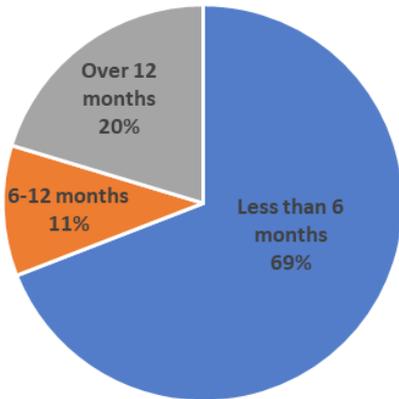


Sentence length for Welsh women sent to prison in 2018 ¹



Women from Wales were sent to prison on

857 occasions in 2018.

601 of those were immediate custodial sentences. This is a **21% increase** since 2010.²

The number of prison sentences of less than 6 months given to women has **increased by 45%** in Wales since 2008.³



69% of custodial sentences for women, compared to

There has been a **30% decrease** in the number of **community sentences** given to women since 2010.⁵



54% of custodial sentences for men in 2018 were **less than 6 months**.⁴

The average distance from home for Welsh women in prison is

101 miles.⁶

In 2017, there was an average of **259 Welsh women** in prisons in England at any one time.⁷

In each police force area most women sentenced to imprisonment are sentenced to less than 6 months.

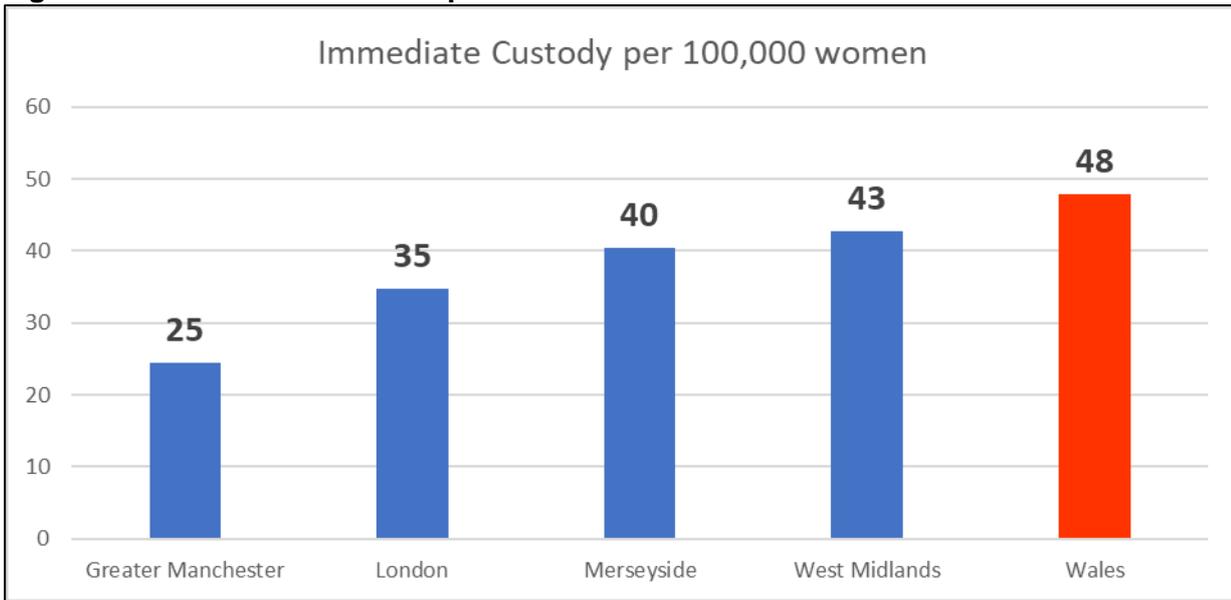
Dyfed- Powys **51%** Gwent **62%**
North Wales **62%** South Wales **74%**⁸

The estimated yearly cost for each woman on a community order/suspended sentence is: **£4,305**.⁹

The average yearly cost of a prison place at HMP Styal is: **£40,635**.¹⁰

“It can take 10 minutes for someone to talk to you, see what you’ve been through and think... you’re still fighting, still here, let’s give you a bit of leeway.”

Figure 1: Rates of immediate imprisonment for women ^{*Endnote 10}



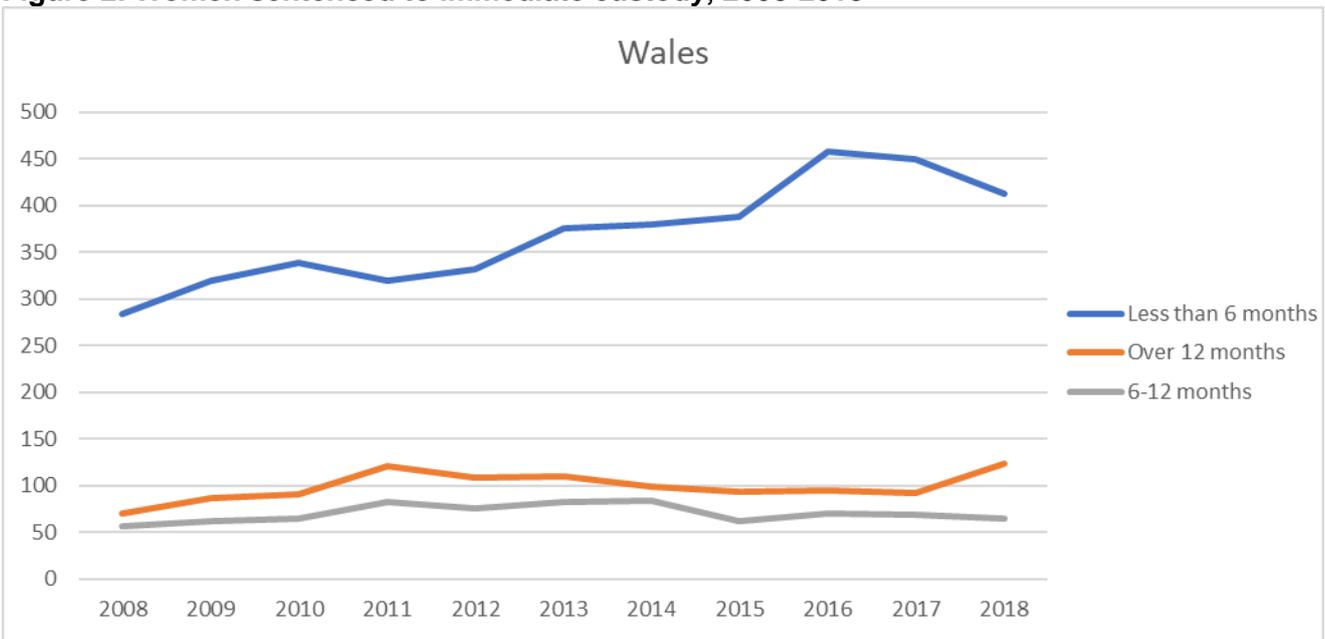
Wales has the highest rate of women’s imprisonment compared to other high custody areas, sending 48 women to custody per 100,000 of the general women’s population.¹¹

Custodial sentencing

Immediate prison sentences made up 28% of sentencing outcomes for women in Wales in 2018, compared to 10% in 2008. In 2018, 601 immediate prison sentences were given to women in Wales. Of those, 68% were sentences of less than 6 months. The frequency of women receiving prison sentences of less than 6 months has almost doubled in Wales since 2008.¹² **(Fig. 2)**

56% of immediate custodial sentences of less than 6 months for women in 2018 were for theft offences.¹³ This is consistent with national data for England and Wales. More women are sentenced to prison in Wales for theft than for violence against the person, drug offences, fraud offences, possession of offensive weapons and robbery combined. **(Fig. 3)**

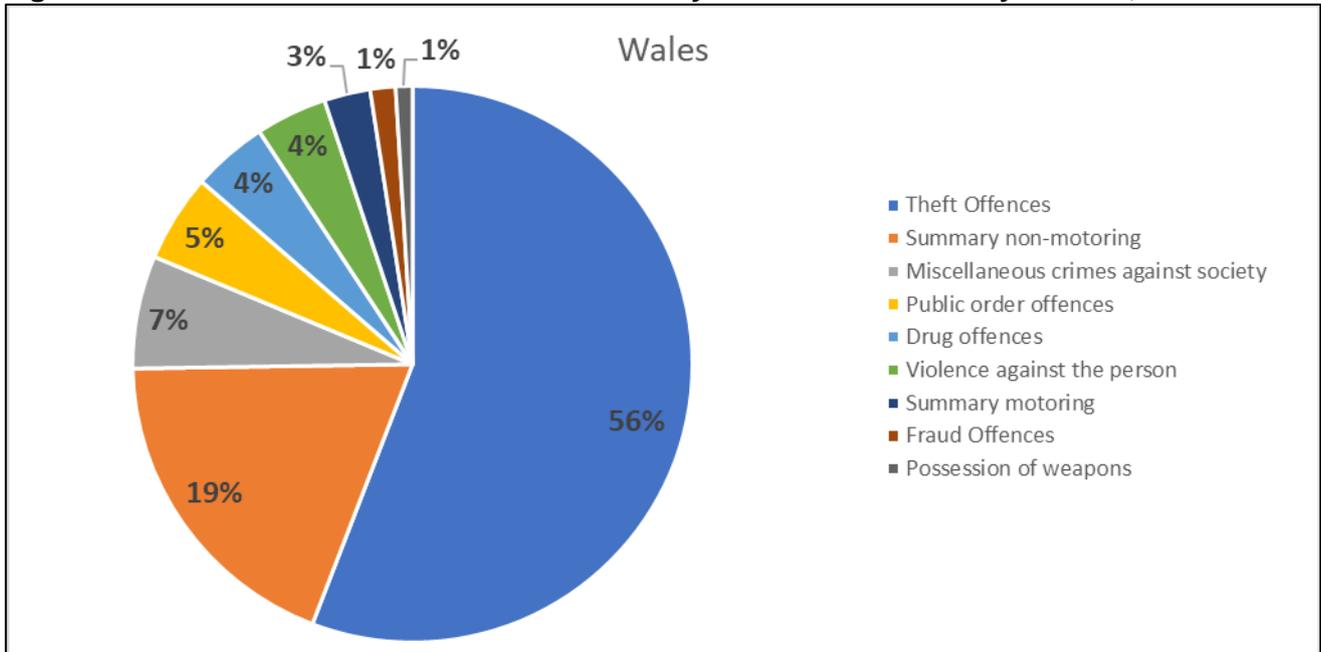
Figure 2: Women sentenced to immediate custody, 2008-2018



Source: Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018, London: MoJ

There are no women’s prisons in Wales. 74% of Welsh women were held in HMP Eastwood Park or HMP Styal in 2017.¹⁴ This means that families of Welsh women in prison have to travel long distances, which can be both difficult and expensive and resettlement is more challenging. The solution is not to build a women’s prison in Wales but to send fewer women to prison. Most of the solutions to women’s offending lie in the community.

Figure 3: Women sentenced to immediate custody of under 6 months by offence, 2018



Source: Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018, London: MoJ

“All of my sentences have been really short so you can’t go to any of the groups like Freedom programme, Counselling or Stepping Stones.”

Arrests

Since 2014 there has been a 36% decrease in the number of arrests of women in Wales and a 50% decrease in the number for cautions of women.¹⁵ In Greater Manchester, where a whole system approach was implemented in 2014, there was a 55% decrease in arrests in the same period.¹⁶

The rate of arrests of women in Wales in 2017/18 was 500 per 100,000 of the general women’s population. This was higher than in Greater Manchester (250 per 100,000), London (430 per 100,000) and the West Midlands (480 per 100,000).¹⁷

Custodial remand

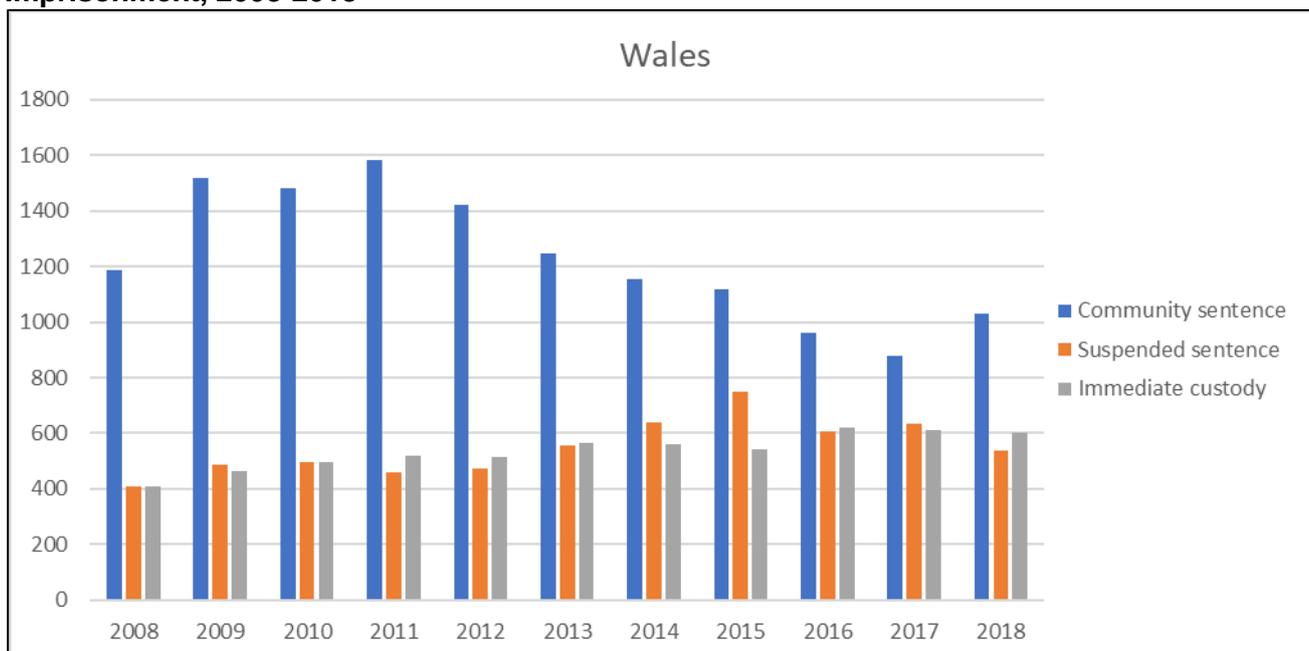
In 2018, women from Wales were remanded into prison 134 times at crown courts, 33% of whom did not go on to receive an immediate custodial sentence. Magistrates’ courts remanded women 122 times, 58% of whom did not go on to receive a custodial sentence.¹⁸

Community sentencing

Community sentences made up 47% of sentencing outcomes for women in Wales in 2018, compared to 59% in 2008. Suspended sentences made up 25% of outcomes in 2018, compared to 20% in 2008. (Fig 4)

“My ex was really nasty, he used to hit me and stuff. When the relationship ended, and I ended up in a woman’s refuge I didn’t know what to do. I met a bloke and left there because I thought he’d look after me – he was doing drugs and I joined in. I got done for handling stolen goods, and now I’ve ended up back in refuge again.”

Figure 4: Women sentenced to Community Orders, Suspended Sentences and Immediate Imprisonment, 2008-2018



Source: Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018, London: MoJ

Reoffending

The overall reoffending rate for women across England and Wales from October to December 2016 was 23.4%, which is lower than for men (30.7%). The reoffending rate for women who have received a prison sentence of less than 12 months is higher (72.7%) than it is for men (63.4%).¹⁹

Recall

In the period January to April 2017 there were 22 recalls of women from Wales on licence back to prison, 13 by Wales National Probation Service and nine by Wales Community Rehabilitation Company. There has been a 57% increase in the number of recalls of women in Wales since the period January - April 2015. Across England and Wales there was a 107% increase in the same period.²⁰

The increase in the number of women being recalled to custody is due to the introduction by the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 of mandatory 12-month post-release supervision for anyone who has served more than one day in prison. PRT’s report [Broken Trust](#)²¹ reviews the impact of recalling women to prison and recommends repeal of that provision.

What Welsh women say

Women who participated in focus groups convened as part of PRT's Transforming Lives programme reported that their offences were often a result of abusive and coercive relationships. They felt that the police response to domestic violence can be unsympathetic. Women spoke about their histories of trauma linked to problematic substance use and missed opportunities for early intervention and support.

"I don't think the judges know about domestic abuse. They don't know about control and I don't think they can be bothered to learn. If they did they'd have a bit more sympathy for how some of us had got here."

"In the magistrates they see you and the offence. They don't take anything else in to account – never look at your experiences."

Women's Pathfinder and Diversion Scheme

The Women's Pathfinder, supported by the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, HM Prison and Probation Service and the Welsh Government, is diverting women across South Wales and Gwent. In North Wales and Dyfed-Powys the police are adopting the 'Checkpoint' model.* The Women's Pathfinder commenced in 2014, aiming to '*design and deliver a women specific, whole system, integrated, multi-agency approach to women in contact with the Criminal Justice System*'.²² It includes case conference meetings and co-location of statutory probation services with voluntary sector, women-centred partners. The focus has been on diverting low risk women away from the criminal justice system into community support at the earliest opportunity. To date over 1,500 women have accessed early intervention/support from voluntary sector partners based within the local custody suites across the four police forces. An evaluation by the University of South Wales evidenced a 26% reduction in women's reoffending and found that the re-arrest rate in the pilot sites was around half that in the comparison sites (17.8% compared with 35%).²³

Women's centres in Wales

"It was really good. I felt comfortable there, there were no men around and the workers were good and they were there to help me with my problems. They helped me contact my GP about my mental health. I was offered a female probation officer and it really helped me."

Women's centres, such as the North Wales Women's Centre, can provide effective support and safe, non-stigmatising settings for women to address drivers to their offending such as problematic substance use and abusive relationships.²⁴ Women who attend and receive support from women's centres are less likely to reoffend than those who do not. A report by the Justice Data Lab found that the one year proven reoffending rate for women who had received support was 30%, compared to 35% for those who did not.²⁵ There is extensive qualitative evidence of the effectiveness of women-specific support services. Increased funding would enable women's centres in Wales to support the unmet needs of women who may otherwise face short custodial sentences.

Women's recommendations for reform

"They should look at alternative programmes not just prison. If it's linked to drug abuse, then prison isn't going to solve the problem is it?"

"The judge just looks at you like you're worthless, like you're wasting their time being back there. They don't want to help, just look at the right sentence."

"They should make sure men and women do community service separately. It's so intimidating doing it with the men."

* For further information see [Prison Reform Trust's report 'Fair Cop'](#), p.17.

Moving Forward

Improving outcomes for women is a priority in the *Wales Reducing Reoffending Strategy* and in the *Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales 2018-2023*. In May 2019 the Welsh Government published the '*Wales Blueprint to reduce women's offending*', aimed at realising the ambition to reduce the number of women at every stage of the criminal justice system. The Women in Justice Group including women with direct experience of the criminal justice system informed this work, which is linked to the UK government's Female Offender Strategy (2018).

About the Prison Reform Trust

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) is an independent UK charity working to create 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 women's prison population in England and Wales more than doubled between 1995 and 2010 – from under 2,000 women to over 4,000. The numbers have since declined to under 4,000 but this remains one of the highest rates of imprisonment for women in Western Europe.

PRT has a longstanding interest in improving criminal justice outcomes for women and we are currently pursuing a strategy through our Transforming Lives programme, supported by the National Lottery Community Fund, to reduce the unnecessary imprisonment of women in the UK.

For further information about the distinct drivers to women's offending and practical proposals please see our recent publications at www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/women

- On the experiences of women with learning disabilities in the criminal justice system: [Out of the Shadows: Women with learning disabilities in contact with or on the edges of the criminal justice system](#)
- On the recall of women see: [Broken Trust: The rising numbers of women recalled to prison](#)
- On the experiences of foreign national women and trafficked women in the criminal justice system see: [Still no way out: Foreign national women and trafficked women in the criminal justice system](#)
- On the impact on children of maternal imprisonment and recommendations for reform see: [What about me? The impact on children when mothers are involved in the criminal justice system](#)
- On the availability of accommodation for women on release from prison and the impact this can have on successful resettlement see: [Home truths: Housing for women in the criminal justice system](#)
- On domestic abuse and the link between women's victimisation and their offending see: ["There's a reason we're in trouble" - Domestic abuse as a driver to women's offending](#)
- On the experiences of BAME women and Muslim women in the criminal justice system see: [Counted Out: Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system](#)
- On the benefits of 'problem-solving approaches' and early intervention for women see: [Fair Cop? Improving outcomes for women at the point of arrest](#)
- On the way local authorities can support women involved in the criminal justice system see: [Leading Change: the role of local authorities in supporting women with multiple needs](#)

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- ¹ Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018, London: MoJ
- ² Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018, London: MoJ; Ministry of Justice (2019) Remands at the Crown Court: Pivot Table Analytical Tool for England and Wales 12 months ending December 2014 to 12 months ending December 2018. London: MoJ and Ministry of Justice (2019) Remands at the Magistrates Court: Pivot Table Analytical Tool for England and Wales 12 months ending December 2014 to 12 months ending December 2018. London: MoJ
- ³ Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics: December 2017, London: MoJ
- ⁴ Ibid
- ⁵ Ibid
- ⁶ House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee (2007) Welsh Prisoners in the Prison Estate: Third Report of Session 2006-07. London: HoC
- ⁷ Dr Robert Jones (2018) Imprisonment in Wales: A Factfile. Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University & University of South Wales.
- ⁸ Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018, London: MoJ
- ⁹ National Offender Management Service (2014) National Offender Management Service: Business Plan 2014-2015. London: NOMS
- ¹⁰ Ministry of Justice (2018) Cost per place and costs per prisoner by individual prison. HM prison and Probation Service Annual Report and Accounts 2017-18 Management Information Addendum. London: MoJ
- ¹¹ Ministry of Justice (2018) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017, London: MoJ. London: Home Office and Office for National Statistics, Population Pivot Tool mid-2016 UK, London: ONS. This rate should be treated with caution, as it has been calculated using 2017 court outcomes data and 2016 estimated general population data from the Office for National Statistics.
- ¹² Ministry of Justice (2019) Court Outcomes by Police Force Area Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018, London: MoJ
- ¹³ Ibid
- ¹⁴ Dr Robert Jones (2018) Imprisonment in Wales: A Factfile. Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University & University of South Wales.
- ¹⁵ Ministry of Justice (2018) Out of Court Disposals Data Tool, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017, London: MoJ
- ¹⁶ Home Office (2018) Arrest open data tables, ONS Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2018. London: Home Office
- ¹⁷ Home Office (2018) Arrest open data tables, ONS Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2018. London: Home Office and Office for National Statistics, Population Pivot Tool mid-2016 UK, London: ONS. These rates should be treated with caution, as they have been calculated using 2017/18 police force arrest data and 2016 estimated general population data from the Office for National Statistics.
- ¹⁸ Ministry of Justice (2019) Remands at the Crown Court: Pivot Table Analytical Tool for England and Wales 12 months ending December 2014 to 12 months ending December 2018. London: MoJ and Ministry of Justice (2019) Remands at the Magistrates Court: Pivot Table Analytical Tool for England and Wales 12 months ending December 2014 to 12 months ending December 2018. London: MoJ
- ¹⁹ Ministry of Justice (2018) Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System. London: MoJ
- ²⁰ Ministry of Justice (2018) FOI on Recall FOI 113548 * The data represented values of one or two recalls per quarter with an asterisk: our calculations assumed that * = 1 to reach a minimum figure for that quarter.
- ²¹ Prison Reform Trust (2018) Broken Trust: The rising numbers of women recalled to prison. London: PRT
- ²² Women's pathfinder: <https://www.iomcymru.org.uk/Women%E2%80%99s-Pathfinder/>
- ²³ Holloway, K., Williams, K. and Brayford, J. (2017) Evaluation of the Pan-Wales Women's Triage (The Diversion Scheme) University of South Wales
- ²⁴ Radcliffe, P. and Hunter, G. (2013) The Development and Impact of Community Services for Women Offenders: An Evaluation, London: ICPR. Available at www.icpr.org.uk/media/34025/ReportNuffieldfinal.pdf [accessed 21 March 2018].
- ²⁵ Justice Data Lab (2015) Justice Data Lab Reoffending Analysis Women's Centres throughout England. London: MoJ