



Women's Justice Blueprint Newsletter

Edition 6 • March 2025

Working in partnership to improve outcomes for women in or at risk
of entering the Criminal Justice System in Wales



This year's International Women's Day theme was 'Accelerate Action', with a call to collectively #Accelerate Action for gender equality. The aim of the Blueprint is to do just that, by accelerating the transformation of services for women by taking a whole system approach to better meet the needs of women and represent their experiences.

I'm very proud of the ongoing collective effort of Blueprint partners to develop a joined-up infrastructure and deliver sustainable local solutions to

support women in communities across Wales. Our partners have taken on board the evidence and research and listened to the voices of women with personal experience of the justice system and continue to strive to develop and tailor services to meet the needs of complex and vulnerable women.

Thanks to the Women's Justice Blueprint partners, Wales now has diversion schemes in all four police force areas, co-commissioned integrated women's services across Wales, seven unique Partnership Integration Co-ordinator roles, independent domestic violence advisors in HMP Styal and HMP Eastwood Park, 15 multi-agency Women's Pathfinder Case Conferences established across Wales, HMPPS Female Community Accommodation Service provision and support to increase and sustain community safe spaces for women.

From April we will be moving into a new delivery phase of the Blueprint, building on the existing

framework and principles to continue to embed best practice in the justice system for women in Wales.

There is also now a wider national focus on Women in Justice, and the National Women in Justice Board has recently been established with the aim of delivering fewer women in prison and more women supported in the community, which aligns with the work of the Blueprint. A cross-departmental Partnership Delivery Group has also been set up to undertake the work commissioned by the Women's Justice Board, and we will be looking at how we can align and share learning from Wales.

I want to thank everyone for your on-going support of the Women's Justice Blueprint and all the work you do to support women in Wales. I'm excited to see how this area of work develops so that we can continue our contribution to accelerate the transformation of the lives of women in Wales. If you would like further information or to contribute to the next newsletter, please contact us at wales.womensblueprint@justice.gov.uk

Emma Wools

South Wales Police and Crime
Commissioner and Senior
Responsible Lead) for the Women's
Justice Blueprint in Wales.



A review of youth to adult transitions for girls and young women in Wales

Young adult women are a minority in the criminal justice system on account of both their age and gender. Upon turning 18, young women in contact with the criminal justice system who transition into adult services can face a cliff-edge in support, often experiencing a lack of understanding and recognition of their needs, and more punitive responses to their vulnerabilities.

There is often little recognition of the need for a distinct age- and gender-specific approach for young women to address the risks they face at this time in their lives. These include increased vulnerability to criminal and sexual exploitation as support from statutory services falls away, and barriers accessing effective mental health support and suitable accommodation. For young adult women facing additional forms of disadvantage and discrimination –

including young women with experience of care – this increased vulnerability to harm and likelihood of being overlooked is exacerbated.

Through the Women's Justice Blueprint Early Intervention Workstream, an extensive piece of work is underway to review existing transition services for girls and young women in the justice system and look at how pathways can be strengthened.

A review has been carried out, analysing existing data, guidance and case studies as well as focus groups with practitioners and young women with experience of youth to adult transitions. A report is currently being drafted which summarises this research and outlines a set of recommendations for next steps. Findings will feed into the refresh of the Youth to Adult Transitions Guidance in Wales.



Understanding the health needs of women at risk of entering the criminal justice system in North Wales

Women at risk of entering the criminal justice system often face significant health disparities, yet research predominately focuses on those already within the system, with limited attention to women in Wales, particularly North Wales. A new Blueprint study has been investigating the healthcare needs, barriers to access, and the role of unmet health needs in criminal justice system involvement for this population.

The primary aims of the study were as follows:

1. Identify the healthcare needs of women at risk of entering the criminal justice system in North Wales.
2. Explore any barriers these women face in accessing healthcare services.
3. Examine how unmet healthcare needs contribute to offending behaviours.

Findings showed that prior to entering the criminal justice women reported:

- High levels of poor physical and mental health, as well as substance misuse.
- Over 90% of participants stated they had experienced difficulties accessing mental health services.
- Fear of judgement, previous experience of stigma, long waiting times, a lack of information, and substance use were all identified as key barriers to accessing healthcare.
- A lack of mental healthcare and substance use services were identified as contributors to criminal justice involvement.
- Respondents generally felt that healthcare services were not gender specific.

Research carried out with professionals working with women in relevant services identified:

- Significant barriers to healthcare access for women included fragmented services, misdiagnosis, dual diagnosis, as well as problems relating to motherhood and childcare, including stigma.
- Third-sector organisations hold an importance in bridging gaps and encouraging women's engagement with healthcare.

The research highlights the need for gender-specific, trauma-informed, and holistic healthcare approaches, as well as early intervention strategies, to reduce health inequalities and prevent vulnerable women from entering the justice system.

There were a number of key recommendations from this research including addressing barriers to healthcare access, prioritising early intervention and preventative healthcare and expanding and integrating community-based services.

These insights address a critical gap in the literature and provide valuable implications for policymakers and practitioners.

The report can be found online here:

<https://acehubwales.com/resources/understanding-the-health-needs-of-women-at-risk-of-entering-the-criminal-justice-system-in-north-wales/>

New study finds 80% of women in the criminal justice system in Wales may be living with a brain injury

Commissioned by the Criminal Justice in Wales Board and the Women's Justice Blueprint for Wales, *Complex Lives* is the first study exploring the prevalence of brain injury in women in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) in Wales.

Carried out by the UK's leading brain injury charity, [Brainkind](#), the research indicates that this cohort of women has faced significant social disadvantages and exclusion, often starting from a young age. The women contend with complex health needs, frequently reporting histories of domestic abuse, substance misuse, and mental and physical health issues.

In addition, many of these women have had their children removed by social services or have firsthand experience with the care system from their own childhood. This is underpinned by a high percentage of women reporting a history indicative of brain injury.

These intersecting factors illustrate an exceptionally vulnerable group of women who have encountered extreme marginalisation. Consequently, their lives are precarious, marked by trauma, and poor health.

Findings include:

- 80% of participants screening positive for a history indicative of brain injury
- 92% had experienced a serious blow to the head

- 78% reported being held in a way they could not breathe
- 84% of women self-reported 2 or more mental health conditions
- 68% said they had made an attempt to take their own life

The research goes on to support what we already know that women involved at all stages of the criminal justice system (not just prison) have often experienced multiple health and social disadvantages throughout their lives, and that these challenging circumstances impact their ability to access and engage with the support available to them. A potential brain injury may mean women are further impacted by a reduced ability to advocate for themselves and articulate the support they would find beneficial.

Further to this, the research found that many women within the criminal justice system feel misunderstood and let down, but does also show how many are finding huge value in community-based and holistic services such as the Women's Centres across Wales.

The report emphasises the need for awareness raising, recognising the importance of people being aware of the potential serious consequences of a head injury or non-fatal strangulation. A copy of the report can be downloaded [here](#).



The Nelson Trust opens the doors to a new women's centre in Newport

The Nelson Trust has recently opened a new women's centre in Newport as part of the One Wales Service, which takes a whole system approach to supporting women in the justice system, or diverting them away from the system at the earliest point possible.

The Newport Women's Centre is situated in an accessible location within Newport City centre and hosts a range of facilities to provide women with practical and emotional support to address their needs.

The Centre offers a safe environment for women to engage in a range of services including group interventions, one to one support, drop-in sessions and other services such as lunch clubs, access to partner agencies and co-location of statutory services and partnership integration coordinators.

The Centre is linked in with sexual health, domestic abuse, substance use, education training and employment and homelessness agencies for co-location, and is currently planning for the co-location of probation services.



HRH Prince William recently visited the Nelson Trust Newport Women's Centre, which was hosting a photography exhibition on behalf of local homeless organisation Homewards, highlighting women's homelessness.

For further information please contact Gemma Humphreys (Service Manager – Women's Community Services in Wales) on gemma.humphreys@nelsontrust.com.

Hepatitis C and the Reaching in Reaching Out Prison Project

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a blood-borne virus primarily affecting the liver, and left untreated can lead to irreversible liver damage, liver cancer and other health problems. It is transmitted through contact with infected blood, and although there are many routes of transmission, the most common is through sharing needles when injecting drugs. Around a third of people in prison have injected drugs so rates of HCV infection are particularly high among this population, estimated to be 7–20%.

HCV has emerged as a significant cause of chronic viral hepatitis in children in many countries. Nowadays, and especially in developed countries, vertical transmission of HCV (mother-to-baby) is considered the main cause of HCV infection in children.

Testing for HCV-RNA is essential to differentiate between those with current infection, from those who tested positive for maternal antibodies with no active infection, or who have spontaneously cleared the virus. It is vital that there is an effective pathway to trace, test and treat the children of infected mothers.

The Reaching In, Reaching Out (RIRO) project is a pilot project that is taking place initially in 3 women's prisons in England. The project aims to identify women in prison who have previously tested positive for Hepatitis C virus (HCV) and have children. As HCV can be passed from mothers to their children, we will offer HCV testing to their children to determine their HCV status. They will be supported by a specialist

health and social care practitioner to access information and counselling as well as treatment if they test positive.

The sites involved in the pilot are HMP Bronzefield, HMP New Hall and HMP Eastwood Park, as they all have mother and baby units as part of their establishment.

The engagement of wider stakeholders, including HM Prison and Probation service, NHS England, NHS Trusts, Prison Healthcare Provider organisations and Local Authorities, is vital for the success of the project.

HMPPS Wales has been involved in supporting the work in HMP Eastwood Park, including helping to track children of mothers who test positive for Hepatitis C and ongoing work relating to resettlement and the challenges with medication.

HMPPS Wales has also been carrying out community engagement to collect data and share information with women at women's health events.

Gender Informed Psychologically Led Model achieves CPD accreditation

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Forensic Psychology Service has developed a Gender Informed Psychologically Led Model on behalf of the Women's Justice Blueprint, which aims to create a supportive environment that addresses the root causes of offending behaviour, promotes rehabilitation, and reduces reoffending rates among women.

Key components of the model include, a trauma-informed approach, gender-responsive practices, collaboration and coordination between various agencies and services to ensure that women receive comprehensive support that addresses all aspects of their lives, and empowerment and rehabilitation to help women build resilience, develop new skills, and reintegrate into society successfully.

The Gender Informed Psychologically Led Model has achieved Continuing Professional Development (CPD) accreditation, recognising its comprehensive and innovative approach. This accreditation ensures that the model meets high standards of training and professional development, further enhancing its credibility and effectiveness.

Since its implementation, the Gender Informed Psychologically Led Model has shown promising results in improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system. As part of the next steps, HMPPS encourages partner organisations to independently test themselves against the

principles of the Model. By doing so, organisations can ensure that their practices are aligned with the best standards in supporting women in the criminal justice system and promoting their rehabilitation.

If you would like more information on the model, please email

wales.womensblueprint@justice.gov.uk



Glasbrint Cyfiawnder i Fenywod

Women's Justice Blueprint

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