



# Short Study on Women Offenders

May 2009

**Making  
government  
work better**

# Ministerial foreword



“Social exclusion is a very real issue for many women offenders. Before they ever come into contact with the criminal justice system, many women offenders experience a range of entrenched and complex problems, including poor mental and physical health, financial hardship, substance misuse, homelessness and abuse. Their offending comes at great cost

to individuals and society, and can limit the life chances of not just one, but several generations.

This joint Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice short study takes a fresh look at how we can better meet the complex needs of women offenders, and reap the benefits of earlier, improved support. The work builds on our commitment to help some of the most vulnerable people in our society and a coordinated effort to break cycles of disadvantage.

We are grateful to the frontline professionals, groups and experts who have contributed to and supported this work, and we convey particular thanks to Barnardo's, who have been a valuable partner in this work.”

Kevin Brennan MP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Brennan'.

Parliamentary Secretary, Minister for the Third Sector, Cabinet Office



“Women offenders have a broad range of complex problems, and present needs which are distinct to those of male offenders. Though problems may have begun long before they enter the criminal justice system, custody can exacerbate pre-existing problems and disadvantage, and have a compounding impact on the lives of their children and families.

Of course for women who have committed serious offences or who present a danger to the public, custody will remain the only appropriate sentence. Women form only a small proportion of the criminal justice system – making up around five percent of the total prison population – and we are committed to ensuring that for those women who are in prison, regimes are as effective and appropriate as possible. We are encouraged that the number of women in prison appears to be falling, and we will build on that in our plans to divert women, who are not serious or dangerous offenders, from custody.

This report reinforces our understanding of the complexity of women offenders' lives and needs, and the interventions and systems that can make lasting and positive change, and I would like to thank all those who have been involved.”

Maria Eagle MP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maria Eagle'.

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice

## Executive summary

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Women in prison constitute a small proportion of the number of women offenders who pass through the criminal justice system each year. Their crimes often come at great cost to society, their families and themselves. Though most women offenders do not pose a threat to society, most have multiple complex needs and many are caught in a damaging cycle of abuse, victimisation, and offending. The majority are also mothers. Problems often begin long before women enter the criminal justice system, yet they have not been able to engage in or get the support they need. By the time they reach prison, their problems are likely to have become entrenched and more complex, and outcomes for the whole family can be affected.

Women offenders need to be punished appropriately, however, we also need to tackle the underlying causes of crime, the pathways to offending behaviour, and break cycles of disadvantage at the earliest possible moment if we are to make a sustained difference.

The Ministry of Justice and its partners have taken major steps to address the needs of women offenders. Significant progress has been made since the publication of the Corston Report to drive forward a programme of cross-government reform. Key milestones include the publication of a service framework for women offenders and the announcement of a £15.6m diversion fund for provision for women offenders and women at risk.

In delivering systemic change, there is great value in complementing existing provision with earlier, intensive and tailored support. By building on the most exciting existing practice, and by using initial contact with the criminal justice system as an opportunity to identify and engage women with complex problems much earlier on, there is an opportunity to further improve outcomes for women offenders and their families and to ensure early and effective provision for those at risk.

# Key findings: profile and need

**The number of women in prison represents a small proportion of the number of female offenders who pass through the criminal justice system each year**

- There were 4,347 women (18+) in prison in September 2008. A fifth were on remand and a fifth were foreign nationals. Analysis of prison population statistics and receptions data underlines that the majority of women in prison are young, in custody for non-violent offences, and serving less than 12 months. In addition, many more women enter prison each year. In 2007 there were 11,847 new female prison receptions.
- There is a larger group of women offenders in the community. In 2007, 19,483 community sentences were handed down to adult women, though there is little information on the women or their families.
- Owing to data limitations, the full picture of the female offending population is incomplete.

**Women offenders have a broad range of complex problems and the majority are estimated to be mothers**

- Analysis of 2007 data for 11,763 women under probation supervision who have received an OASys assessment shows that 76% had 2 or more needs and that a significant number are particularly high need. Women offenders experience high rates of mental health disorders, victimisation, abuse, and substance misuse, and have low skills and rates of employment. Their specific needs are distinct from those of male offenders.
- Over half of women in prison are estimated to be mothers, although there are no definitive statistics on the number of women offenders who are parents, or robust data on their children. New analysis of the ALSPAC data set shows that children with mothers who have been in trouble with the law are at greater risk of poorer outcomes such as poor parental interactions, anti-social behaviours and symptoms of emotional problems.

**There are a number of criminal justice initiatives and pilots, some for women offenders, and a broad range of support for girls and women with complex problems**

- Custody is often associated with a range of negative outcomes and high costs.
- There are a range of disposals to divert offenders from custody, including cautioning and community sentencing, diversionary pilots and initiatives for public service reform.
- Vulnerable women and girls are likely to be in contact with a range of services, though there may not be a full picture of their complex needs or offending.
- There is a developing body of evidence on the risk and protective factors associated with female offending and on what works to influence these factors. We have an idea of the key characteristics that make provision for vulnerable women effective, which includes whole family assessment, lead professional delivery and intensive tailored support.

# Key findings: systems and support

## **Citizen empowerment:**

More personalised and responsive services offer prospects for improved outcomes

- Support within the criminal justice system is often insufficiently designed to fully identify and address the complex and interrelated needs associated with social exclusion. There are opportunities to increase the use of problem-solving approaches that may also deal with the underlying causes of offending behaviour. Current support does not always reflect the circumstances particular to women, and can lack the degree of personalisation required to best address an individual's distinct needs.
- Women who have multiple problems may find access to support difficult owing to high service thresholds, specialist assessments and siloed information processes. Furthermore, clients can lack the incentive to engage, and lack the ability to exercise choice and control over their package of support.

## **New professionalism:**

Enhanced delivery requires greater consistency, improved skills, incentives and more robust processes to effectively engage those with complex needs

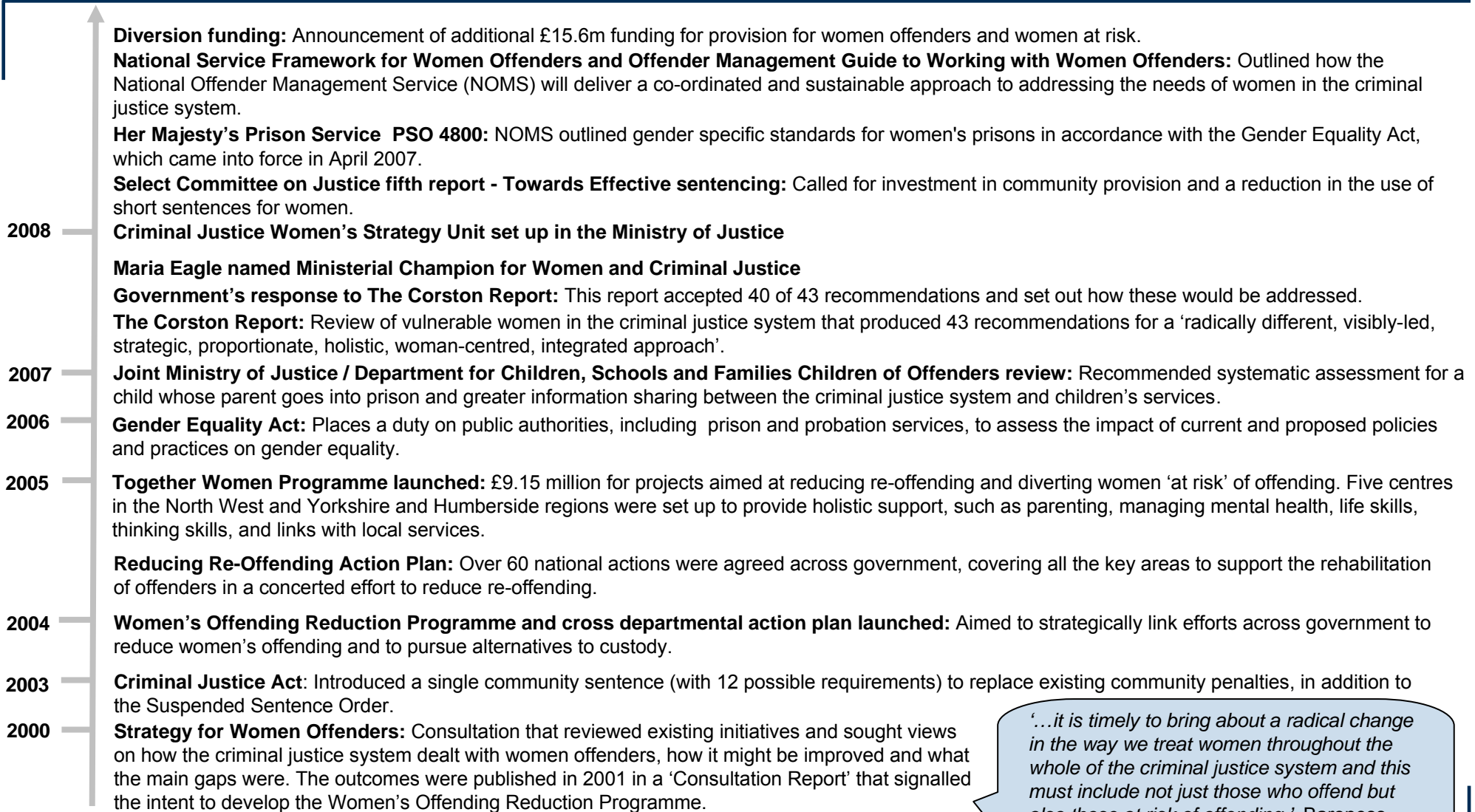
- Working with clients with complex needs can be demanding and practitioners need the skills, knowledge, flexibility and capacity to respond effectively.
- Clients will be known to multiple agencies, but contact will often be chaotic, ineffective and expensive. Professionals need incentives to deliver sustained support for women and girls at risk, and to encourage clients to engage.

## **Strategic leadership:**

Though important progress has been made, there are opportunities to strengthen the data and focus on women offenders and those at risk

- Important progress has been made to improve support for vulnerable women in the criminal justice system, in particular since the Government's response to the Corston Report. There are innovative models of support across the country. There is an opportunity to build on this progress and address the high needs of vulnerable women offenders in the community through tailored provision and earlier intervention.
- Both nationally and locally, it is important to have a consolidated picture on women offenders and those at risk. However, weaknesses in data quality and lack of a gender-specific focus can render needs 'invisible' and pose additional challenges in the design and delivery of support.

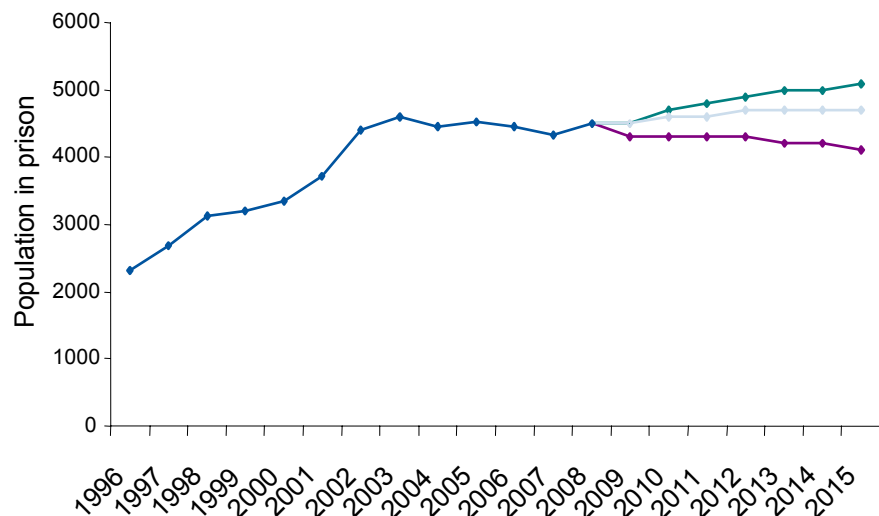
# There has been growing recognition of the need for better support for women offenders



*'...it is timely to bring about a radical change in the way we treat women throughout the whole of the criminal justice system and this must include not just those who offend but also those at risk of offending.'* Baroness Corston, The Corston Report March 2007

# The female prison population is small but fluid

Female prison population projections (1) (low, medium and high)



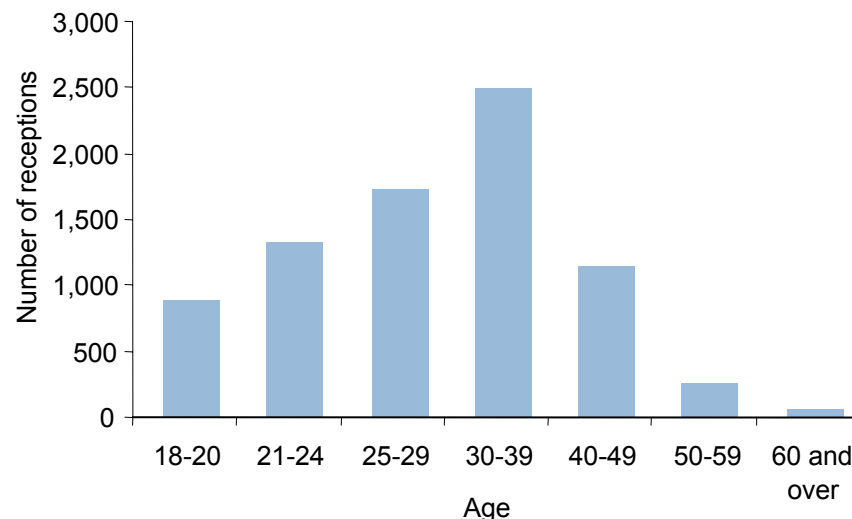
• In September 2008, there were 4,347 adult women in prison, and 73 young female offenders in custody (2). Whilst this number may seem relatively small, many more women enter custody each year: there were 11,847 new female prison receptions in 2007 (3). However, owing to the way offences are counted, we cannot specify how many women this represents.

• The female prison population more than doubled between 1996 and 2002 (4). Between October 2008 and March 2009 (inclusive) the adult female prison population fell every month in comparison with the previous year (5).

• The total number of female foreign national receptions more than quadrupled between 1996 and 2007, from 303 to 1,336 (6).

• Ministry of Justice projections suggest that the prison population will remain constant, at best, or otherwise increase further (7).

Female receptions into prison (immediate custody) by age, 2007 (8)



• In 2007, half (50%) of adult women received into prison under immediate custody in 2007 were under 30 (3,934) and 82% were under 40 (6,419) (9). The average waiting time for those remanded in custody awaiting cases committed for trial at the Crown Court was 12.9 weeks (10).

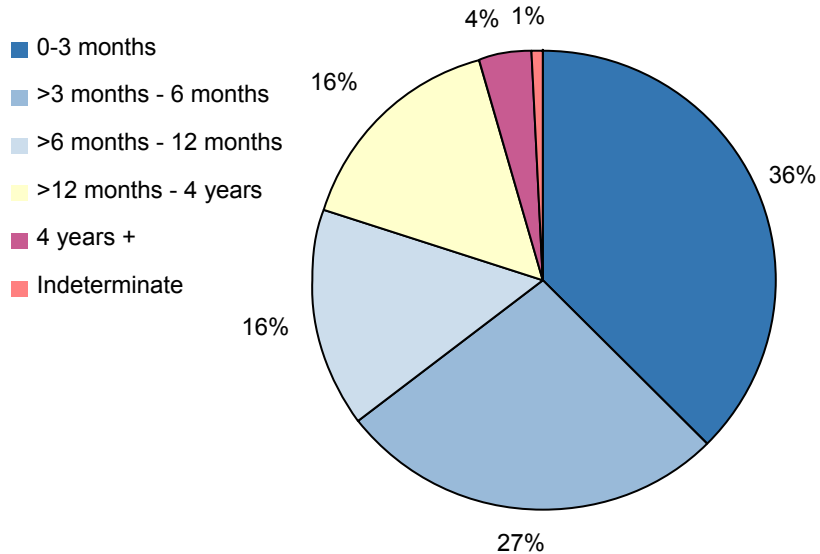
• In September 2008 a fifth of women prisoners (916) were on remand, of which two thirds (609) were awaiting trial and one third awaiting sentencing (11).

• Over a fifth of women in prison are foreign nationals. 849 (19%) women and girls (all ages) in prison in September 2008 were foreign nationals compared to 13% for men (12). 58% of sentenced foreign national prisoners in September 2008 were being held for drug offences and 18% for fraud and forgery. The most common country of origin was Nigeria (147), followed by Jamaica (78) (13).



# Most women in custody serve short sentences, and the majority are imprisoned for non-violent offences

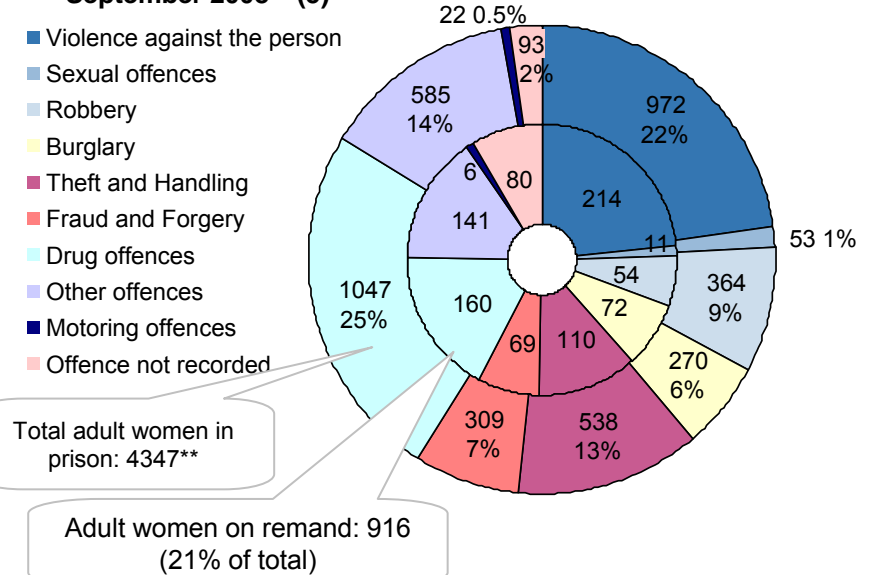
**Sentenced receptions for adult women, by length of sentence 2007\* (1)**



\*Excludes fine defaulters (n=148) and women on remand.

- Over a third of prison receptions for adult women under immediate custodial sentence (18+) were for sentences of less than 3 months, and 79% for less than one year (2).
- In 2007 the average sentence length for female prisoners of all ages was 9.5 months (3).
- Under existing legislation prisoners with determinate sentences serve half of their sentence in custody (4).

**Adult women (18+) in prison by type of custody and offence, September 2008\*\* (5)**



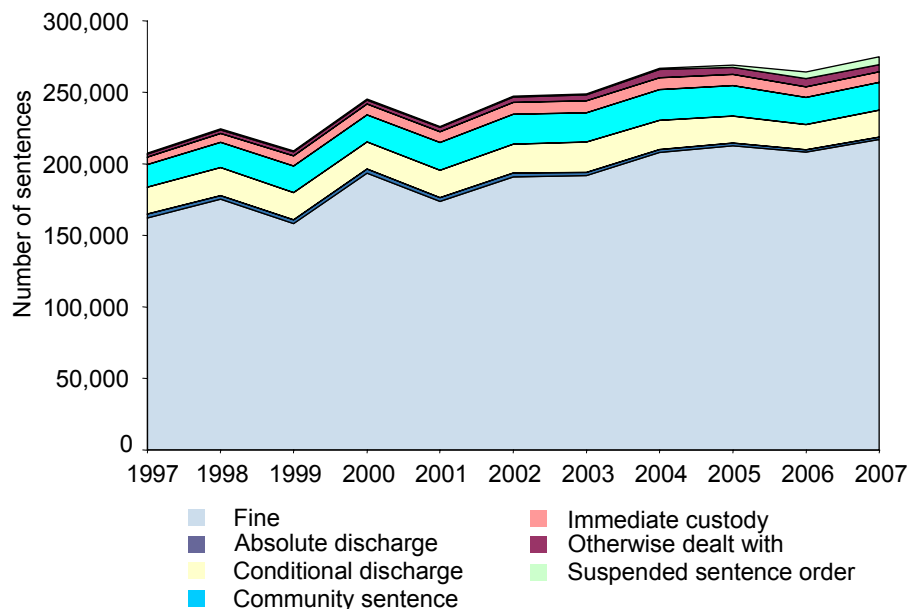
\*\*Chart excludes non criminal offences (77) and fine defaulters (17).

- 68% of women are in prison for non-violent offences (compared with 47% for men) (6).
- A quarter of all women in prison had been sentenced for drugs offences (7).
- Reoffending rates for women discharged from prison, though slightly lower than those for men, remain relatively high: 46.6 for men and 45.0 for women (2006 cohort) (8). However, when they do re-offend, females discharged from prison are more prolific than men: 445.0 offences per 100 male reoffenders compared to 485.8 per 100 female re-offenders (9).



# There is a large group of women offenders in the community

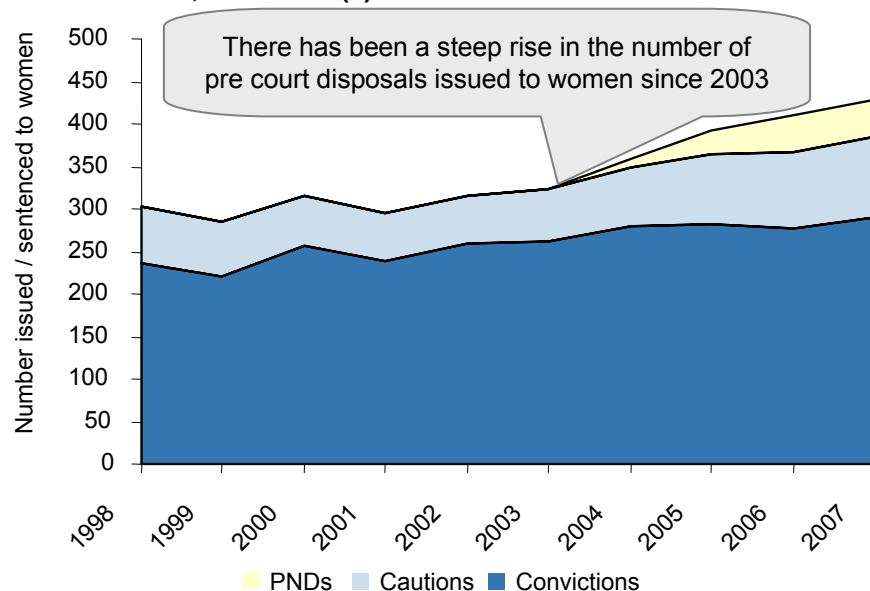
**Sentences by type for adult women convicted of both indictable and summary offences, 1997-2007 (1)**



## Over three quarters of women who reach court receive a non-custodial penalty

- Of the 274,737 sentences given to women in 2007, 79% were fines, 7% were community sentences, and 7% were absolute or conditional discharges(2).
- In 2007, there were around 20,000 community sentences handed down to women, though there is little data about the women who received them (3).

**Number of Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND), cautions and convictions for all women, 1998-2007 (4)**



## Many women do not reach court

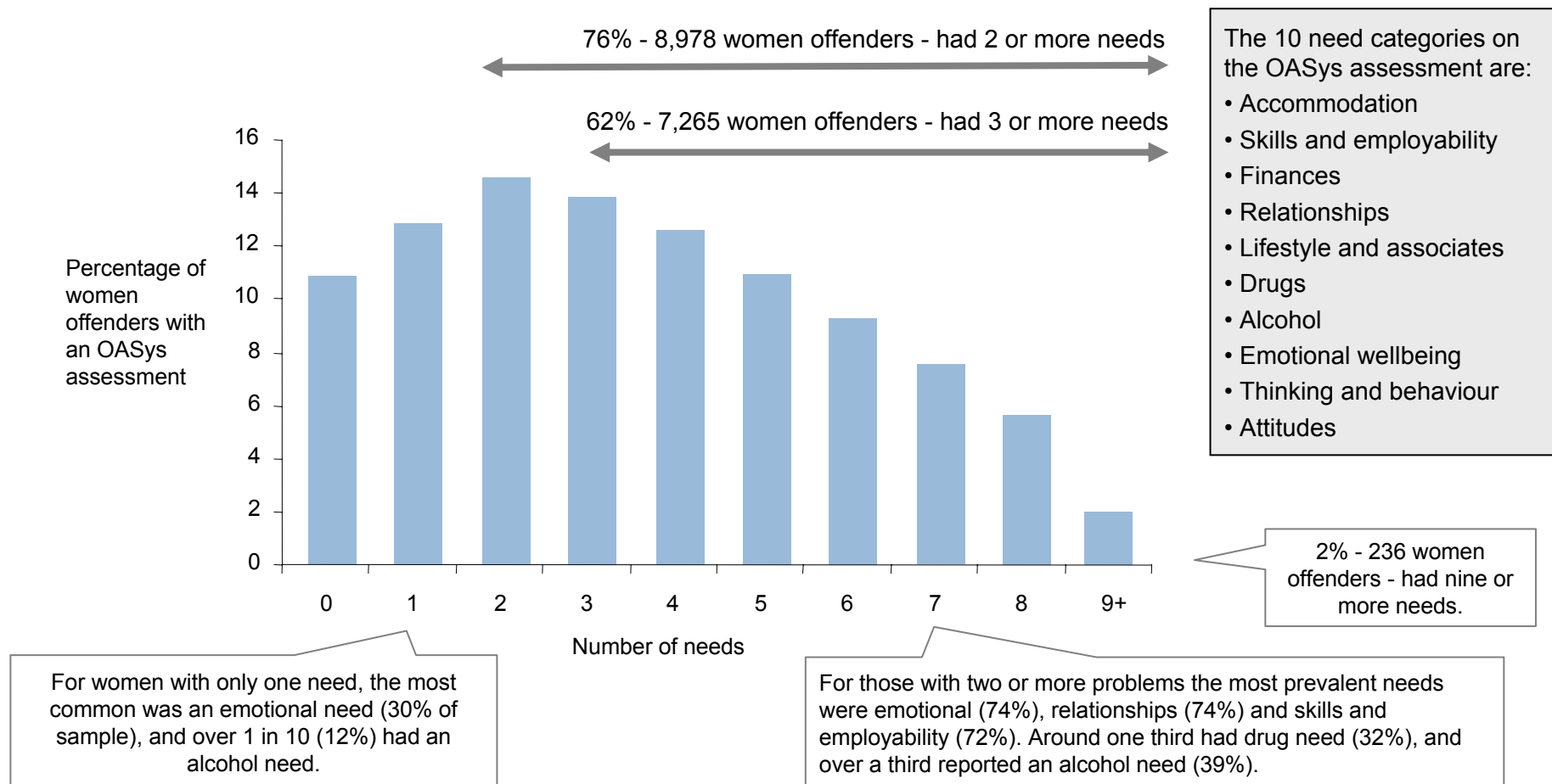
- In 2007, 55,740 cautions were issued to adult women (18+) (5).
- In 2007, over 45,000 Penalty Notices for Disorder were issued to women over 16 years of age (6).

## Women are more likely to be cautioned than men

- As a proportion of all those cautioned / warned and proceeded against, women are more likely to receive a caution for indictable offences than men, irrespective of age group (7). Girls are also more likely to receive a caution than women (8).

# Women offenders have multiple needs

Analysis of the data for 11,763 women under probation supervision\* who have received an OASys assessment shows that **89% of women offenders were identified as having at least one need, and that a significantly large number have multiple needs (1).**



# Women offenders have a broad range of needs

Analysis of the data for men and women under probation supervision who have received an OASys assessment\* shows that offenders have a **broad range of needs**. Women offenders experience high rates of mental health disorders, victimisation, abuse, and substance misuse, and have low skills and rates of employment. Their specific needs are distinct from those of male offenders (1).

**Accommodation:** a third of women offenders (33%) presented an accommodation need. As the majority of women in prison receive custodial sentences of less than 12 months, many women offenders report finding themselves caught in 'catch 22' situations around securing benefits and the return of their children.

**Relationships:** OASys data suggest women offenders have more problems with their relationships (59%) than male offenders (35%), this includes poor childhood experiences and poor close family relationships, and abuse. Stable relationships have been recognised as a factor in reducing reoffending, and having family ties is positively linked to successful prisoner resettlement and reducing reoffending.

**Lifestyle and associates:** nearly a third (30%) of women offenders had a significant need in relation to lifestyle and associates, compared with 34% of male offenders. Key factors include poor community integration and risky or reckless behaviours, including associating with criminal peers.

**Employment and skills need:** 58% of women offenders (compared to 53% of males) identified unemployment and skills as an issue contributing to their offending.

**Finance:** A quarter of women offenders (25%) presented a finance need, compared to 19% of men.

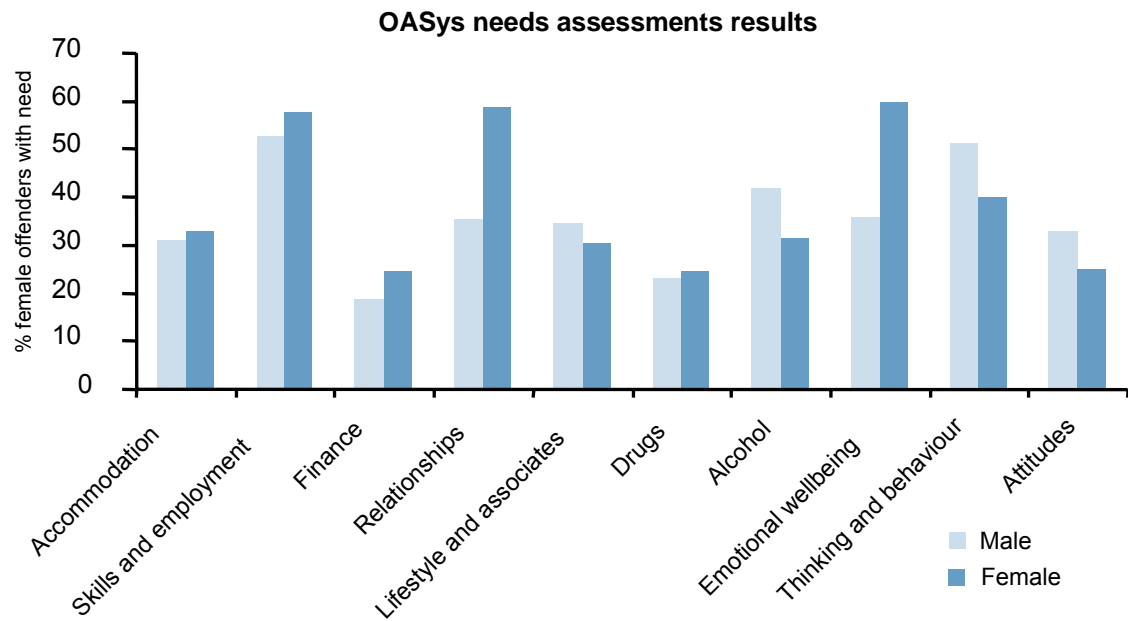
**Drugs:** 24% of women had a drug misuse issue linked to offending behaviour (compared to 23% of men), while 27% women (compared to 20%) reported a form of current serious drug use.\*\*

**Alcohol:** 31% of female offenders who were assessed had an alcohol misuse problem (42% men).

**Attitudes:** a quarter of women offenders (25%, compared to 32% male offenders) were assessed as having an attitudinal issue such as uncooperative behaviour or pro-criminal views.

**Thinking and behaviour:** 40% of female offenders (compared with 51% male offenders) had a significant need in relation to thinking and behaviour. This includes poor interpersonal skills.

**Emotional well-being:** 60% of women had problems recorded against emotional well-being (a proxy for psychological and psychiatric issues) compared with 36% of men. In many cases, there are high levels of mental health issues and social isolation, including self-harm, and low-self esteem as a result of a history of victimisation.



\*Descriptive statistics for women offenders' needs were calculated using OASys probation termination assessments completed in 2005-06 and 2006-07 (11,763 women). Termination assessments include those who received sentences (custodial and community sentences) of more than 12 months. \*\* Current use of heroin, methadone (not prescribed), opiates, crack/cocaine, cocaine hydrochloride or misused prescribed drugs.

# Women offenders have a high rate of mental health disorders

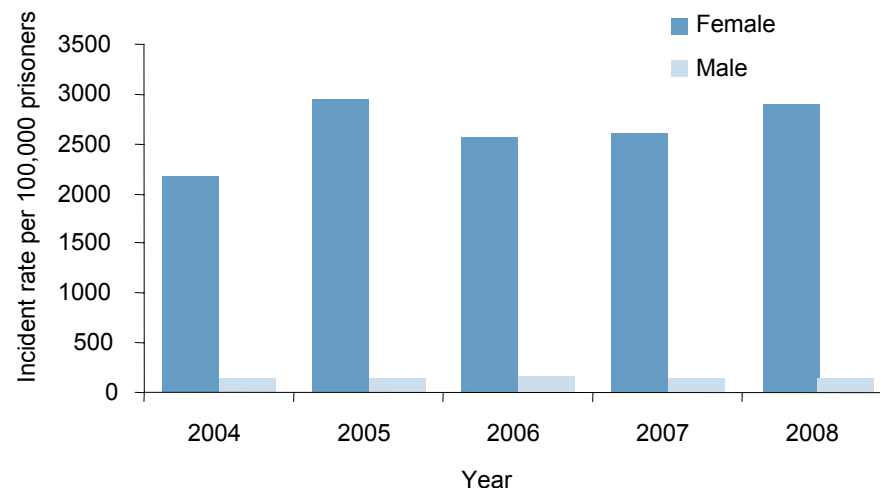
**Our analysis of OASys found that 60% of women have problems recorded against emotional well-being (a proxy for psychological and psychiatric issues). The extent of their mental health disorders is corroborated by a range of other studies:**

- Women in custody are five times more likely to have mental health problems than women in the general population (1).
- Up to 80% of women in prison have diagnosable mental health problems and one in five women on remand in 2003 were identified as suffering from psychosis (2).
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) reported that in 2006/07 a fifth (19%) of women had attempted suicide during the year before custody, nearly three times the rate reported for men (3).
- Data from the Safer Custody Group shows that in 2008 1,502 individual women (a rate of 333 per 100,000 prisoners) and 4,859 men (62 per 100,000) self harmed. The number of incidents reported for women is also four times higher than that of men (4).
- Research undertaken by the national evaluation of prison mental health in-reach services in August 2008 at a local establishment for young and adult women found that of all those screened (212), 51% (108) had severe and enduring mental illness, 47% (100) a major depressive order, 6% (12) any psychosis and 3% (6) schizophrenia (5).

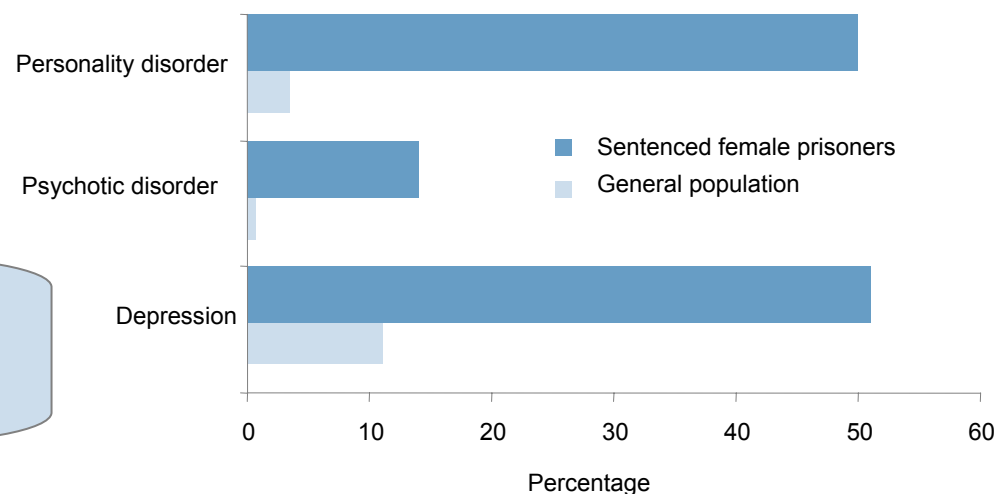
*"I did suffer with depression and I've taken eight overdoses now... and I have slit my wrists about 50 times..."*

Young girl at risk of offending, with a violent and abusive background and a history of sexually exploitative relationships with older boys and young men (6).

**Self harm incident rate per 100,000 prisoners (7)**



**Psychiatric morbidity in the UK among sentenced female prisoners and the general population (1997) (8)**



# Women offenders experience high rates of victimisation and abuse

**Our analysis of OASys found that 59% of women reported problems with relationships, such as poor childhood experiences and poor close family relationships (including abuse) and that 40% had a significant need in relation to thinking and behaviour. The extent of their experience of victimisation and abuse is highlighted in a range of other studies:**

- An HMIP report from 1997 found that nearly half of a sample of 234 women prisoners reported a history of physical abuse and almost one third reported experience of sexual abuse (1).
- 27% of 500 women prisoners interviewed in a more recent survey reported that they had been paid for sex before coming into prison (2).
- When women are violent, it is more likely that it will be directed at someone they know than in the case of men. Of women aged 18-25 reporting themselves as perpetrators of violent offences, 48% describe their relationship to the victim as their partner, 26% as siblings and 21% as friends. Only 23% were violent towards 'someone else', as compared to 41% of men in the same age group. Younger girls (aged 10-17) were more likely to report being violent towards friends 40% or siblings 40% (3).
- Women's sexual and violent victimisation can play a part in the onset and persistence of offending (4).

A HMIP survey of 11 women's establishments from April 2003 – November 2004 reported that a quarter of women had been victimised by other prisoners, with the most common method of victimisation being verbal. A fifth of respondents also claimed victimisation from staff, with insulting remarks being the most common method (5).

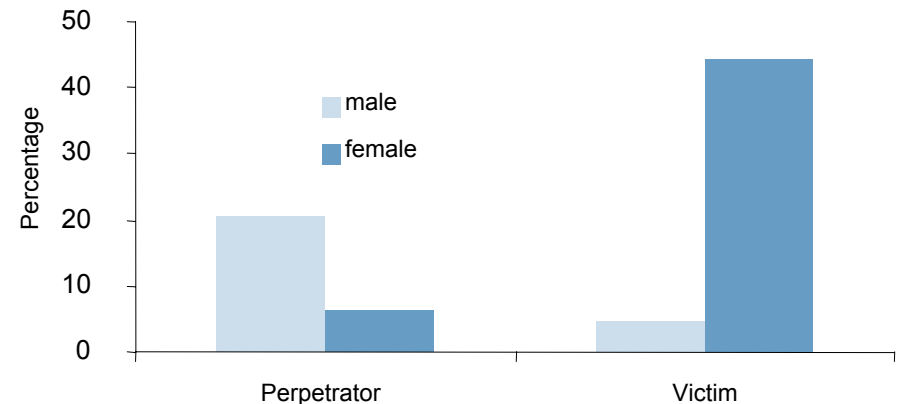
*"One of my step-brothers. He abused me when I were eight for about three years. My mam knew about it and she didn't do nowt about it. She caught him enough times."*

Girl (18 – 21) in custody, with a violent mother and a history of drug abuse. Her latest offence was a violent attack on a family member.

*"From my earliest memories, well before I was put into care, I was always living in constant fear... I witnessed a lot of violence, you know, ... so when I was actually taken into care, that was a relief to me, but when I look back, that is when my problems started."*

Woman (21+) in custody. She had been in care from an early age, was excluded from school and progressed from secure units to a custodial sentence (6).

**Percentage of offenders who are involved in domestic violence – taken from women with valid OASys assessments\* (7)**



# Women offenders have high levels of substance misuse

Proportion of prisoners who reported using drugs during the year before custody (2008) (1)

	Men %	Women %
<b>Any drug</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>65</b>
Cannabis	55	45
Heroin	30	44
Non-prescribed methadone	9	17
Non-prescribed tranquilizers	16	26
Crack	30	49
Cocaine powder	25	17
Amphetamines	14	11
Ecstasy	15	7
LSD	3	2
<i>Unweighted base (N)</i>	1,318	135

*"With heroin it took the depression away. So I thought, I don't need to kill myself, I'll just carry on using heroin... but then it got to the point when you're not even living, you're just existing."*

Young woman (aged 18 – 21) serving a non custodial sentence. She had violent and neglectful parents, spent time in and out of care, acquired a drug habit as a teenager and was sleeping rough (10).

Our analysis of OASys data shows that 31% of female offenders under statutory supervision were assessed as having an alcohol problem (42% men) and 24% females (compared to 23% men) had a drug misuse issue. This is corroborated by a range of other studies:

- Around 70% of women coming into custody require clinical detoxification (2).
- 65% of women had used a drug during the year before custody (3). Levels of use of heroin (44%), non-prescribed tranquilisers (26%) and crack (49%) were significantly higher than for men (4).
- Practitioners reported that women may hide or underplay substance misuse through fear of losing their children (5).
- Furthermore, there is a close correlation between violent crime and alcohol. There is a large body of evidence linking alcohol misuse with offending – in a 2003 Home Office study 45% of female binge-drinkers reported at least one offending incident in the past year (6). According to our analysis of OASys data, 55% of those convicted of violent crime have an alcohol problem (7).
- Research undertaken by the national evaluation of prison mental health in-reach services in August 2008 found that 75% of the sample had a dual diagnosis (co-existing severe and enduring mental illness *and* drinking and/or drug problem) (8).

*"I just really, really liked it, from the first time. Escape. Feel no pain. Feel nothing, takes your feelings away actually after a while."*

Woman in custody, who had had an unhappy but not deprived childhood. She was introduced to drugs by an older partner, acquired a habit and became a prolific offender with a series of shoplifting offences (9).

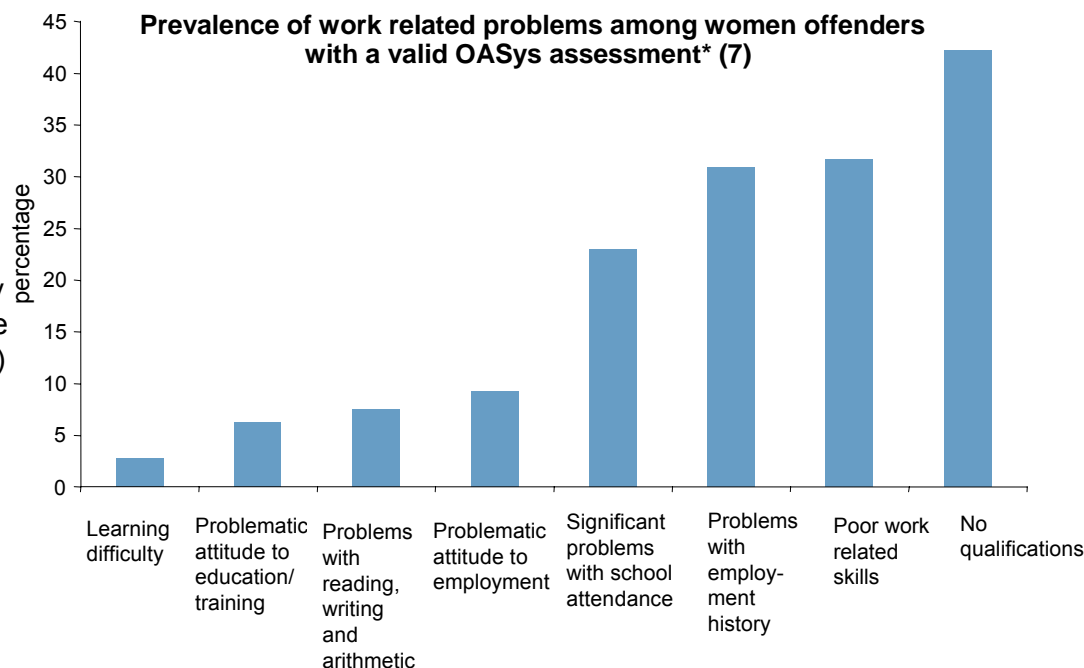
# Women offenders have low skills and rates of employment

Analysis of OASys suggests that 28% of female offenders' crimes were financially motivated (compared with 20% men). 32% of women had significant problems with respect to work related skills compared to 20% of men. 93% of women identified as having an employment need relating to their offending behaviour had problems with their employment history. These findings are corroborated by a range of other studies:

- The Social Exclusion Unit (2002) found that 33% of the sentenced female population had been excluded from school, with 71% of imprisoned women claiming to have no educational qualifications (1).
- In a Home Office study from 2000, 74% of females in prison had left school at the age of 15 or 16 compared to 32% in the general population (2).
- In 2002/2003, 52% of imprisoned women had a reading proficiency at Level One and below, and 76% had numeracy levels at Level One or below (Level One is the expected level of an average 11-year old) (3).
- According to the Bradley Report (2009) there is currently no standardised measure used to identify offenders with learning disabilities. Differences in definition and identification mean that the prevalence of learning disabilities and difficulties is very hard to estimate (4). Learning disability is associated with perpetration and victimisation experiences (5).
- Home Office (2000) research found that of the 567 women prisoners interviewed, only three in ten were working in the period before imprisonment (most often in low-skilled and short-term work) (6).

*"Long term poverty, debts and loans with high interest are the reality for many women offenders. In addition, the family finances may have been managed by the partner with the women not even having a basic bank account."*

*Offender Management Guide to Working with Women (Ministry of Justice, 2008)*



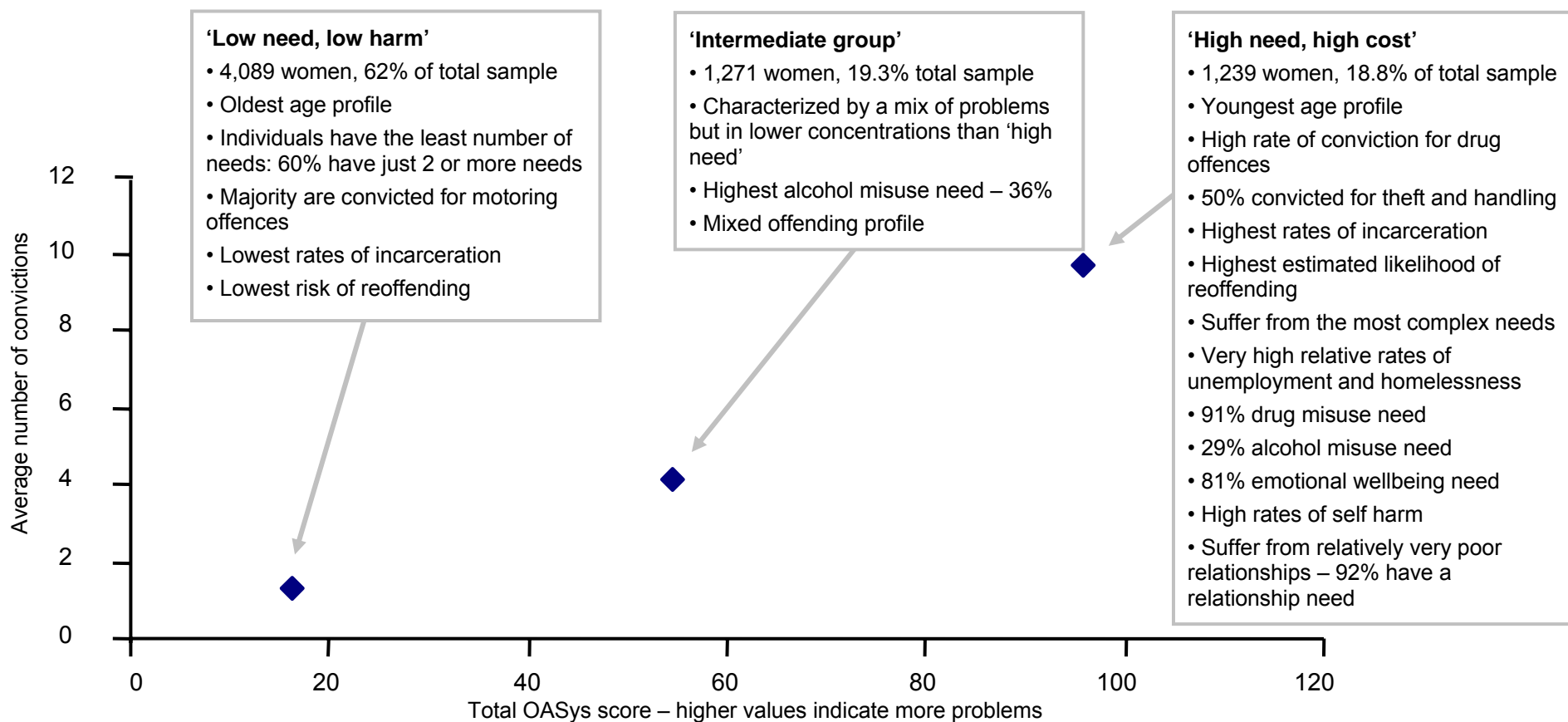
\*Descriptive statistics for women offenders' needs were calculated using OASys probation termination assessments completed in 2005-06 and 2006-07 (11,763 women). Termination assessments include those who received sentences (custodial and community sentences) of more than 12 months, and information may be based on self-disclosure or assessment by the probation officer.



# Whilst the majority of women offenders have complex needs, there is a particularly high need/high cost segment

Analysis of the OASys data\* suggests a characteristic of women offenders is the likely presence of multiple presenting problems. Our new cluster analysis draws out a particularly problematic segment of the female prison population which is young, has the highest number and level of needs, and the highest number of offences per individual (1).

Many of these offenders may have been failed by services long before they hit the criminal justice system.

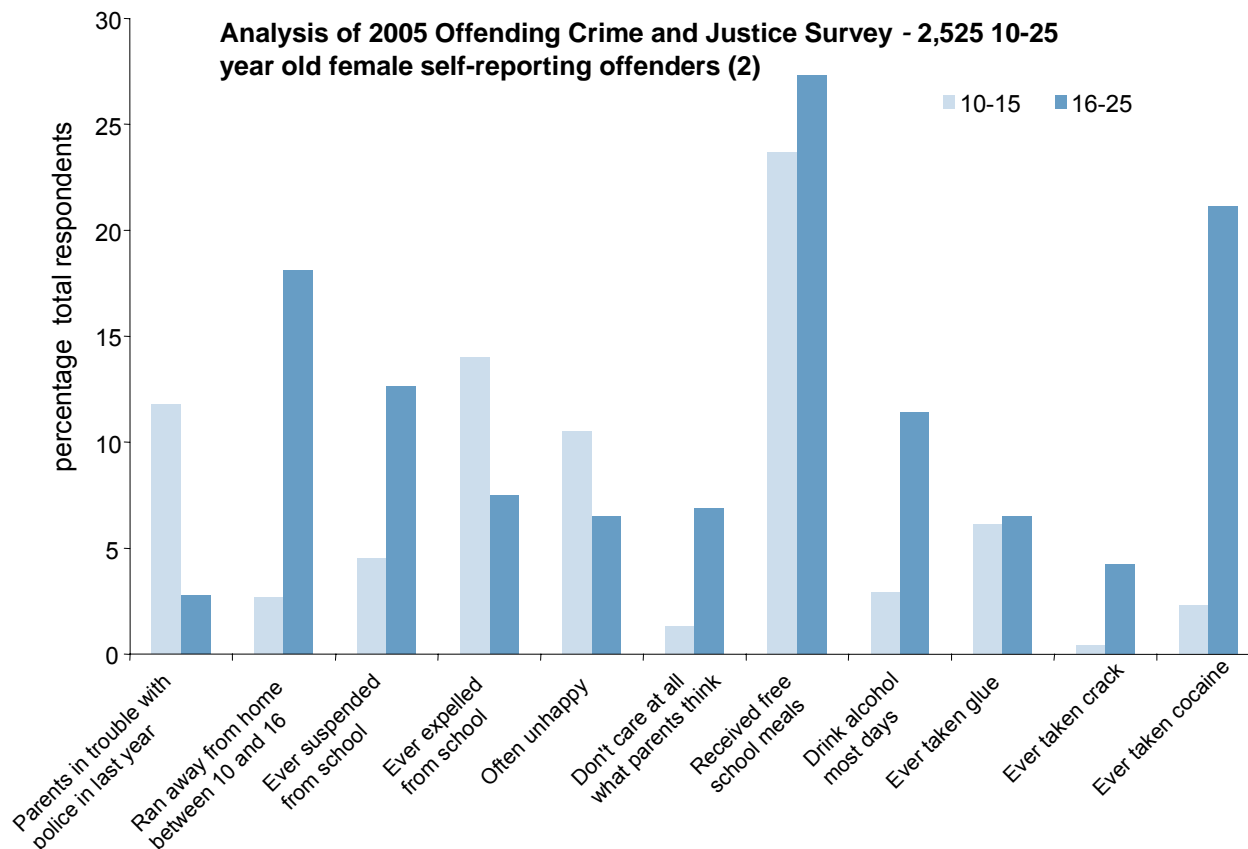


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# The needs of young females in the secure estate (under 18s) and females (10-25) who self-report offending are also complex

**Findings from an Oxford University (2006) survey of the healthcare needs of 17 year old girls in the secure estate (1) show that:**

- 41% had been adopted or been in foster care.
- Nine out of ten had left education by age 17 (90%) and just over a quarter (27%) were employed prior to imprisonment.
- 71% of respondents had some level of psychiatric disturbance.
- Over one-third of respondents (36%) had self-harmed in the last month, of which the majority (92%) had cut themselves.
- 81% of respondents smoked, on average starting at age 12. The majority drank alcohol prior to imprisonment (86%) and just under two-thirds (61%) exceeded the recommended weekly units for women.
- 82% had used illegal drugs in the previous six months, 72% of which used at least two substances. Another Oxford University study (2006) of adult women prisoners found that three quarters had used illicit drugs in the same time frame (3).
- Of the girls, over a quarter (26%) had had three or more sexual partners in the last year but only 15% reported that they always used condoms.
- Almost a quarter (23%) had been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection and one in ten (10%) had been paid for sex.



Young (10-15) female self-reporting offenders experienced high rates of unhappiness, and more than one in ten reported their parents as having been in trouble with the police in the last year.

Whilst the 10-15 age group self-reported levels of substance misuse, the 16-25 year old group had considerably higher levels of crack, cocaine and glue use, and higher levels of alcohol consumption.

Both groups experienced problems around school attendance.

# It is estimated that the majority of women prisoners are mothers



Distance of prisoner from home by gender (9)

	All male prisoners held over 100 miles from home	All female prisoners held over 100 miles from home	Average distance from home for all male prisoners (miles)	Average distance from home for all female prisoners (miles)
2003	11,900 (17.4%)	1,200 (26.8%)	52	68
2004	10,150 (14.4%)	1,000 (21.6%)	51	62
2005	9,750 (13.8%)	700 (16%)	49	58
2006	11,150 (15.3%)	850 (19.4%)	50	58
2007	11,350 (15%)	820 (19.1%)	49	55

Although over half of women offenders are estimated to be mothers, there are no definitive statistics on the number of female prisoners who are parents, the number of children who have a parent in prison, or what happens to dependents once a woman is imprisoned.

- A recent Ministry of Justice study found that 55% of women in prison have children under the age of 18, and that 20% lived with dependent children before entering custody (1). However, the real figures could be higher – in another research study conducted by the Department of Public Health at Oxford University, 69% of the women interviewed in prison custody had children (2).
- 283 children were born to women in custody between April 2005 and July 2008, an average of 1.7 a week (3).
- Information regarding dependants is not routinely recorded either within the Prison Service or Children’s Services.

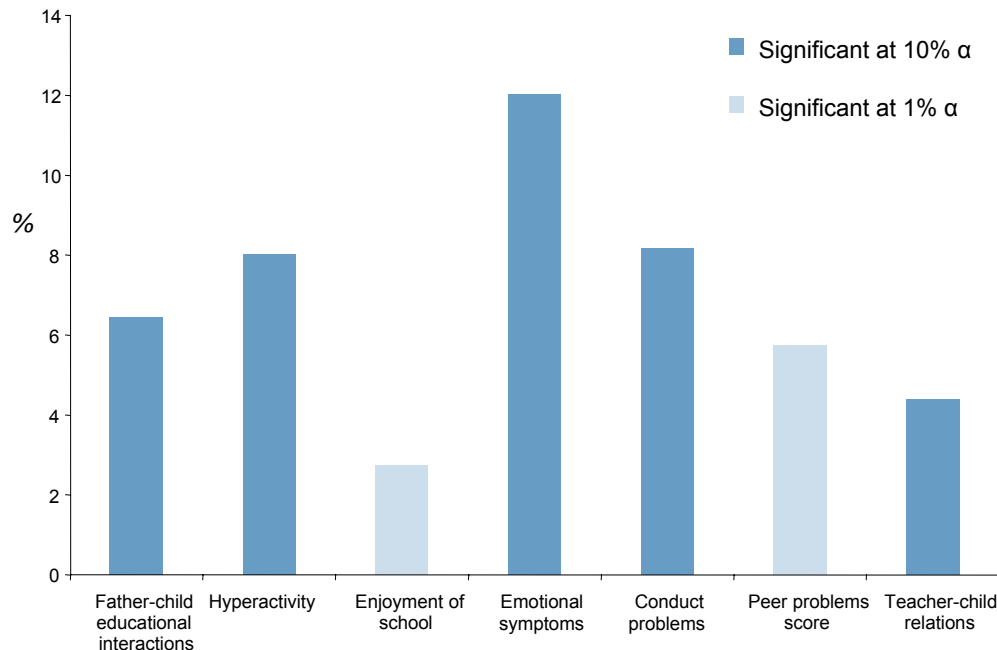
**Family ties have a positive effect on prisoner rehabilitation, though they can be hard to maintain when a mother goes to prison. Women prisoners are more likely to be held over 100 miles from home than male prisoners, and less likely than the general population to be able to call on the support of a stable relationship.**

- At least one fifth of mothers were lone parents before imprisonment (4).
- An inspectorate study found that only a quarter of children whose mothers were in prison were being cared for by either their biological or current father (5).
- HMIP also found that 12% of children of female prisoners were in care, with foster parents or had been adopted compared to 2% of children of male prisoners (6).
- Just 5% of women prisoners’ children remain in their own home once their mother has been sentenced (7).
- The Revolving Doors Agency at HMP Holloway reported that 42 women being held there (3%) had no idea who was looking after their children, and that 19 children under the age of 16 were looking after themselves (8).

# Parental offending can put children at risk of poorer outcomes

New analysis of the Avon and Somerset Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) data set indicates a clear association between a mother being in trouble with the law and poorer outcomes for her children, including a higher likelihood of poor parental interactions, anti-social behaviours and symptoms of emotional problems.

Percentage point difference in outcome scores (at aged 9) for children whose mothers self-reported contact with the criminal justice system compared to children whose mothers reported no contact with the criminal justice system (1)



Very little is known about the number or location of children of female offenders, as there is no transparent and robust data systematically shared on this group. However, children of (male and female) prisoners are at risk of poorer outcomes than their peers:

- 65% of boys with a convicted parent go on to offend (2).
- Children of prisoners have at least double the risk of mental health problems compared to their peers (3).
- Parental imprisonment can lead children to experience stigma, bullying and teasing (4).
- Children of prisoners are often subject to unstable care arrangements (5).
- Children of prisoners have three times the risk of anti-social/delinquent behaviour compared to their peers (6).
- Imprisonment has a negative financial impact on families, leaving families vulnerable to financial instability, poverty and debt, and potential housing disruption (7).
- Children of prisoners also experience higher levels of social disadvantage than their peers (8).

*"My little girl. She didn't eat. The first couple of weeks were really bad and hard on her and my mum and dad and everyone else in the family. She just cries all the time..."*

Woman (aged 21) with a custodial sentence who reported that she was drawn into a criminal life-style by her partner (9).

# Custody is often associated with a range of negative outcomes and high costs

## Annual spending on women in the criminal justice system is estimated to be high

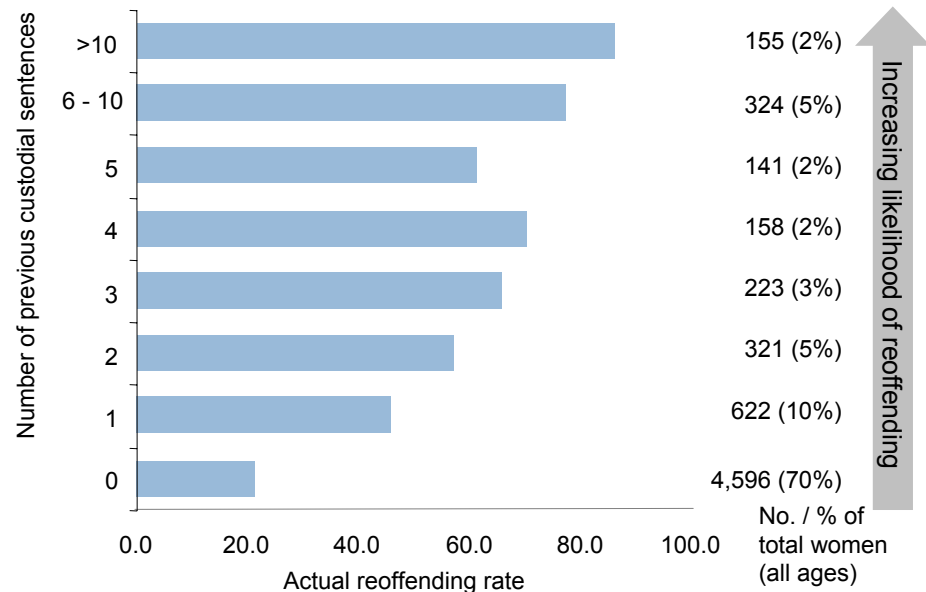
- In 2008 we spent £108m on the adult female custodial estate (1). In addition, we spent £23.8 m on general health care for women in prison (2).
- On average, it costs 12 times more to send a woman to prison than to put her on a probation or community service order (3)

Type / location of sentence served	Cost per offender per year
Female closed prison	£42,225
Female local prison	£41,638
Female open prison	£26,218
1 year Community Rehabilitation Order	£3,000
1 year Community Punishment Order	£2,000
1 year Punishment and Rehabilitation Order	£4,000
1 year Drug Treatment Order	£8,000

## Custody is often associated with a range of negative outcomes

- Around one third of women prisoners lose their home, and often their possessions, whilst in prison (4). This has a particular impact for women with children that have been taken into care.
- Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that in households where a prisoner (male and female) had previously been in paid employment, incomes fell by between £150 and £500 per week (5).

## The more custodial sentences a women has served, the more likely it is that she will reoffend (6)

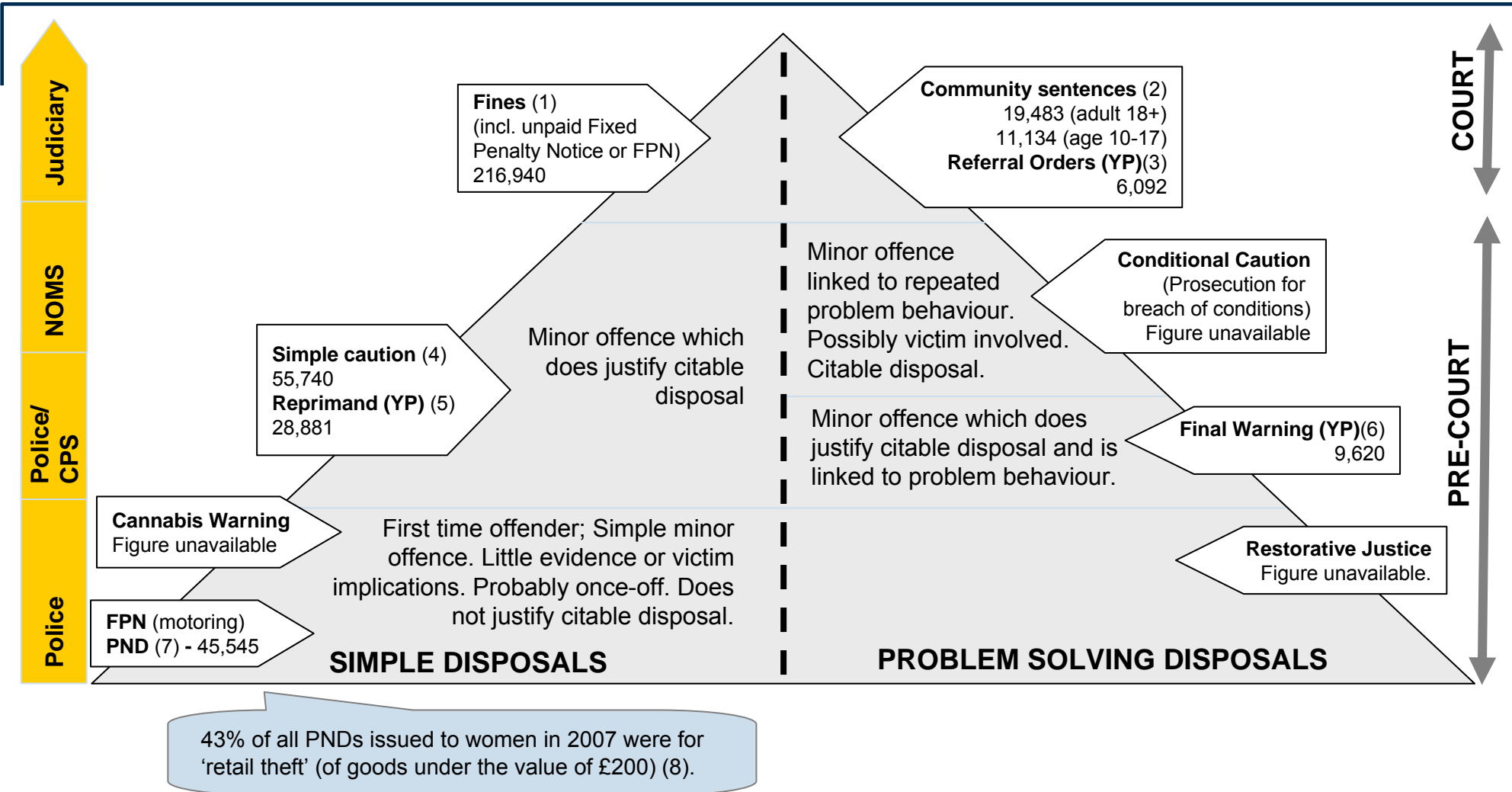


## The public are favourable to alternatives to sending women to prison according to an ICM survey (7):

- 86% supported community alternatives to prison
- 73% did not think mothers, particularly those of young children, who commit non violent crime should be locked up
- 77% also thought it would be more effective for female drug addicts who commit non violent crimes like shoplifting to undergo drug rehabilitation treatment as well as doing compulsory work, rather than being sent to jail.

July 2008, sample over 3,000 in England and Wales.

# There are a range of criminal justice disposals, although the problem-solving approaches are less often used



Figures are for adult women unless otherwise indicated (disposals only available to young people are marked YP). Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Parenting Orders are not shown.



# Community sentences have a number of benefits and are an important diversion from custody

## Preserve protective factors

- Allows women to remain in the community and in employment / accommodation.
- Enables mothers to continue caring for dependent children.
- Minimises negative impact of parent’s offending on children – enables stability of schooling and contact. Reduces likelihood of children engaging in (eventual) criminal activity (1).
- Enables women to rebuild their lives in a constructive, positive manner (2).

## Flexible and simple to use

- Community sentencing offers flexibility within a standardised sentence.
- If used correctly, the OASys assessment will capture risk/need and can be matched to appropriate requirements.
- They are easy to explain to the offender.

## Potential to reduce reoffending

- There is emerging evidence to suggest that the use of community sentences can reduce reoffending rates (3).
- Latest data show 32.5% of female offenders commencing community orders reoffend in one year, compared to 45.0% of female offenders discharged from prison (4).

## Cost-effective

- On average, it costs around 12 times more to send an offender to prison than to put them on a probation or community service order (5).
- In 2004, a Drug Treatment and Testing Order cost £25-37 to deliver, whereas it can cost £100 per day to keep a substance misusing offender in custody (6).

## Concordance data indicates that sentencers are using community sentences as recommended by the probation service (7).

- 78% of community sentences proposed by probation officers were handed down by sentencers.
- In 24% of cases where fines were proposed by probation, the offender was sentenced to a community sentence.

Sentences proposed by probation service, % breakdown	Actual Sentence Delivered by Magistrate						
	Community Sentences	SSO	Custody	Fine	Absolute/ Conditional Discharge	Other	Total number
Community Order	78%	13%	5%	1%	2%	2%	18,339
All community sentences	77%	14%	5%	1%	2%	2%	19,220
SSO	14%	63%	19%	0%	1%	2%	2,701
All custodial sentences	7%	10%	79%	0%	0%	3%	1,123
Fine	24%	4%	2%	57%	10%	4%	424

## Women have slightly higher completion rates than men

- A slightly higher proportion of women than men completed their orders successfully, on both Community Orders (59% versus 56%) and Suspended Sentence Orders (58% versus 51%) in 2007 (8).

## Whilst the number of community sentences given to women has been rising, only 1 in 10 sentenced female offenders receive this type of disposal

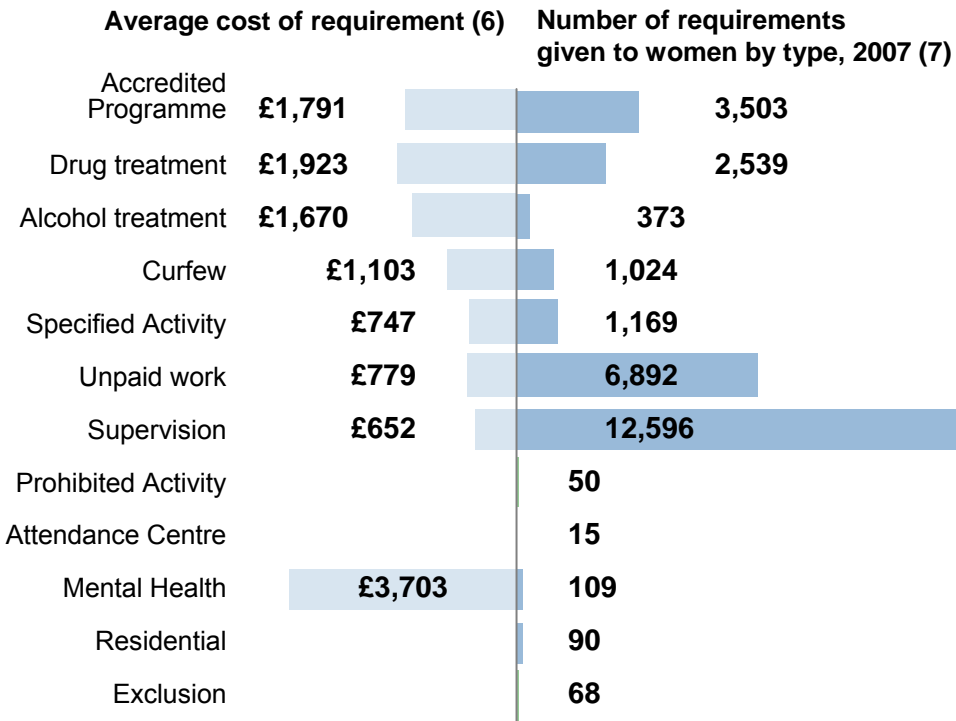
- The community sentence rate for women was 10.6% (for all crimes) in 2007, compared to 14.8% of men (9).



# Requirements on community orders are currently not sufficiently matched to need. The most expensive (and often intensive) requirements are some of the least used for women

- By far the most common requirement in community orders for women is supervision (44%), followed by unpaid work (24%) (1). These are ‘simple’ requirements which do little to treat underlying problems.
- Requirements that offer the potential to change offender attitudes and behaviours (accredited programmes, mental health treatment, drug rehabilitation) are widely underused for women. In 2007, only 1% of community order requirements were for alcohol treatment, for example (2).
- The majority (58%) of community orders for women include just one requirement (3), whereas our OASys analysis has shown that 76% of women offenders (8,978 women) have two or more needs. This suggests that community orders are currently not addressing the complexity of their needs and do not recognise the prevalence of dual diagnosis amongst women. Furthermore, where poorly applied, they may also fail to address the risks to children.
- 62% of community orders last only one year (4). Given the enduring nature of many women offenders’ needs, it is not clear if this is long enough to treat some of the more severe or entrenched problems.

Number / % 12 Community Order requirements given to women, 2007 (5)			
Unpaid work	6892 (24%)	Accredited programme	3503 (12%)
Supervision	12,596 (44%)	Drug rehab.	2539 (9%)
Alcohol treatment	373 (1%)	Mental health treatment	109 (0.4%)
Residence	90 (0.3%)	Specified activity	1169 (4%)
Prohibited activity	50 (0.2%)	Exclusion	68 (0.2%)
Curfew	1024 (4%)	Attendance centre	15 (0.05%)



**Unpaid work is often designed for men**, which can make the placement harder to complete. For example, women who have experienced sexual abuse or domestic violence may feel unsafe working with groups of men (8).

**Work or childcare commitments** can make it difficult for female offenders to complete their requirements. The Probation Service runs evening and weekend classes but the availability of accredited programme tutors at these times can be a limiting factor (9).

# There is an emerging network of community provision, though robust evaluation and planning is required to ensure we maximise potential impacts

**Together Women (Liverpool, Salford, Leeds, Doncaster and Bradford):** The centres offer one-stop-shop services for women who have offended and/or women who may be experiencing issues that could put them at risk of offending. The ratio between offenders and those at risk is 3:1.

- In 2007/8, 900+ women were assessed, half of whom were successfully engaged and retained. Their target is to retain 75%.
- Running costs around £2.35m, with approximately 40 staff.

**The Women's Turnaround Project (Cardiff):** seeks to provide women offenders and women at risk of being an offender and/or victim of crime with multi-agency, community based service that address individual risks and needs. Referrals to the project have mainly been received from HMP Eastwood Park and the Probation Service.

- In July 2008 the centre had received 149 referrals, was actively providing assistance to 48 vulnerable women in the community, and another 39 in prison, pending release.
- The centre has running costs of £150,000 and three members of staff.
- Independent evaluation of phase 1 (mainly qualitative) has yielded largely positive results but was based on a small sample size.

**WomenCentre (Halifax and Huddersfield):** provides broad ranging support and interventions for socially excluded women. Referrals are taken from other agencies and via outreach initiatives.

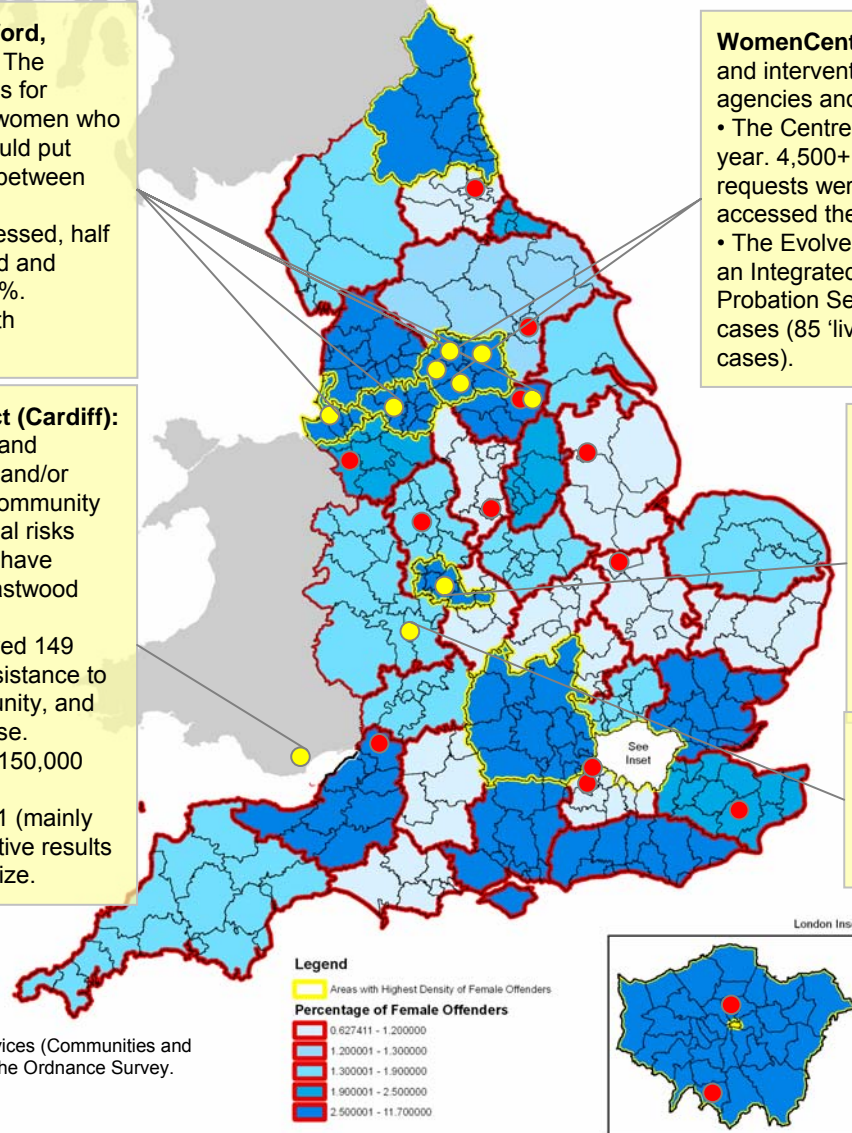
- The Centre made 17,000 contacts with women (some more than once) last year. 4,500+ attended appointments/training, 3,000 used their helpline, 1,725 requests were made for support with domestic violence and 700 children accessed their crèche/children's services.
- The Evolve (£200k of the £816k) programme for at risk / offending women is an Integrated Offender Management approach between Calderdale, the Probation Service, Police and Magistrates. As of October there were 130 cases (85 'live') with a reoffending/offending rate of 3.2% (2.3% for 'live' cases).

**Anawim (Birmingham):** provides multiple services to vulnerable women across Birmingham referred from a variety of agencies.

- It currently deals with around 30 women per day.
- The centre provides unpaid work placements under a community sentence initiative (52 women) funded by a grant £40k (25% goes to local probation). Retention rate is 73% in Anawim versus a national average of about 50%.
- Assessed by Pricewaterhouse Cooper and have changed its reporting mechanisms in response. Cited as an example of good delivery by Fawcett.

**ASHA (Worcester):** a one-stop shop centre helping disadvantaged women to gain access to support.

- 300 referrals are received each year
- No formal evaluation has been carried out but the centre was commended by the Corston Report.



Map produced by the GI Team, Analytical Services (Communities and Local Government), with the permission from the Ordnance Survey.

- Female prisons
- Provision for women offenders in the community with direct links to the criminal justice system

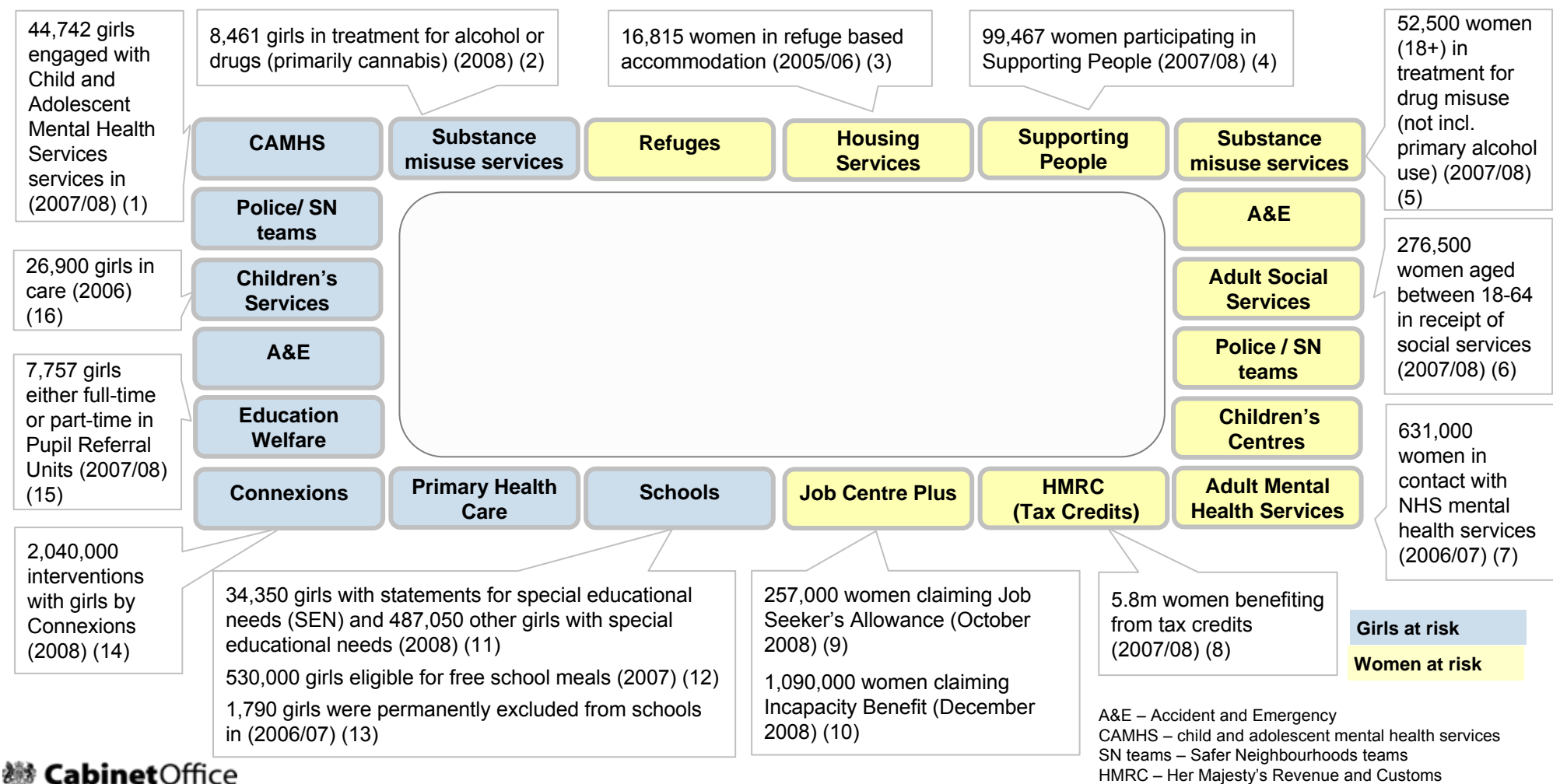
The shading indicates how many women were sentenced for committing drug and theft offences (aged 18+ found guilty at magistrates' courts) by police force area.

# There are a number of innovative criminal justice system pilots and initiatives, though they tend to focus on diverting offenders from custody rather than early intervention

Project		Funding	No. / % women
<b>Ministry of Justice Diversion project</b> In February 2009 the Government announced that it would be investing to ensure early and effective provision for vulnerable women in the community over the next two years. There are four work streams: increasing the capacity of existing one-stop-shop services for women; continued funding for the Together Women Project; funding for the Eden Project and; the development of enhanced bail support services.	Opportunity to develop a more systematic approach to linking women into mainstream services and support from their first point of contact with the criminal justice system.	£15.6 million	One stop shop and bail support estimated to impact on 4000 women.
<b>Integrated Offender Management (IOM)</b> IOM projects are testing new approaches to offender management in six areas over a two year period. Agencies are developing shared approaches to the assessment and management of those who pose the highest risks and ensuring co-ordinated access to the resources that will help offenders turn away from crime, including groups not currently under statutory supervision.		£1.9 million provided to four of the six areas.	Of the four projects reporting in January 2009, 28 of 1950 clients were female (1.4%).
<b>Conditional cautioning</b> <b>• Pilots for women</b> - Launched in September 2008 by the Solicitor General to run for six months in Liverpool, Bradford and Leeds. The caution is available to adult women offenders who admit that they have committed an appropriate offence. It involves attendance at one of the women's centres for a full needs assessment but is voluntary thereafter. <b>• Conditional cautioning with Drug Intervention Project (DIP)</b> - Available nationally, but variable uptake on the ground as Local Criminal Justice Boards opt for which conditions to use in their area. The DIP condition can range from a one-off session, which requires an offender to remain at a single session with a Criminal Justice Intervention Team (CJIT) drugs worker, to a three-session condition with a follow-up.	To date, IOM has been used to target prolific and priority offenders and those who are already well known to statutory services.	No additional funding.  No central funding is available.	In excess of 110 referrals during the 6 months of the pilot. Estimated 38 women received a conditional caution with DIP October – December 2008.
<b>Court or Criminal Justice Diversion and Liaison Schemes</b> Diversion and liaison schemes seek to work in a multi-disciplinary way to ensure that, where appropriate, offenders with mental health needs are diverted from the criminal justice system or that relevant information about an offender's condition is made available to the courts and Crown Prosecution Service.		No central funding available.	Est. 140 schemes across the UK. Number of women unknown.
<b>Community Justice Courts (CJC)</b> Operating in 13 areas, CJsCs prioritise cases in consultation with the local community. Projects use existing sentencing options and an additional power to return offenders to court for review. Sentencing focuses on problem solving disposals and the courts operate on a one-stop-shop principle.	Intervention focused at the court stage. Evaluation indicates that greater co-ordination of leadership and funding could lead to more systematic provision.	Total costs unknown.	National figure unknown. 23% of 269 offenders in an evaluation of the Liverpool court were female.
<b>Intensive Alternatives to Custody (IAC) pilots</b> There are seven IAC pilots, with links to women's centres in W. Yorkshire, S. Wales and Dyfed Powys. IACs were developed to encourage diversion from custody by increasing the number of requirements and intensity of supervision that offenders receive on community sentences. Each order is designed to meet the particular needs of an offender whilst offering a high level of restriction of liberty.	Significant investment targeted at serious and prolific offenders on the threshold of custody.	£13.9 million	25 of 177 (14%) offenders on the project April 2008 – December 2009 were women.

# Many women and girls at risk are already in contact with services

Vulnerable women and girls are likely to be in contact with a range of public services, though they may not have a full picture of their complex needs or offending behaviours. There are opportunities to capitalise on the existing engagements that mainstream public services have with at risk women and girls.









# There is a developing body of evidence on risk and protective factors associated with offending, and those specific to girls and women, though these are not necessarily hardwired into the design of support services

		Pregnancy	Childhood	Adolescence		Adulthood	
Risk and protective factors associated with female delinquency and criminal offending at the individual, family and community level	Individual factors	Premature/birth factors Obstetric difficulties Genetic predisposition	Infant's temperament Impaired attachment ADHD	Tantrums/aggressiveness Witnessing domestic violence Diet Low achievement in primary school	Poverty Multiple behavioural problems <b>Physical/emotional/sexual abuse</b> ADHD compounded by aggressive behaviour Anti-social peers Early initiation to offending Truancy Running away <b>Low self esteem</b>	<b>Drug and alcohol use</b> Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Risky spare time activities <b>Self harm</b> <b>Disordered eating</b> Depression Low educational attainment	<b>Risky spare time activities</b> <b>Drug and alcohol use</b> <b>Depression</b> Previous anti-social behaviour / offending behaviour Poverty <b>Attempted suicide</b>
	Individual protective factors throughout the life course include: High self-esteem; assertiveness; healthy lifestyles						
	Family factors	Stress in pregnancy Young teenage pregnancy Smoking in pregnancy	Postnatal depression Harsh parenting style Rejection Hitting/frequent smacking Low level of stimulation	Problems/inconsistency in managing child mental ill-health Hitting / excessive use of smacking Having a convicted parent at age 10 Family crisis	<b>Harsh/erratic discipline</b> Poor parental supervision <b>Parental conflict</b> <b>Low parental interest in education</b> <b>Low parental interest in children</b> Parent with a conviction <b>Separation from a parent</b>	<b>Low praise by parents</b> <b>Poor parental supervision</b>	<b>Domestic violence</b> <b>Anti-social partner/partner who has offended</b>
	Family protective factors throughout the life course include: Supportive and enduring relationships with family members and peers						
	Community factors	Neglected neighbourhood Low income Poor housing	<b>Socio-economic stress</b>	Bullying School disorganisation	Low informal social control High crime area <b>Victimisation</b>	<b>Adult harassment</b> <b>Anti-social male peers</b> <b>Weak attachment to school</b>	High Index of Multiple Deprivation score
Community protective factors throughout the life course include: Pro-school attitudes; access to services; positive female role models							

This table only includes risk factors that have been shown to be significant in empirical studies. Where there is evidence for risk factors that appear to be particularly important for girls / women, this has been indicated in bold.

# There are a range of programmes and initiatives in place to influence these risk and protective factors across the life course

Life stage or level	Key risk factor	Examples of current support
<b>Childhood/ Adolescence</b> 	Physical / emotional / sexual health	School nurses; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services ; Child protection/Social Services; Health visiting; Primary health care; Family Nurse Partnership; Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)
	Drug and alcohol misuse	Primary health care; Residential drug rehabilitation; Brief Interventions
	Truancy/school exclusion	Education Welfare Services; alternative education including Pupil Referral Units and home schooling; Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care
	Running away	Missing People Runaway Hotline; Local authority emergency accommodation; Police
<b>Adulthood</b> 	Anti-social partners	Anti-Social Behaviour Officers; Housing Officers; Parenting programmes; Police; Family Intervention Projects
	Poor mental health (self-harm, suicide and depression)	Adult Mental Health Services; Primary health care
	Substance misuse	Drug Intervention Projects; Drug Action Teams; Residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres; Community-based approaches; Primary health care
<b>Parental/Family</b> 	Parent convicted of an offence	No systemic statutory support and variable voluntary and community sector coverage
	Domestic Violence	Independent Domestic Violence Advisors; Refuges; Domestic Violence Courts; 24 hour Women's Aid and Refuge Hotline; Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Accident and Emergency
	Parental drug and alcohol misuse	Primary Health Care; Drug Intervention Projects; Drug Action Teams; and residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres; community-based approaches
<b>Neighbourhood</b> 	High crime level High level of victimisation	Tackling Guns and Gangs Action Programme; Tackling Knives Action Plan; Neighbourhood Police Teams; Community Safety Partnerships
	High levels of deprivation	New Deal for Communities; Working Neighbourhoods; Inspiring Communities Programme

# We are gaining a better understanding of the key characteristics that make provision for women with complex needs effective

There are examples of good practice, though few interventions comprise all key characteristics:

## **The Nelson Trust - Stroud**

The Nelson Trust is an alcohol and drug treatment centre in South West England. It offers a complete programme of support integrating treatment, education, training and employment and resettlement. It employs ex-service users as centre staff who can act as peer supports to clients.

## **Barnardo's Bristol BASE Project**

Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation (BASE) project works with young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation and who are exhibiting risky behaviours. BASE offers 24/7 practical help to young people to deal with immediate difficulties. A lead professional develops a plan with each client to help them make better decisions to keep themselves safer and healthier.

## **Anawim Project - Birmingham**

Anawim works with women in and around prostitution, drug addiction and domestic violence. They receive one to one support on the full range of issues which affect them; housing, benefits, domestic violence, CV writing, accompanying to appointments, attending court and social services case conferences. Support services are co-located on site, and the SAFE project runs a methadone programme on the premises.

<b>Contract</b>	Family Intervention Projects use a contract to secure commitment around objectives and sustain engagement with the family.
<b>Self-referral facility</b>	Sandwell Organisation Against Domestic Abuse has drop-in centre facilities for those that want to engage and/or seek support before problems escalate.
<b>Lead professional/key worker</b>	Programmes like Multi-Systemic Therapy and Family Intervention Projects are centred around a trusted professional who coordinates support and is the link between the family and services.
<b>Whole family assessment</b>	Blackpool Springboard undertake a whole family assessment covering all family members to identify broader needs and ensure that support is relevant and tailored to circumstances/context of the whole family.
<b>Childcare provision</b>	The Phoenix Centre provides childcare and secures placements in schools so the child can stay with their parent and ensures mothers do not miss out on support.
<b>Peer support network</b>	Nelson Trust employ ex-service-users to provide friendship and insight, and encourage engagement.
<b>Strengths-based approach</b>	Family Nurse Partnerships use motivational interviewing techniques to identify strengths and work with clients to develop constructive behaviour change goals.
<b>Women only</b>	Anawim centre provides a safe and secure setting for women through its women only centre and female practitioners.
<b>Holistic tailored support</b>	Together Women programmes deliver a range of support to deal with a range of problems. The package is tailored specifically around the women's needs.
<b>Intensive support</b>	BASE in Bristol provides sustained intervention through 24/7 support to girls at risk.
<b>Assertive outreach</b>	At the Maple Centre, practitioners physically go out to collect clients working on the streets if they fail to appear, to secure their attendance and engagement.
<b>Exit strategy</b>	Family Nurses are linked to Sure Start Children's Centres, and encourage families to make active use of local community resources, including activities such as parenting groups and educational activities. This builds the family into local services and ensures smooth transitioning after completion of the programme.



# Sandra’s story highlights that early intervention and prevention make sense



*\*Sandra was born to an alcoholic mother... From the age of 4, Sandra was emotionally and sexually abused by her step-dad’s brother and this continued up until she was 9 – after which her step-dad had moved on... At aged 9, an assessment was carried out by an educational psychologist who found she had significant reading and writing problems and low self esteem... Between the ages of 7-11, Sandra ran away from home three times and on two occasions, was brought back home by the police. She had a period in foster care during the summer when she was aged 11...*

**Sandra’s story shows that without effective early intervention and prevention, service costs are high and outcomes are poor (1)**

- Age 9:** Assessment by educational psychologist (£204)
- Age 10 - 11:** Police involvement. Foster care placement for 6 weeks (£3,126)
- Age 12:** First children’s home placement for 3 months (£17,856)
- Age 13:** Second children’s home placement for five months (£29,760); Statement of SEN compiled by LEA (£7000); Enrolment in Pupil Referral Unit (£15,000)
- Age 14:** First A&E visit including ambulance and paramedic support (£296); Second A&E visit including ambulance and paramedic support (£296);
- Age 15:** Family assessment and referral made to social services for care of Sandra’s child (£8,252)
- Age 16:** Police warning for anti-social behaviour
- Age 17:** First custodial sentence for 12 months (£54,000)
- Age 18:** Referral to drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre (£2,982)
- Age 20:** Second custodial sentence for 6 months (£20,820)
- Age 28:** Third custodial sentence for 2 months (£6,500)

**£166,092**

**Early intervention could have resulted in improved outcomes and substantial savings**

- Age 0-2:** Family Nurse Partnership (£3,750 per family)
- Age 0-5:** Family Support/Sure Start (£900 per child/per annum)
- Age 7:** Assessment by an educational psychologist (£204); Statement of Special Educational Needs compiled by the LEA (£7,000)
- Age 7-11:** Education psychologist support and liaison/direct work (£11,664)
- Age 12-14:** Positive activities (£3,312) Learning support assistant/learning mentor (£12,600)
- Age 15:** Began to drink heavily at the weekends. Successfully completed three brief intervention sessions with health practitioner (£140 per session)

**£43,450**

Sandra’s mum received support during pregnancy and after her birth, which enabled her to develop effective parenting skills and gave her a better start to life.

Earlier SEN statement got Sandra access to support earlier on and prevented her falling too far behind at school.

At age 12, Sandra’s learning support mentor referred her to a positive activities programme to keep her productively occupied when away from school

Effective brief interventions helped Sandra break the cycle of binge drinking in adolescence and helped her develop sensible attitudes around which stay with her for the rest of her life.

\*This case study is based on real unit costs and builds on a real life history taken from independent qualitative research

# More personalised and responsive services offer prospects for improved outcomes

## **Involving women in the design of their support (1)**

- Women with complex problems are more likely to achieve positive outcomes where they are involved in the design of their support. Motivational interviewing techniques, such as those used in Family Nurse Partnerships, can unlock information and enable support to be built on a woman's strengths, ensuring engagement and better prospects of sustained behaviour change.

## **Provision is most effective when it is designed around the needs and circumstances of the woman and family**

- It is critical that support recognises the woman's role as a mother – particularly pertinent given that a third of women in custody are lone parents. Effective support, inside and outside the criminal justice system, needs to take into account childcare needs, and may include provision of childcare facilities, such as in Brighton's Women Centre and the Anawim Centre. Women-only treatment and support facilities can also make women feel less intimidated.
- There is an opportunity through the Equality Act 2006 and the Gender Equality Duty to embed the needs of vulnerable women into service planning and delivery (2).

## **At risk women need to be empowered to take decisions for themselves, and conflict and relationship issues need to be appropriately dealt with**

- Family Group Conferencing can have a positive impact on resolving family conflict and women's relationship needs.
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, such as those at the Sandwell Organisation Against Domestic Abuse, ensure clients get the services to which they are entitled.

## **Assessment processes must capture the full picture of family needs and information shared where it is in the best interests of the client**

- Formal assessments need to be tailored and responsive to pick up on the needs of vulnerable women. It is therefore important to take into account the evidence on female risk and protective factors, and hardwire gender-specific factors into assessment processes. To capture the full picture of need, we must also take into account broader family circumstances and try to bridge an understanding of symptoms and causes.

## **At risk women need intensive support that deals with the whole range of complex and interrelated needs**

- At risk women tend to get intensive support to deal with individual problems, but little to deal with complex and interrelated needs. Intensive and coordinated support ensures service providers acknowledge the interrelationship between different needs, and enables support to be sequenced appropriately. This ultimately delivers better outcomes and value for money.

### **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC)**

A MARAC is a tailored assessment procedure for cases involving domestic violence. The goal of these conferences is to provide a forum for sharing information and taking action to reduce future harm to very high-risk victims of domestic abuse and their children. Conferences are held on a monthly basis for the most at-risk cases and involve representatives from police, probation, local authority, health, housing, children's and women's services. Assessment takes account of wider risk factors, such as substance misuse and mental illness, and the resources available locally are shared and used to create a risk management plan involving all agencies. Research has indicated that the meetings yielded substantial improvements both to the practice of professionals and to the safety of victims and their children.

# Enhanced delivery requires greater consistency, improved skills, incentives and more robust processes to effectively engage those with complex needs

## **Practitioners need to be able to identify wider needs (including underlying drivers of behaviours) in either the individual or their family (1)**

- Better understanding the family context can increase the probability of successful outcomes. For example, if a woman is receiving support for depression, principally driven by debt caused by the gambling addiction of her partner, then her partner's needs should also be addressed. If a combination of homelessness and substance misuse is contributing to the offending behaviour of a woman, both needs should be met in the appropriate sequence (residential detoxification then housing), to ensure the interventions have enduring impact.

## **Professionals should be rewarded for innovation**

- Practitioners who have the incentives to go that extra step in their delivery of support, as well as the flexibility, assertiveness and capacity to spend sufficient dedicated time with vulnerable women and their families are able to achieve impressive results for clients with complex needs.

## **Improved access and engagement can make targeting and provision better**

- Frontline practitioners need to be sufficiently equipped to work with the complexity and seriousness of vulnerable women's needs. This does not mean that all practitioners have to be specialists, but it is vital they are aware and sensitised to the issues. For example, Mental Health Awareness training for court, probation and prison staff can make an important difference in practitioners recognising and dealing with the mental health needs of women offenders appropriately.

- Difficulties of identification and engagement of vulnerable women, in particular owing to the internalising nature of their problems, mean that practitioners can have few levers to engage those that do not seek support. Programmes such as Family Intervention Projects use contracts to engage the clients and dedicated key workers can have an important role in building trusting relationships with vulnerable clients.

- Clients can often have multiple practitioners working with them either at one time, or across their lifetime. Continuity of relationships and support facilitates trusted and sustained relationships, which are vital to improved outcomes.

- Information can often be dependent on women's self-disclosure. It is therefore critical that practitioners have the skills and tools to engage and build relationships of trust with their clients, and the capacity to draw on a range of information sources.

## **Changing Minds: Northampton University**

Changing Minds have been commissioned by DH to deliver a gender specific training package for practitioners working with women with complex mental health needs within the community. Although designed for use by primary care practitioners and health and social care students, the training is equally as relevant to vulnerable women within the criminal justice system. The course design encourages participants to examine both their own practice but also that of their organisation to identify areas of potential improvement.

# There are opportunities to strengthen the data and focus on women offenders and those at risk

## Locally, areas should have a picture of female offending, vulnerable women and need in their area

- A timely, accurate and 'complete' picture enables clients and decision-makers to make informed choices around the most effective support.
- Where support is failing, agencies tend to be siloed and with narrow agency boundaries. The silo between the criminal justice system and the community means 'women offenders' and 'at risk' groups can be segmented and dealt with separately, even though women with many problems cut across many boundaries. Robust assessment and information can support the alignment of service boundaries, inform planning and commissioning processes, and shine a light on threshold-related issues.
- The advent of protocols which set out joint responsibilities, and the joining up of adults' and children's services to the criminal justice system, is proving to make a difference. However, it is critical that agencies work together to build a dynamic picture of what is happening in their area. This should drive joined-up planning and delivery across women and girls' support services, and between community and custodial settings.



## Nationally, it is important to have a consolidated picture on women offenders and vulnerable women

- There is an opportunity to build on the vision for women offenders and excluded women and girls in the community. There has been important progress in areas such as the development of the section 95 statistics on women in the criminal justice system, however it is critical that we fill key gaps in information – such as around offenders' children – at both a local and national level. There is also value in national programmes recording figures explicitly for women in order to build a clear picture of service availability and targeting.
- There is strong national leadership on this agenda. Following the Corston Report, cross-departmental governance has been established to coordinate strategic policy and planning. Building on this success, there is an opportunity to broaden the focus from high risk to high need, and to give greater consideration to the role of prevention and early intervention.
- Gender-specific targets can increase the focus on girls' and women's issues both nationally and locally, and inspection targets can be a means to ensuring provision is comprehensive across the country.

# We could further improve outcomes for women offenders and their families if we were to complement current initiatives with improved support upon first contact with the criminal justice system

## Target Group

- Low-level women offenders with complex problems (estimated at around 30,000 per annum) (1)
- Around two thirds (20,000 women) will be mothers, whose children will also be at greater risk of poor outcomes

## Aims of the model

- Deliver **personalised packages of support** – coordinated by a lead professional with a small individual budget – to women with complex problems who make contact with the criminal justice system as low-level offenders
- Fill a critical gap by tackling the underlying causes of offending behaviour at the **earliest possible stage of contact with the criminal justice system** (before offending and problems escalate further)
- Deliver support in a **community setting** - encouraging stability by allowing women to remain in their homes and communities, and reducing potential harms to children
- Ensure greater consideration of the needs and circumstances particular to women and their children
- Provide a clear delineation between ‘support’ and ‘justice’

## Benefits

### Improved Outcomes

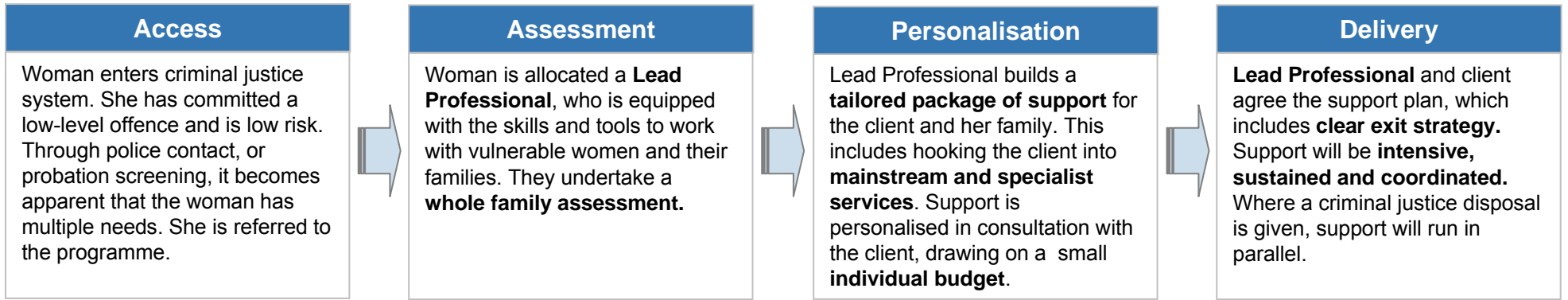
- Reductions in offending and safer communities
- Improved health and wellbeing outcomes (reductions in substance misuse, A&E attendance and improvements in mental health)
- Better integration of clients in the community (housing and employment stability)
- Stabilisation of chaotic families, including better relationships and parenting
- Improved outcomes for children (education and attendance, care placements etc.)

### Efficient delivery of services

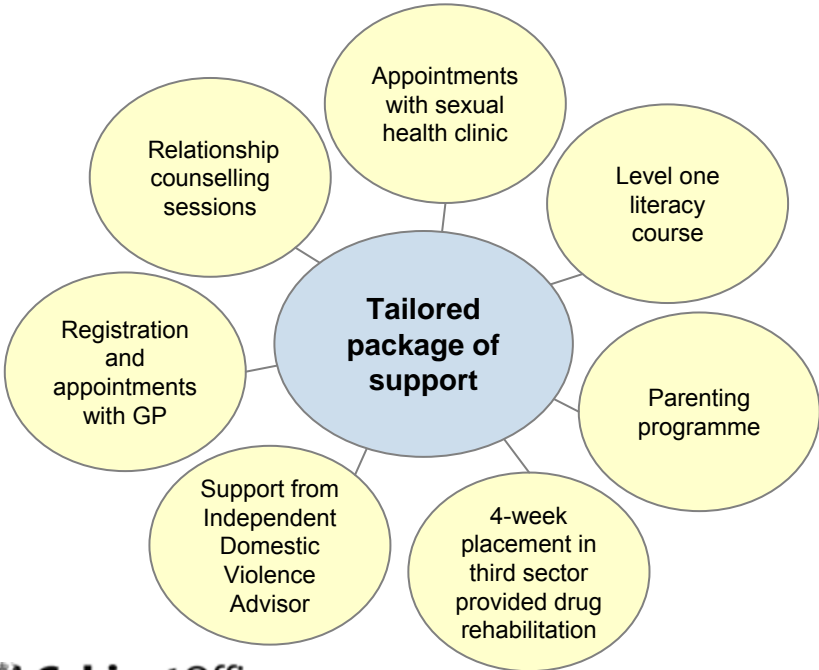
- Improving coordination and sequencing of support will remove duplication and cut waiting times, and should improve user satisfaction
- Intensive and early intervention will prevent the persistence and escalation of problems



# A model of early intervention would provide personalised support to tackle problems before they escalate

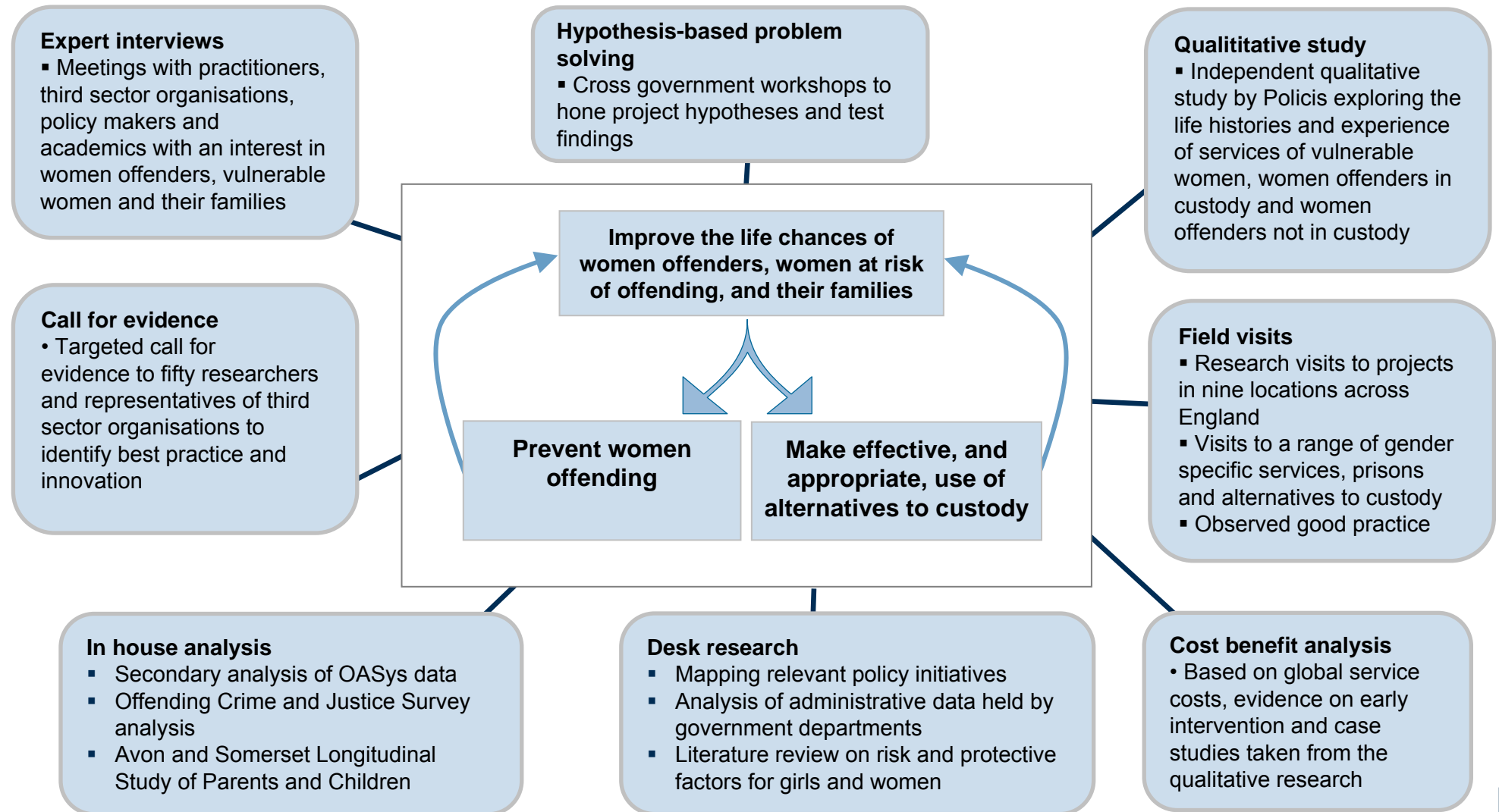


## Example 'bundle' of support:



Key characteristics	
Contract	To set out details of the coordinated support plan
Lead professional	A trusted professional who will coordinate the support and link with the client
Whole family assessment	To identify broader needs and ensure that support is relevant and tailored to circumstances/context of women and her whole family
Strengths-based	Motivational interviewing techniques to develop constructive behaviour change
Individual budget	To purchase additional support from alternative providers and personalise support
Gender-specific	To hard-wire female risk and protective factors into processes
Intensive support	To ensure compliance. Small caseloads free up lead professional to deliver sustained support
Childcare	To support parenting responsibilities
Assertive outreach	To ensure clients attend and engage
Exit strategy	To ensure clients are adequately linked into sustained support

# Methodology





# Glossary (i)

ALSPAC	Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (also known as Children of the 90s): Longitudinal study run by the University of Bristol, following 14,000 mothers who were enrolled during pregnancy in 1991-2.
Assertive outreach	Intervention that targets people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness but have not been engaged with mental health services.
Budget holding lead professional	Professional leads on co-ordinating provision and acts as a single point of contact for the individual when a range of services are involved and an integrated response is required. Has the ability to buy in services as required to meet need.
Cautions	<u>Simple Caution</u> : non-statutory warning given to adults (18+) by the police, following admission of guilt, as an alternative to prosecution. Though not a conviction, this forms part of a person's criminal record. <u>Conditional Caution</u> : warning under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (with reparative and/or rehabilitative conditions attached), given by the police after a CPS decision to issue and following admission of guilt, to adults (18+) as an alternative to prosecution. Again, though not a conviction, this forms part of a person's criminal record.
Community Orders	Introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and replacing all existing community sentences for adults. Under this order, one or more of 12 possible requirements must be added, such as supervision, unpaid work and drug treatment.
Custody	The offender is awarded a sentence to be served in prison, Young Offender Institution or Secure Training Centre. It is important to note that for those serving determinate sentences the sentence length awarded will be longer than the time served.
DIP	Drug Intervention Programmes bring together the police, the courts, the Prison Service, the National Probation Service, treatment providers, government departments and Drug Action Teams to provide tailored solutions for drug-misusing offenders.
DV	Domestic violence: defined by the Home Office as any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are, or have been, in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.
Family Group Conferencing	A system of family led decision making, which draws on the resources of the extended family and empowers those involved to negotiate their own solutions to a problem, rather than imposing external remedies.
FIPs	Family Intervention Projects: work with families with multiple problems to turn around their behaviour and reduce their impact on the community through a twin track approach that combines intensive support with focused challenge.
FNP	Family Nurse Partnerships: a model of intensive, nurse-led home visiting for vulnerable, first time, young parents. FNP nurses visit parents from early pregnancy until the child is two years old, building a close, supportive relationship with the whole family and guiding mothers to adopt healthier lifestyles, improve their parenting skills, and become self-sufficient.
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
Mental health in-reach teams	Prison mental health in-reach teams were established nationwide in England and Wales to identify and treat mental disorders among prisoners.
MARAC	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference: a tailored assessment procedure for cases involving domestic violence that take into account broader risk factors associated with each victim and addresses the complex needs of each victim's family.
MST	Multi-Systemic Therapy: Family and community-based treatment programme for young people with complex clinical, social, and educational problems such as violent behaviour, drug abuse and school expulsion. MST therapists work in close partnership with the young person's family and community to strengthen protective factors known to reduce the risk of future offending and anti-social behaviour.
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
OASys	Offender Assessment System: a standardised process for the assessment of offenders that has been developed jointly by the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Prison Service
Other offences	The 'other offences' category includes arson, criminal damage, drunkenness, blackmail, kidnapping, affray, violent disorder, perjury / lying / perverting the course of justice, threat / disorderly behaviour, breach of court order.

## Glossary (ii)

Positive Activities for Young People	A programme aimed at 8-19-year-olds who are at risk of social exclusion and community crime. This provides funding for diversionary and developmental activities for these young people during the school holidays.
Positive Futures	A national social inclusion programme using sport and leisure activities to engage with disadvantaged and socially marginalised young people.
PCD	Pre Court Disposals or Out of Court Disposals aim to deal with low risk, low-level and mostly first-time offenders outside of the court system, in appropriate circumstances. They are not suitable for contested or more serious cases and would not normally be considered for those who offend repeatedly (subject to relevant guidance). They include: For adults: (18+) simple and conditional cautions, penalty notices for disorders (PND), fixed penalty notices (FPN for driving offences) and cannabis warnings. Young people: Reprimand, final warning and penalty notice for disorder.
Protective factors	Though there are several definitions of protective factors, just as a risk factor predicts an increased probability of offending, we have defined a protective factor as one that predicts a decreased probability of offending. From Farrington (2006): <a href="http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page10035">http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page10035</a>
Receptions	Receptions provide an indication of the number of new prisoners entering prison in a given time period. A person received into prison to serve a sentence may previously have been received on remand after conviction prior to sentence, and before that as a remand prisoner awaiting trial. First receptions data will count that prisoner only once in the relevant time period in which they were first received.
Remand (in custody)	The accused person (defendant) is kept in custody or placed on bail pending further court appearance(s).
Restorative Justice	Restorative justice brings victims, offenders and communities together to decide on a response to a particular crime. It puts victims' needs at the centre of the criminal justice system and seeks positive solutions to crime by encouraging offenders to face up to their actions.
Risk factors	We have defined risk factors as factors that increase the risk of occurrence of the onset, frequency, persistence or duration of offending. From Farrington (2006): <a href="http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page10035">http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page10035</a>
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SSO	Suspended Sentence Order: Effectively a custodial sentence, SSOs are made up of the same requirements as the Community Order, and in the absence of breach is served wholly in the community.
Strengths-based approach	An approach focusing on empowering individuals by focusing on their strengths, personal resources and motivation for positive change.
Supervision	Post-release supervision – Prisoners released on licence are supervised by the Probation Service in the community. Pre-release supervision – Home supervising officers along with probation staff in prisons work jointly with prison staff on sentence planning and management, including consideration of post-release issues.
Supporting People	National programme delivered by local authorities offering vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment which enables greater independence. It aims to deliver high quality and strategically planned housing-related services which are cost effective and reliable, and complement existing care services. Supporting People is a working partnership of local government, service users and support agencies.
Sure Start Children's Centres	Provides children under five and their families with a range of services including good-quality integrated early education and care, health and family support services, help in finding employment, and advice and information for parents.
Violent crime	The crimes that the Home Office classes as 'violent crime' for the purposes of statistics are robbery, sexual offences, assault and murder.
Whole family approach	Stresses the importance of looking at the family as a unit and of focusing on positive interdependency and supportive relationships. This approach takes the family's resilience and social capital as the foundations for achieving positive outcomes.
YOI	Young offender institutions (YOIs) are secure facilities (or 'prisons') that accommodate 15-20-year-olds who have been committed to custody (i.e. sentenced or remanded) by the courts.

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31	(1) Evidence on this page is drawn from fieldwork and information provided in the call for evidence (2) The Equality Act 2006 puts a duty on public bodies to promote equality between men and women. It refocuses criminal justice agencies to strive for equality in outcomes in the treatment of men and women - rather than female and male offenders being simply treated in the same way, they must be treated appropriately according to need.
32	(1) Evidence on this page is drawn from fieldwork and information provided in the call for evidence.
34	(1) Figure based on the number of adult women coming into contact with the criminal justice system for 'trigger' offences (a similar concept is used by the Drug Intervention Projects) which (based on field work and qualitative research) are likely to be committed by women with complex problems. They include: retail theft, drug offences, drunkenness, prostitution and vagrancy. In 2007, 10,162 adult women were sentenced for these offences at all courts. An additional 65,000 women were arrested, 27,231 were given a PND, and 14,574 cautions were issued for these offences. Figures have been adjusted for double counting based on analysis by the Ministry of Justice using data from the police national computer. According to Sentencing Statistics 2007, 79% of sentences for indictable offences represented distinct adult offenders. Since the majority of offenders will be dealt with in the magistrates court, where there is likely to be a higher rate of churn, this estimate is based on 60%.

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