staff and women themselves. Mentors work with service users one-to-one, helping them to engage with statutory services, build self-esteem and improve social relationships, taking a holistic approach to improve lifestyles and reduce offending. Group work is also offered. The service has capacity to work with 50 women each year. The other service is Shine Women's Mentoring Service (see page 72).

Shine women's mentoring service - Kay's story⁴⁹

Kay (not her real name) was in prison when she was referred to Shine after expressing a desire for support to turn her life around. She was due to be homeless on release. The Shine mentor arranged an interview at the local authority housing office to organise temporary accommodation. During the interview, communication between Kay and the housing office began to break down when she was told she was not eligible for accommodation. The mentor facilitated dialogue between Kay and the housing office, working with the homeless officer to secure local supported accommodation. Kay was also enrolled in a 12-week programme to help prepare for her own home in the future, and learn the skills she would need to successfully maintain this. When the accommodation proved unsuitable for Kay's needs, the Shine champion secured a place in other local supported accommodation which provided the person-centred approach that Kay needed.

This was to be the pivotal change for Kay. She began to listen to those around her, made plans for the future and looked at how she might change certain elements of her life. She included her mentor more and more in this planning as the relationship and trust grew. On her mentor's recommendation, Kay secured a place on the Venture Trust's five-day personal development programme. She also re-established contact with her daughter through social workers and was granted supervised visits. The Shine mentor credited this to Kay's hard work, to which Kay replied, "it is all down to you and you believing in me."

Her mentor believes that being treated in a non-judgmental way, and given the chance to change and be supported with the choices she makes, has been key to Kay moving away from a life of offending and believing in the rewards of leading a positive life. While life can be hard, Kay firmly believes that taking the time to do things slowly and thoroughly and working on her issues one at a time has helped change her life.

Rural provision remains a challenge

A number of projects and services described in this report show how service providers are seeking to meet the challenge of effective service delivery to women in large, sparsely populated, rural areas. These include the Shine mentoring service in the Northern CJA, where training is being offered to local services in the remote parts of Scotland where the PSP partners do not have branches, as well as the development of Aberdeenshire's virtual hub and the use of a women's social worker in Highland.

Meeting the challenge of rural coverage

The national Sacro-led Shine women's mentoring service offers support to women who have patterns of behaviour that land them in the criminal justice system. For those who are imprisoned the aim is for the mentor to begin work inside the prison and continue on release into the community. The service is aimed at women who have served short sentences, or are at risk of breaching Community Payback Orders.

In the Northern CJA area, two specialist mentors employed by Turning Point Scotland and Apex Scotland deliver Shine. Where the partners in the PSP do not have operating bases, such as the Islands authorities and remoter parts of Scotland, part of the women's PSP bid was for funding to provide mentoring training for local service delivery. For example, a local third sector agency in Shetland could train staff in mentoring vulnerable women who would thereafter be able to provide such a service locally.⁵⁰

RECOMMENDATION:

- Local authorities should ensure their Criminal Justice Social Work Service provides women-specific services. In rural communities, virtual hubs or mobile outreach services should be developed.

6) Support for the community justice centre approach is tempered by concerns about future funding and sustainability of services

Members of the expert panel at the meeting held by SI Kirkcaldy and SI Dunfermline in February 2014 were amongst many others in expressing strong support for the community justice centre model as the norm for women who commit non-violent offences. They noted the key benefits as:

- a community one-stop shop co-ordinated approach to help reduce re-offending
- holistic approach to meet the needs of individual women
- organisations working together in partnership especially NHS with other agencies
- programme of core services in place, sharing information, ("tell the story once")
- all services in one place, more chance of women keeping appointments
- helping offenders develop new skills (to increase chances of employment)
- development of community links (to help reduce isolation)
- peer support for offenders (opportunity to develop relationships).

Several good practice examples of one-stop shop services currently operating in Scotland are featured in this section. A concern running throughout the responses received by Soroptimists from service providers was the short-term nature of their funding and how they will be sustained after funding ends in March 2015.

Speaking to the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee about the government's commitment to community provision for women, the head of the Scottish government's Rehabilitation and Reintegration unit, said:

We know that women and indeed others go round and round the system a number of times until they are ready to make the sometimes very difficult change that will ultimately result in them reducing their reoffending and perhaps leading a life free of crime. Initially, the partners will be the traditional ones that you would envisage, such as criminal justice social

*workers, third sector partners, health workers and addiction workers, but ultimately we aim to involve procurators fiscal, police colleagues, Prison Service colleagues, housing colleagues and anyone else who has an interest in ensuring that we can help women to turn their lives around.*⁵¹

However, concerns were raised with Soroptimists during their inquiry and by the Committee about short-term funding for women's services. The then Cabinet Secretary for Justice, stated:

Reflecting the Commission's view that it should be possible to deliver an improved service through the more effective use of existing resources, it is expected that where these new developments prove their effectiveness, participating agencies and local stakeholders will ensure that they are sustained.

Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending

Concerns about the sustainability of women's projects are shared by the Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending (SWGWO). Established in early 2011, SWGWO comprises organisations and individuals engaged with addressing women's offending in Scotland. The group wishes to see true equality for all women across the criminal justice system, and to sharpen the focus of policymakers on those women with mental health and learning disabilities and women from a background of sexual abuse, addiction and substance misuse, as well as support for their families.⁵² The group has commented:

Whilst the national mentoring project Shine will get a further 2 years funding beyond its initial end date, there will still be a sustainability challenge for the smaller projects, which were funded on a one-off basis (12-18 months funding). SWGWO is concerned that when much of this funding expires in March 2015, many excellent projects will be discontinued. Many projects have and are indeed continuing to provide a solid evidence base of what works in supporting female offenders. However, the pressures on budgets locally and nationally as well as the fact that changes to the delivery structures for criminal justice services will not come on stream until 2016 may result in a gap in funding. Many good projects may be lost and the services for female offenders will suffer.

The manager of justice services for North Lanarkshire Council believed that three-year funding would help, as this would ensure the retention of staff who have gained particular expertise in engaging with women offenders and secure links with the third sector.

In relation to the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund (RRCF), the Deputy Director of the Scottish government's community justice division, explained:

The point of the Change fund is to leverage money from lots of partners and not just the community justice budget; it is an innovative way of bringing in new funding. We challenge the partnerships that are delivering projects to continue to deliver the utility of what the PSPs are delivering in the two years, so they can find ways of convincing other mainstream funders to continue to support the mentoring projects thereafter.

I am suggesting that the Change Fund acts as something of a catalyst. It provides a new way of bringing together money, but that is not intended to be for a sustained period. The worth of a project is demonstrated through the Change Fund mechanism, after which mainstream funding sources are expected to pick up and sustain the project.

The then Cabinet Secretary for Justice, added:

The Reducing Reoffending Change Fund is intended to ensure that we see what works and mainstream it. I give my assurance that the last thing that we want is for the projects to just come to an end, especially if they are working.

Many agencies in the Stirling area commented that short term funding isn't the answer. They noted that there is a good track record of knowing what works, including support for mental health and addiction problems and the provision of ongoing support.

It was also noted that it can be difficult for government agencies like the Scottish Prison Service, the Community Justice Authorities and Police Scotland to obtain sustained funding for initiatives for women offenders when they are constantly being asked to make savings and/or being reorganised.

Tomorrow's Women Glasgow

Tomorrow's Women Glasgow, a community justice centre, is a new holistic service supported by Scottish government funding. Modelled on Tomorrow's Women Wirral, the centre opened to women offenders in December 2013. One of the principal aims is to prevent women reoffending and to divert women from custody. By June 2014 they had 100 clients on their books.

Located in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, staff at the centre include a psychologist, two criminal justice social workers, two social care workers, two mental health nurses, one secondee from the Scottish Prison Service, one from Glasgow Housing Association and a manager. The premises are not custom made but are part of a complex housing other services which SI members thought was helpful as it is not easily identified as a women's centre. Referrals are made by Criminal Justice Social Workers, the Scottish Prison Service and, recently, by Sheriffs as they become aware of the services provided. A small number of referrals are made by other agencies working in wider criminal justice services.

Government funding for the centre is time-limited for 18 months which does not allow much time to set up, develop and monitor the services provided, although the number of clients seen to date offers proof of the need for such services.

Although we are described as a centre much of the work done isn't here. A lot is chasing women. We know that the women don't turn up for appointments. We go and knock on doors and we don't stop until we get them. We will support them wherever they are, whether that is in hospital or prison.

Tomorrow's Women service manager⁵³

Creative response to the sustainability challenge and concerns about ‘dilution’ of the model

A number of services profiled in this report are adopting creative strategies to deliver women-specific provision with limited resources, and to make this sustainable in the face of uncertain future core funding from the government. These include Aberdeenshire’s virtual hub and Highland’s women’s social worker, embedded in the substance misuse service. While it is hoped that the strategies to achieve sustainability adopted by these services are successful, this is bound to be a real challenge.

Three new women’s centres in Fife

With Scottish government funding, three new women’s one-stop shops have been set up in Fife - Dunfermline, Methil and Cupar - where previously there were none. At a meeting hosted by SI St Andrews & District in October 2013, the Chief Officer of Fife and Forth Valley CJA, and Convenor of the Scottish Working Group on Women’s Offending, noted that challenges include sustainability, given the short-term nature of the funding, the risk of net-widening, the difficulties of tackling the over-use of remand and custodial sentences, and challenging public perceptions of women offenders.

A concern raised by the SWGWO was that, in some cases, services being set up with the new funding are a diluted version of the models recommended in the Angiolini report:

We are concerned that many longer standing projects with a robust evidence base are not being replicated effectively across Scotland. Instead they are being implemented in a diluted form, which will not provide as effective support for female offenders as the original pilot schemes.

There is some evidence to suggest that new services are being co-located with generic services and employing male staff. One problem is the lack of premises or multi-agency shared location for some services. Giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament Justice Committee in November 2013, the Chief Executive of Sacro said:

I recognise that it might not be possible to have shared locations throughout Scotland, but where it is possible that is undoubtedly the right way to do things. We know that from our experience of the Willow Project.⁵⁴

Aberdeen City Council Criminal Justice Social Work Service delivers the Connections programme, developed locally in response to the need to engage with women in different ways, with the overall aim of reducing the risk of reoffending. The Scottish government allocated 18-months funding to develop a Women’s Connections Centre in Aberdeen city centre to extend the work that is already being done; two further bids for 12-month funding for the Aberdeenshire and Highland areas were also successful.

The 218 Service – Glasgow

The 218 Service is a Turning Point Scotland initiative that takes a person-centred approach in dealing with the problems women offenders face. The programme of work at 218 is designed to address problems with substance use, physical and mental health and other social needs including housing and childcare. The service deals primarily with women aged 18 and over who are involved in the criminal justice system, with a range of complex needs such as addiction, poor mental or physical health and trauma.

The 218 Service has a 12 bed residential unit and a day service programme providing a range of compulsory and optional group work sessions and one-to-one support. Women can access a clinic which deals with mental and physical health needs, a dietician, chiroprapist, dentist, doctors and nurses.

My journey began in the crisis centre, then the past 5½ months have been in the 218 project for women. I have received group therapy to build me back up and I return to my community in 3 weeks. I don't know what lies ahead and can only continue to hope and pray. The main lesson is that I had to learn to live with and love the one person I can't get away from – me.

The staff are wonderful. They don't judge...I was told it was a service for women to rebuild their lives...I came to see 218 on the advice of the sheriff...[it] has been a valuable project in my life and I would recommend it to anyone. If you get the chance to go...take it 'cos it does improve your life...It's a fabulous thing changing your life around.

I've been wanting to do this for years...if I didn't come to 218, I'd still be mad wae coke, shoplifting everyday, this has just changed me. I wish I'd got this 10 years ago...it just came at the right time. I've got my new house, my front and back door, my grandson, and then 218 came into my life, those three things came into my life, and I said 'right enoughts enough'. I really believe I'd be still doing what I was doing if I wasn't here'.

Service users, 218 service Glasgow⁵⁵

Aberdeenshire's virtual hub - strategy to achieve sustainability

As the geographical spread of Aberdeenshire does not lend itself to the establishment of a community justice centre, funding (£61,697) was awarded for delivery via a virtual hub, a structured network of practitioners across agencies and disciplines that allows a wrap-around, holistic, responsive, needs-led approach. The funding will be used to create a coordinator post with administrative support, and, through training and development of staff across Aberdeenshire's Criminal Justice Social Work Service and partners, embed the changes.

The aim is to concentrate on doing things differently rather than necessarily doing more, achieving better use of existing resources by improved targeting, better joint work, more effective practice and pooling of multi-agency resources. It is anticipated that this new model will be largely cost neutral and therefore viable in the long term.⁵⁶

Highland - making use of existing structures to provide new women-specific services

Highland has implemented a revised model of delivering services to women offenders as part of a new substance misuse team. This includes the establishment of a dedicated women's social worker post to work exclusively with women subject to statutory supervision.

Highland was awarded funding (£23,000) to deliver a group work programme, in partnership with the Woodland Trust (at Abriachan) and Apex. This forms part of a package of interventions that can be offered to women offenders. The funding has also helped sustain a women's social worker post, which is part-funded by Northern CJA Section 27 funding and, in 2013-14, by one-off funding of £15,000 from Highland Council.

The short and medium-term outcomes of the programme will be particularly important – for example, increased problem-solving skills and increasing the number of women engaging with services – as longer term outcomes such as reducing reoffending will not be evidenced within the lifespan of the funding.

In terms of sustainability, Highland Criminal Justice Social Work Service has identified possible savings within its business support structure that would sustain the group-work programme with the Woodland Trust beyond 2014-15, and, assuming the continued £30,000 annual contribution from the Northern CJA, the social worker post too.⁵⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Following the extension of funding for the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund (RRCF) to 2017, the government should undertake an audit of funding for other services for women offenders with a view to providing ring-fenced funding, on a three-year basis, to ensure their sustainability beyond March 2015.
- Where a service model has a robust evidence base for reducing women's reoffending and achieving positive outcomes for women and their families, this success should not be jeopardised by 'diluting the model'.

ANNEX 1 - SUMMARY OF CLUB ACTIVITIES

ENGLAND

Local and regional SI events

SI England and the Prison Reform Trust held a Parliamentary reception in the House of Commons on 25 April 2013 to mark the publication of the Action Pack to Reduce Women's Imprisonment. Soroptimists representing clubs across the country attended and speakers included Lord Woolf (Prison Reform Trust chair), Jan Hemlin (then Soroptimist UKPAC chair), Juliet Lyon CBE (Prison Reform Trust director), Lord McNally, (then Minister of State for Justice and Deputy Leader in the House of Lords) and Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws QC, FRSA.

SIs Midland Chase and Midland Arden held a joint Action Research meeting in November 2013 attended by Yvonne Mosquito, Deputy PCC for the West Midlands; Barbara Sykes JP, a magistrate at Dudley Courthouse; Joy Doal, Chief Executive Officer of Anawim women's centre, Birmingham; Sara Ward of Sandwell Women's Aid; Vanessa Francis, Probation Officer for the Mariposa Project at Sandwell Women's Aid; Adele Brown, Probation Officer (Women's Champion) Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust; Councillor Yvonne Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

SI Southern England held a morning conference on 21 March 2014 exploring the impact of women's imprisonment and the alternatives. There were three speakers:

- a member of HMP Send Family Link who explained their work and the impact of imprisonment, particularly on children, the wider family, and their future
- a speaker from Women's Wisdom talking about the work the charity has undertaken with women offenders both in the community and pre-release in prison
- Mitch Egan CB spoke on behalf of the Women's Justice Taskforce.

SI Bristol held a conference Reducing Women's Imprisonment – Diverting Women from Custody on 9 September 2013 which aimed to:

- raise awareness of what is available for non-violent women in Bristol caught up or at risk of being caught up in the criminal justice system to divert them from custody and to serve their sentence in the community
- raise awareness of how sentencers come to their decisions
- ask those who can influence change to support the Soroptimists' project and increase the number of women's centres and bail hostels to allow more women to serve their sentence in the community.

There were 140 delegates registered including Soroptimists from ten clubs, judges, magistrates, NHS England, Bristol City Council Health Scrutiny Committee members, Bristol dignitaries, health care and criminal justice professionals and others. Bristol SI members were pleased that this event helped to raise awareness of the need for more women's centres and bail hostels in the area, and more female accommodation has since become available. Local MPs are looking at the state of

vulnerable women in the criminal justice system. People in Bristol are still talking by email, in person, and in the media about what the Soroptimists are trying to achieve. Delegates found the conference stimulating and invaluable. The conference gained extensive local media coverage.

Clubs within **SI North West England** held a number of awareness-raising events, involving speakers including a former governor of a women's prison, Juliet Lyon of the Prison Reform Trust, Maureen Thompson from Tomorrow's Women Wirral and service users.

SI Canterbury, Folkestone and Ashford held a focus group on 27 February 2014 attended by representatives from the police, magistrates, probation, prison, local authority, housing, health and mental health services and voluntary sector.

Lobbying

Some Soroptimist clubs wrote to their local MPs about the campaign, to raise awareness and obtain information. As a result, MPs wrote to ministers about the Soroptimists' concerns and replies were received from Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP, the Secretary of State for Justice, The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP and the successive Justice Ministers with responsibility for women in the criminal justice system, Helen Grant MP, The Rt Hon Lord McNally and The Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP.

Supporting local services

A number of SI clubs were already involved in supporting local services for vulnerable women, including volunteering and fundraising. More activity is planned or underway, including:

- in **Heswall (Wirral)**, 21 Soroptimists volunteer at Tomorrow's Women Wirral, two are part of the conditional cautioning process and Maureen Thompson of SI Heswall is the chair of the Board
- **SI Norwich** members volunteer at The 4 Women Centre in Norwich, including teaching knitting skills and donating wool and thread or other materials which are being used by the women to make things to use or sell
- **SI Derby** members are currently working with their local probation service to offer bi-monthly one-stop shops with a variety of agencies attending and the Soroptimists hosting and providing refreshments. It is planned that this will lead to some mentoring work. SI Derby also puts on a number of courses at the local women's centres around confidence building and back-to-work activities, and are liaising with probation to see if there are courses they can put on for women on probation
- funding from the **SI Bradford club** has enabled Together Women (TWP) to employ a Parenting and Childcare Development Worker at the Bradford Centre and Family Resettlement Worker at New Hall Women's Prison. The project will provide childcare while mothers access the centre's services, and deliver a special programme to help disadvantaged mums improve their parenting skills. It will also deliver specialist support to women in prison to help them maintain contact with their families⁵⁸

- Soroptimists help out at the **Nottingham Women's Centre** Job Club and have raised funds for specific purposes at the centre - two Soroptimists are on the centre's board
- following a talk at a Regional Council Meeting by Canon Jane Clay about her work as chaplain in HMP New Hall and HMP Askham Grange, **Yorkshire Soroptimists** decided to donate good quality clothing for the charity shops within the prisons. Collections will be made at regional meetings over the coming years and taken to the prisons by the SI volunteers who offer their service, skills and time. Toiletries and other essentials such as sleeping bags and coats will be donated for the vulnerable women who attend the Tomorrow's Women Wirral Service and other local women's centres
- **SI Swindon** members are visiting the new Swindon Isis Women's Centre to see how they may be of help. They hope that lobbying will help persuade the government to make more funding available not only to increase the services available at the centre but also to make outreach services available throughout Wiltshire
- Soroptimists in **South East England** made donations to Brighton Women's Centre and Tunbridge Wells Women's Refuge and are offering ongoing support. SI Canterbury, Folkestone and Ashford have made a donation towards IT equipment to Rebuilders, a Kent-based organisation supporting vulnerable women with convictions find employment and accommodation. They are in active discussions with the probation service regarding contributing creative sessions to the women's probation groups, and one-on-one mentoring to support women on probation
- **SI Manchester** members are in regular contact with Community Outreach staff at Styal Prison. Facilities at the prison include an unused large workshop, which has all the facilities to provide meaningful employment for the women. They are appealing for the wider business community to consider setting up a business venture in partnership with the prison. SI members have agreed to promote this locally
- members of **SI Bristol** are Trustees of Eden House Women's Centre and others volunteer there
- **SI Southampton** members are volunteering to help Women's Wisdom and to raise funds for them
- **SI Greater London** has made donations to The Wise Project and supported many charitable events. SI members will be volunteering as mentors and befrienders for women released from prison.

WALES

SI Wales and the Prison Reform Trust held a reception in the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay on 15 May 2013 to mark the publication of the Action Pack to Reduce Women's Imprisonment. Soroptimists representing clubs across the country attended and speakers included Jane Hutt AM (Vale of Glamorgan), Professor Mike Maguire (University of Glamorgan), Jan Hemlin (then UKPAC chair), Jenny Earle and Juliet Lyon CBE, (Prison Reform Trust).

SI Wales South held an Action Research meeting on 8 December 2013 which was attended by all 19 SI clubs in South Wales as well as Wendy Hyett, project manager of IOM Cymru, and representatives from women's centres (Hafan Cymru, Changing Lives and Gibran) and magistrates.

At the invitation of the IOM Cymru team, **SI Wales South** members participated in the Women's Pathfinder Project Workshop (9 December 2013) and the Women Offenders Executive Summit (27 March 2014). In addition, Soroptimists were represented at the launch of the Criminal Justice Liaison Services (CJLS) Policy Implementation Guidance⁵⁹ (27 November 2013) and a symposium on Transforming Rehabilitation (17 December 2013).

Some clubs in Wales South received presentations from third sector organisations involved with offenders in their localities and Clive Chatterton, a former women's prison governor.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The **SINI** working group received positive and constructive responses from all the organisations and individuals contacted, with some indicating that ongoing support/collaboration from SINI would be welcome (e.g. NIACRO). The working group intend to recommend to SINI that further work is done, including follow through with other voluntary sector organisations working with women offenders (e.g. Barnardo's, Extern, women's centres), with whom contact has already been established but where there has not been sufficient time to follow through. A specific project may then be identified.

SCOTLAND

SI Scotland and the Prison Reform Trust held a reception in the Scottish Parliament on 12 June 2013 to mark the publication of the Action Pack to Reduce Women's Imprisonment. Soroptimists representing clubs across the country attended and speakers included Kenny MacAskill MSP (then Cabinet Secretary for Justice); Rhoda Grant MSP (Highlands and Islands); Sarah Roberts (Families Outside); Wendy Spencer (218/Turning Point); Jan Hemlin (UKPAC); Juliet Lyon (Prison Reform Trust).

The Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending (SWGWO) has been immensely supportive of the Soroptimists' project. Anne Pinkman, the chair of this group, has invited a UKPAC representative to attend the group to represent Soroptimists, and coordinated production and circulation of a leaflet²⁰⁸ providing statistics on women in the criminal justice system in Scotland.

National conference, April 2014

A national conference was jointly held by SI Scotland North and Scotland South.

Fife open meeting, February 2014

SI Kirkcaldy and SI Dunfermline held a joint open meeting on 24 February 2014 with speakers including:

- Baroness Linklater of Butterstone
- Dan Gunn, retired Director of Operations Scottish Prison Service
- Angela Simpson, Women Offenders Team, Fife Council

- Colette Wormleighton, the Willow Project, Edinburgh
- Jacky Close, Families Outside, Dundee
- Lyn Herbert, Solicitor (Chair).

A UKPAC representative represented Soroptimists at a meeting organised by the **Robertson Trust**. This follows on from the discussions Soroptimists had with the Trust about their plans to develop community-based centres in Scotland to support vulnerable women, girls and families. Discussion covered:

- the existing landscape in Scotland in terms of the support currently available for vulnerable women, girls and families
- any particular challenges/issues that vulnerable women, girls and families experience
- gaps in services for these groups and any opportunities to build on existing community-based approaches to supporting them
- whether there are any particular communities where there is the need, appetite and capacity to develop a community-based centre.

Members of **SI Glasgow City** have agreed to support Tomorrow's Women Glasgow through an initial two-year funded project with supplies for the centre's daily breakfast service. The club's charities fund will also provide regular monies to TWG as an emergency fund for the service users.

SI Glasgow City members would like to explore the content of information and education related specifically to women offenders which is provided to Scottish magistrates, sheriffs and Justice of the Peace officers. Initial approaches to educational establishments are in process. This could lead to advocacy work by club members depending on the information received and analysed.

SI Perth is looking at how Soroptimists can support the work of OWLS (One-stop Women's Learning Service). There are volunteering opportunities for members to be involved with the various activities and group work.

SI Stirling will support the HMP & YOI Cornton Vale family hub until the prison closes in 2018, and will encourage other local groups such as Rotary to do so as well. In April 2014, SI Stirling were invited to give a presentation on women in prison to a local Rotary Club.

SI Crieff have supported HMP & YOI Cornton Vale since 2009-10, visiting prisoners and staff and providing much-needed equipment, including: toys for the family unit; cots and sensory equipment for the mother and baby unit; and sanitary wares and toiletries for women on remand.

SI clubs in **Scotland North**, led by region chair Billie Wealleans, attend the Cross Party group on Children and Families affected by Imprisonment, convened by Mary Fee MSP.⁶¹

There is an appetite in a number of clubs across Scotland to continue to work in this area.

REGION CHAIRS AND OFFICERS OF UKPAC October 2013-October 2014

ROLE	NAME
Chair	Jan Hemlin
Vice Chair (South Lancashire Rep)	Margaret Molyneux
Treasurer	Eileen Griffiths
Secretary	Jan Doyle
Website/Promotion	Heather Knott
Cheshire, North Wales and Wirral	Sue Challoner and Helen Owen
London Anglia	Jean Thorpe
London Chilterns	Yinka Soetan
Midland Arden	Patricia Martin
Midland Chase	Sue Nickson
Midland East	Barbara McDonald
NW England & Isle of Man	Ruth Bruce
Northern England	Gill Smith
Northern Ireland	Joanna McVey
Scotland North	Billie Wealleans
Scotland South	Margaret Mowat
South East England	Ann Reeves
South West and Channel Islands	Irene Hockin
Southern England	Christine White
Wales South	Kay Richmond
Yorkshire	Chris Clark
Lobbyists	
Northern Ireland	Irene Miskimmon
Scotland	Audrey Harvey
Wales	Farida Patel

ANNEX 2 - CONTRIBUTORS

The following individuals and agencies, amongst others, provided information to Soroptimists by completing questionnaires, giving interviews, taking part in group discussion or speaking at local and regional events:

ENGLAND

Central government and national agencies

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Justice

Helen Grant MP, (then) Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice with responsibility for women in the justice system

The Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP, Minister of State for Justice and Civil Liberties

Ministry of Justice

National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

Crown Prosecution Service

Police

Avon and Somerset Police

Cheshire Police

Cumbria Constabulary

Derbyshire Constabulary

Devon and Cornwall Police

Essex Police

Greater Manchester Police

Hampshire Police

Hertfordshire Police

Humberside Police

Kent Police

Leicestershire Police

North Yorkshire Police

Northumbria Police

Nottinghamshire Police

South Yorkshire Police

West Midlands Police

West Yorkshire Police

Police and Crime Commissioners

PCC for Suffolk

PCC for Essex

PCC for Kent

PCC for West Midlands

PCC for Staffordshire

Deputy PCC for Nottinghamshire

Deputy PCC for the West Midlands

Assistant PCC for Lancashire

Prisons

Volunteers and the chaplain at HMP New Hall
Volunteers and the chaplain at HMP Askham Grange
[Midland Chase] prisons
HMP East Sutton Park
A representative from prison education, SE England
HMP Styal prisoners and staff
HMP Eastwood Park
HMP Send – women’s prison Family Link
HMP Peterborough

Magistrates

A Cheshire magistrate
Norwich magistrates
Courts in Midland Chase region
Magistrates in Yorkshire
Magistrates’ Association in SE England/local magistrates
East Kent magistrates
South Lancashire judges and magistrates
[Hertford] magistrate
Hampshire magistrates
Magistrates from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire
A selection of West Midlands courts

Probation⁶²

Avon and Somerset Probation Trust
Cumbria Probation Trust
Derbyshire Probation Trust
Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust
Hampshire Probation Trust
Kent Probation Trust
Lancashire Probation Trust
Merseyside Probation Trust
Northamptonshire Probation Trust
Northumbria Probation Trust
Nottinghamshire Probation Trust
Probation and Housing, Sevenoaks Council
Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust
Thames Valley Probation Trust
Yorkshire Probation Trust

Women’s community services

Tomorrow’s Women Wirral and other women’s centres in Cheshire and Wirral
Halton Women’s Centre, Runcorn
Stepping Stones, Luton
Safer Places women’s refuge, Hertford

Living Room centre for people with addictions, Hertfordshire
[Midland Chase] women's centres
Lancashire Women's Centres
Together Women Project, Bradford
WomenCentre (Evolve), Halifax and Huddersfield and other women's centres in Yorkshire
Brighton Women's Centre
Rising Sun Domestic Violence and Abuse Service, SE England
Porchlight (homelessness charity), SE England
Turning Point (alcohol and drug treatment service), SE England
East Kent Rapeline
Women's centres in Huddersfield, Bolton, Birkenhead and Bootle
Eden House Women's Centre, Bristol
Women's Wisdom (women's employment group), Southern England
Aurora New Dawn (domestic violence victim support), Southern England
POW (Prostitute Outreach Work), Nottingham
Dawn Project, Cambridge Women's Resource Centre
CHANGES project, Nottingham Women's Centre
Zinithiya Trust, Leicester
New Dawn New Day, Leicester
Gloucester Women's Centre
Isis Women's Centre, Swindon
Sandwell Women's Aid, Mariposa Project
Anawim women's centre, Birmingham
A women's centre in Cumbria

Others

Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding Children Boards and MPs in Midland Chase
[Southern England] MPs
Greg Clark MP, Tunbridge Wells
Yorkshire youth justice practitioners
SE England IMB members
SE England Community Liaison Officer
SE England local councillor
Derby City Council
Kent County Council
Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery, SE England
U3A (University of the Third Age), SE England
CAB (Citizen's Advice Bureau), SE England
PACT and Just People
POPS (Partners of Prisoners)
Action for Prisoners' Families
Catholic Diocese of Liverpool
Anglican Mothers' Union – Manchester Diocese
North Somerset Children's Services
Mitch Egan CB, Criminal Justice Consultant
Inquest

[Health and Social Care], Leicester
Severn Health Surgery, Leicester
Children's Services, North Somerset
National Treatment Agency (for substance misuse)
Institute for Criminal Policy Research, Birkbeck College

WALES

Information was provided to SI members by many organisations and individuals, including:

- Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru
- Gibran
- Changing Lives
- Hafan Cymru
- magistrates
- Gwent Police
- PCC for Gwent
- Dyfed-Powys Police
- PCC for Dyfed-Powys
- South Wales Police and the PCC for South Wales (via IOM)
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board
- Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
- Cwm Taf University Health Board
- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Powys Teaching Health Board
- women's services in North Wales.

NORTHERN IRELAND

SINI's research included an exchange of letters with the Justice Minister, David Ford MLA, and meetings with:

- Deputy Director of the Criminal Justice Service (DOJNI)
- Probation Board of Northern Ireland (PBNI) Inspire project manager
- representatives from Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) - NIACRO also helped with follow up queries by email
- plus a questionnaire completed on behalf of PSNI.

SCOTLAND

Information was provided to Soroptimists by the following, amongst others:

- Criminal Justice Authorities
- Criminal Justice Social Work Departments
- Local Authorities
- Police
- Health Service

- Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending (SWGWO)
- Sacro
- Circle Scotland
- Families Outside
- Positive Prison/Positive Futures

- a Scottish Executive representative
- Police Scotland
- NHS Fife
- Fife Police

- Perth Prison
- prison visitors
- HMP & YOI Cornton Vale
- NHS Scotland.

ANNEX 3 - POLICY BACKGROUND

A series of inquiries and reports, most notably the 2000 report of the Prison Reform Trust's Committee on Women's Imprisonment (the Wedderburn Report), the 2007 Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System (the Corston Report), the 2011 report of the Women's Justice Taskforce (Reforming Women's Justice), and the Scottish government's Commission on Women Offenders in 2012, have all concluded that prison is rarely a necessary, appropriate or proportionate response to women who get caught up in the criminal justice system. The Justice Select Committee concluded from its inquiry into women offenders that "prison is an expensive and ineffective way of dealing with many women offenders who do not pose a significant risk of harm to public safety." The Committee called for "a significant increase in residential alternatives to custody as well as the maintenance of the network of women's centres" which are seen as "more effective, and cheaper...than short custodial sentences."⁶³ However, despite cross-party support in all jurisdictions for alternative approaches there has been limited progress. Where effective services have been developed, there are real concerns about their sustainability due to limited, short-term funding streams.

The Prison Reform Trust's programme to reduce women's imprisonment is providing fresh momentum for reform, and working alongside civil society organisations such as the Soroptimists and the National Council of Women has allowed new voices to be heard. This collaborative work has also brought an important local dimension to the endeavour which is critical because it is local police, courts and support services that hold the key to changing women's lives for the better as much as national policy frameworks and laws.

Baroness Corston's report to government set out a blueprint for the reform of women's justice in England and Wales⁶⁴ covering the following themes:

- improve health services and support for women offenders
- make community disposals the norm and develop a wider network of one-stop shop community provision for women offenders and those at risk of offending
- reserve custody for serious and violent women offenders and place those in small, local units within 10 years
- improve prison conditions
- improve high level governance and cross-departmental working for women offenders and those at risk of offending.

The Corston report's findings were accepted almost entirely by the (then) government in Westminster, and have influenced the development of women's justice in Northern Ireland⁶⁵ and the 2012 Commission on Women Offenders chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini, whose recommendations were accepted in large part by the Scottish government.⁶⁶

The UN Committee overseeing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has expressed concern about the disproportionate imprisonment of women for non-violent offences, and recently urged the UK Government to implement the recommendations of the Corston and Angiolini reports and improve community services for women.⁶⁷

ENDNOTES

- 1 Extract from a response to the Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP (Bristol South) dated 23 May 2013, replying to a letter sent on behalf of SI Bristol
- 2 IOM Cymru (2014) *Wales reducing reoffending strategy 2014-2016*
- 3 DOJNI (2013) *Reducing offending among women 2013-2016* DOJNI: Belfast
- 4 Cabinet Secretary for Justice (2013) *Cabinet Secretary for Justice's second annual progress report to the Parliament on the steps taken to implement the Commission on Women Offenders' recommendations* Edinburgh: Scottish government
- 5 www.ukpac.org.uk/topics/violence-against-women
- 6 www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/women
- 7 www.swscja.org.uk/download-document/459-women-in-the-cj-system.html
- 8 www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14514&LangID=E
- 9 Prison Reform Trust (2014) *Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment?* London: PRT
- 10 Recommendation 14: New powers are given to the police to divert women offenders from prosecution by issuing a conditional caution directing women offenders to attend Community Justice Centres so that appropriate services can be delivered.
- 11 Easton, H. & Matthews, R. (2010) *Evaluation of the 218 service* London: South Bank University
- 12 Scottish Prison Service (2014) *Scottish Prison Service Annual Report & Accounts 2014-15* Edinburgh: SPS
- 13 Criminal Proceedings in Scotland statistical bulletin tables 2013-14 (The data reported for 2012-13 was incorrect and relates to the year 2010/11; the number in 2012/13 was 2868)
- 14 SPS monthly stats return to CJAs. Figures do not include recalled life prisoners, prisoners awaiting deportation, or civil prisoners for whom the published data is not disaggregated by gender.
- 15 Criminal Proceedings Stats 2013-14, Scottish Govt). The highest proportion of women in custody at the end of December 2015 was serving a custodial sentence of between 6 months and 2 years – 30%. (Source: SPS monthly stats return to CJAs) – Consecutive sentencing.
- 16 Data provided by the SPS to SI Crieff
- 17 Data presented by the SPS at the SI Scotland North/Scotland South joint conference in April 2014
- 18 Unless stated, all stats are from the SPS's *Female offenders 2013 – 14th Survey Bulletin* at www.sps.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?fileName=14th%20PRISONER%20SURVEY%202013%20-%20Female%20Offenders5340_1179.pdf
- 19 Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Commission on Women Offenders (2012) *Commission on Women Offenders* Edinburgh: Scottish government
- 22 Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorate for Scotland (1998) *Women Offenders: A Safer Way: A Review of Community Disposals and the Use of Custody for Women Offenders in Scotland* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive; Scottish Executive (2002) *A Better Way: The Report of the Ministerial Group on Women's Offending* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive; Equal Opportunities Committee of Scottish Parliament (2009) 3rd Report, 2009, Session 3: Female Offenders in the Criminal Justice System (EO/S3/09/R3), Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament

- 23 Cabinet Secretary for Justice's second annual progress report to Parliament on the steps taken to implement the Commission on Women Offenders' recommendations (2013). See also <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/-8-million-to-reduce-reoffending-dfa.aspx>
- 24 Macmaster, B. *Finding a better way to fund services for women in Scotland* Academy for Justice Commissioning News Bulletin Summer 2014
- 25 <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Support-for-women-offenders-5bc.aspx>
- 26 www.northernjcja.org.uk/WomenOffenders
- 27 www.academyforjusticecommissioning.org.uk/deliverfile.php?userid=&resourcetype=Documents&id=415
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005
- 30 The Scottish government (2014) *Future Model for Community Justice in Scotland* Edinburgh: Scottish government
- 31 www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/20131024_CSfJ_2nd_progress_report_on_CWO.pdf
- 32 See Police Scotland (2013) *Equality and Diversity in Police Scotland 2013* Edinburgh: Police Scotland. This requires police officers to comply with human rights and conduct themselves 'in a fair manner, guided by the principles of impartiality and non-discrimination'.
- 33 Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service – In partnership challenging domestic abuse (2013) at www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/keep_safe/175573?view=Standard
- 34 Recommendation 14: New powers are given to the police to divert women offenders from prosecution by issuing a conditional caution directing women offenders to attend Community Justice Centres so that appropriate services can be delivered
- 35 Burman, M. & McIvor, G (2011) *Understanding the drivers of female imprisonment in Scotland* Glasgow: SCCJR
- 36 Expert panel at a February 2014 meeting held by SI Kirkcaldy and SI Dunfermline, including representatives from the SPS (retired), Fife Council, Edinburgh's Willow Project, Families Outside and legal services
- 37 At the joint meeting held by SI Kirkcaldy and SI Dunfermline in February 2014
- 38 Comments made at a meeting with SI St Andrews
- 39 Resolution 2010/16 United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules)
- 40 Email correspondence between Billie Wealleans, SI Crieff, and Lynn Millar, Highland Council Criminal Justice Services 28/08/2014
- 41 Expert panel at a February 2014 meeting held by SI Kirkcaldy and SI Dunfermline, including representatives from the SPS (retired), Fife Council, Edinburgh's Willow Project, Families Outside and legal services
- 42 www.northernjcja.org.uk/Community-Reintegration-of-Offenders
- 43 Dundee City Council (2013) Report to Policy and Resources Committee on Re-designing the Community Justice System: A Consultation on Proposals Dundee: Dundee City Council
- 44 Information supplied to SI Dundee. See also 2013 SSSC Care Accolade Awards – investing

- in preventing offending and reducing offending: Dundee, Dundee Women Offenders Team
- 45 www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Datasets/ReconvictOffendDatasets/reconrate1011
- 46 www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=service.display&p2sid=A688D384-7B94-4959-ADB4-018C9A7D86A1
- 47 Bradford, B. & MacQueen, S. (2011) *Diversions from prosecution to social work in Scotland: A snapshot of current patterns and an examination of practice in three CJAs* Edinburgh: SCCJR
- 48 Letter to Siobhan McMahon MSP
- 49 www.shinementoring.org/
- 50 Report to Northern CJA 6 December 2013 – Update on the implementation of PSPs in the Northern CJA area - Appendix 1
- 51 The Scottish Parliament (2013) *Official Report: Justice Committee* – Tuesday 5 November 2013: Session 4 Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament
- 52 www.scccj.org.uk/index.php/scottish-crime-and-justice-faqs/womens-offending-in-scotland/scottish-working-group-on-womens-offending/
- 53 'Project to help women offenders stay out of jail is a much-needed refuge for troubled females' *Daily Record*, 13 June 2014
- 54 The Scottish Parliament (2013) *Official Report: Justice Committee* – Tuesday 5 November 2013: Session 4 Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament
- 55 www.turningpointscotland.com/what-we-do/criminal-justice/218-service/
- 56 Report to Northern CJA – 14 March 2014: Women offenders' projects, Aberdeenshire and Highland - further details at appendices 1 and 2 available at www.northerncja.org.uk/CJA-Meetings/NCJA-Meeting-March-2014
- 57 www.northerncja.org.uk/WomenOffenders
- 58 www.togetherwomen.org/news/twp-receive-funding-from-soroptimists
- 59 <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/guidance/criminal/?lang=en>
- 60 www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/womeninthecriminaljusticesystemscotland.pdf
- 61 www.scottish.parliament.uk/msps/44488.aspx
- 62 Probation Trusts were replaced by the National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) on 1st June 2014
- 63 House of Commons Justice Committee (2013) *Women Offenders: After the Corston Report* London: TSO
- 64 Home Office (2007) *The Corston Report: A report by Baroness Jean Corston of a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the justice system* London: HO
- 65 O'Neill, J, *Irish Probation Journal* (Vol 8, October 2011) *The Inspire Women's Project: Managing women offenders in the community* Dublin: The Probation Service
- 66 Commission on Women Offenders (2012) *Report of the Commission on Women Offenders* Edinburgh: The Scottish government
- 67 www.nawo.org.uk/our-work/international/cedaw-nawo



Soroptimist International is dedicated to advancing women's equality and improving the lives of women. Following the doubling of the women's prison population between 1995 – 2010, the Soroptimist UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) decided to work in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust to reduce women's imprisonment. Community solutions that enable women to address the causes of their offending are more effective and less damaging for their children and families. Many women in prison have themselves been victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Soroptimists sought information from police, probation, criminal justice social workers, magistrates, sheriffs, health professionals and women's community services across the UK, about what happens locally to women who offend or are at risk of offending.

This report, based on the information gathered, profiles progress and good practice whilst identifying constraints, gaps and shortcomings in local service provision. It is intended as a spur to action, highlighting opportunities to reduce the women's prison population and share learning across jurisdictions. It makes recommendations which, if implemented, would reform women's justice and transform outcomes for women and their communities.

Most of the solutions to women's offending lie outside prison walls in treatment for addictions and mental health problems, protection from domestic violence and coercive relationships, safe housing and employment. Community sentences enable women to take control of their lives, care for their children and address the causes of their offending.

As a Soroptimist perhaps the key message I brought away from this project was that tackling women's offending is not just a matter for the justice system but for society as a whole to address.

Member, SI Lancashire