

LONDON ASSEMBLY

A long way from home

Improving London's response to women in the criminal justice system



Police and Crime Committee

July 2018

Holding the Mayor to
account and
investigating issues
that matter to
Londoners

LONDONASSEMBLY

Police and Crime Committee Members



The Police and Crime Committee examines the work of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and investigates issues relating to policing and crime reduction in London.

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Steve O'Connell AM

Chair of the Police and Crime Committee



With the closure of HMP Holloway in 2016, women from London who are sent to jail must serve their time in prisons outside the capital. This hampers their chances of successful rehabilitation and reintegration in society once they are released.

Our investigation has found that women are mostly involved in crimes like theft and common assault, often driven by factors like drug and alcohol addictions, coercive relationships and financial difficulties. It is disappointing that over ten years on from a major report by Baroness Corston, which highlighted these very issues and called for radical change, including a reduction in the use of prison for women, progress has been so limited.

But now the Government has set out a new strategy and a significant change in direction. It is, therefore, the right time for the Mayor to take a lead in developing and delivering a better 'offer' for women who offend and those at risk of offending. This would mean better triaging and early support by police officers; reducing the number of women sent to prison for low-level and non-violent crime by giving the courts the confidence to use community sentences; and using some of the money from the sale of HMP Holloway to reinvest in women's centres, to improve support services and the chances for rehabilitation. We are calling for a smarter approach to criminal justice to cut costs, cut crime, and deliver better outcomes.

I would like to thank everyone that has sent us their views as part of this investigation. I would particularly like to thank the women from HMP Downview, and from the Revolving Doors Agency Forum, for speaking to us so candidly about their experiences and telling us what needs to change.

We hope that this report will help the Mayor and others move towards the goal of ensuring that every woman who comes into contact with the criminal justice system can move their life in a positive direction.

“The Government has set out a new strategy and a significant change in direction. It is, therefore, the right time for the Mayor to take a lead in developing and delivering a better ‘offer’ for women who offend and those at risk of offending.”

Summary

The number of women who commit crime in London is small. Around 22,000—or 15 per cent—of the arrests made by the police in London each year are of women, and around one in five cases dealt with by London’s courts involve a woman being prosecuted.

The reasons why women commit crime are often closely linked to problems like financial difficulties, drug and alcohol addictions, caring responsibilities or coercive relationships. Many have been victims of crime themselves.

The crimes that women typically commit are ‘low-level’ offences like criminal damage, theft, common assault and TV licence evasion. Only a few women commit and are convicted of the most serious crimes such as violence against the person. While the majority of offences are punished by a fine there are some women who are sentenced to prison, often on short sentences, for low-level offences such as theft. These types of sentences are widely criticised as harmful and unhelpful to rehabilitation.

For more than a decade there have been calls for radical change in the way the criminal justice system responds to women who offend and those at risk of offending. Little progress has been made, despite the Corston report in 2007 making over 40 recommendations for improvement. It is only now that the Government has finally set out a new approach: one that focuses on addressing the underlying causes of offending and reoffending.

The Government’s new strategy, coupled with discussions between the Mayor, London Councils and the Ministry of Justice about the possible devolution of responsibilities, has revived the opportunity for London to deliver a better ‘offer’ for women who offend, and those at risk of offending.

We want a London-wide service that delivers access to quality specialist provision for all women, wherever they live, and ensures the best possible outcomes at each stage of the criminal justice system. We are calling on the Mayor to demonstrate the capital is taking steps to deliver change, and to work with Government to deliver the resources that London needs to make its own vision a reality.

The police response

The first point of contact with the police presents an opportunity to identify the most effective response to offender behaviour from the start; be that diversion to specialist support, sanction, or arrest and prosecution. Women

We want a London-wide service that delivers access to quality specialist provision for all women, wherever they live, and ensures the best possible outcomes at each stage of the criminal justice system.

who have been in contact with the criminal justice system have said the police need to be able to “join the dots” to identify vulnerability and respond to it.

Equipping frontline officers with greater knowledge of provision in their borough is a way of improving that response, so that officers can signpost women to the help that they might need. But part of the response could also be in using different sanctions for dealing with low-level offending, which would prevent the need for women to enter the criminal justice system altogether.

Sentencing

Keeping women in prison is also costly [...] the sentencing of women to prison in London in 2017, mostly for theft, was done at a minimum cost of between nine and ten million pounds.

The use of short prison sentences is widely criticised. It gives little time to try and make a difference to that person’s outcomes and can create additional challenges around issues such as housing, employment and connections to family.

Keeping women in prison is also costly. We heard that an average prison stay costs in the region of £38,000-£42,000 a year. This means that the sentencing of women to prison in London in 2017, mostly for theft, was done at a minimum cost of between nine and ten million pounds.

The Government wants to reduce the number and frequency of women being given short prison sentences through the introduction of residential women’s centres as an alternative to prison. There is further work to do to establish how these centres will operate and we welcome the Government’s commitment to consult on the design of the pilot. Given the number of women sent to prison in London, especially on short sentences, at least one new residential women’s centre should be piloted in the capital.

Improving confidence in the use of community sentences could help to both reduce the cost of keeping women in prison—allowing it to be reinvested elsewhere—and improve outcomes. But, among the judiciary, there is a lack of confidence in these sentences; both in terms of what they can offer and what they can achieve. We also heard that ‘speedy justice’ may be hampering the ability of judges and magistrates to get full reports on the needs of women and alternative options. The Mayor does not control the courts, but he has a role to play in ensuring the courts have the confidence to use alternative sentences to custody.

Women in prison

Following the closure of HMP Holloway in July 2016, women sentenced to prison by the London courts are placed in prisons such as HMP Downview, HMP Bronzefield, and HMP Send, all just outside London, or prisons further away.

The problems caused by women being sent outside London to serve their sentences apply just as much to those serving longer sentences.

The implications of women being sent outside London to serve their sentences are stark. Maintaining family ties—considered crucial to rehabilitation—is severely affected. If the woman is the primary carer then children may face being taken into care, accommodation can be lost and specialist provision and links into community services becomes more difficult to deliver, hindering attempts to ensure effective rehabilitation.

Those prisons that take in London’s women prisoners are developing their facilities and responding to changing demand. But in the longer term, many of the solutions likely lie in bringing some form of custodial provision back into London. The Government had earmarked £50 million to create smaller ‘custodial units’, but has dropped this in favour of residential women’s centres. This does not solve the challenge that London faces if these are not located within the capital. And the problems caused by women being sent outside London to serve their sentences apply just as much to those serving longer sentences.

We need an approach that prevents London’s women, regardless of sentence length, being taken out of London. The Government’s strategy as it stands does not help to deliver this. Despite its change in direction on community prisons, a truly devolved criminal justice system would enable London government to assess the value of such an option. All options should be open.

Rehabilitation

London has only two ‘one-stop-shop’ women’s centres that provide a single access point to a wide range of services specifically for offenders and women at risk of offending.

There is widespread recognition of the need for a tailored approach to offending behaviour to better prevent reoffending. Specialist support exists across London, but provision falls short of demand.

London has only two ‘one-stop-shop’ women’s centres that provide a single access point to a wide range of services specifically for offenders and women at risk of offending. And access to this provision depends on where a person lives and their journey through the criminal justice system. There are eleven boroughs where women offenders do not have access to these women’s centres.

Increasing the provision of women’s centres for offenders and those at risk across the capital is crucial. The Mayor and the Government have committed to look at future investment in a network of women’s centres in London. We believe this should start with a commitment from the Government to dedicated funding for at least one more women’s centre, and using part of the former site of HMP Holloway may be the first step towards a solution since many related support services are already located close to Holloway. By embedding this type of provision across the capital, we can move towards our goal of ensuring that every woman who comes into contact with the criminal justice system has the support needed to move their life in a positive direction.

Recommendations

Improving London's 'offer'

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should, by May 2020, be able to demonstrate how he has used his powers and influence to contribute to:

- an increase in early problem-solving intervention and diversion by the police, where appropriate, of women who offend or are at risk of offending
- an improvement in the quality and use of community sentences for women who offend
- a reduction in the number of London's women who are sent to prison for low-level and non-violent crime, where appropriate
- the establishment of at least one residential women's centre in the capital, or a guarantee from the Government that it will establish and fund at least one in London as part of its pilot programme
- the establishment of a network of women's centres specifically for female offenders and those at risk of offending, to ensure equal access for all women who need this level of support wherever they live

Police diversion

Recommendation 2

The Metropolitan Police should review its foundation training to ensure that officers are equipped to take a gender-informed approach to risk, vulnerability, and offending.

Recommendation 3

The Metropolitan Police and MOPAC should ensure that, by the initial stages of the police triage pilot, frontline officers have access to information about the services that are available for women in their neighbourhood or borough.

Recommendation 4

In support of the Mayor's objective to increase early problem-solving and diversion, MOPAC should investigate the use of out of court disposals for women in London, to determine:

- whether they are being underused and any reasons for this
- the extent to which conditions attached to out of court disposals for women are addressing underlying offending behaviours
- how the Met can be enabled to make use of out of court disposals where appropriate

Improving sentencing practice

Recommendation 5

The Mayor's planned review of community sentencing should report on women as a target group, and assess:

- the quality of the community sentences that can be provided to women
- the effect of 'speedy justice' on the quality of sentencing decisions
- the awareness among magistrates and sentencers of the range and effectiveness of community sentences available to them and how this can be improved
- the potential for more creative sentencing, such as deferred sentences, to encourage engagement with specialist provision
- the potential for alternative approaches for women, such as the use of problem-solving courts

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should consider using his adult education and skills budget to support women in contact with the criminal justice system, and in particular to help women offenders continue any education and skills training they have begun in prisons on their release.

Recommendation 7

As a first step towards developing a comprehensive network of women's centres for London, the Mayor and the London Justice Devolution Board should attempt to secure from the Ministry of Justice the dedicated funding for at least one more non-residential 'one-stop-shop' women's centre specifically for offenders in London, based on the two that already exist.

Recommendation 8

In the process for agreeing the development of the HMP Holloway site:

- Islington Council, in its planning role, should ensure that a women's building, including a women's centre, and ideally community led, is specifically included in plans to redevelop the site, and that it can be funded through contributions by that developer.
- The Mayor should challenge any proposal for the development of the site that does not include a women's building of this kind.

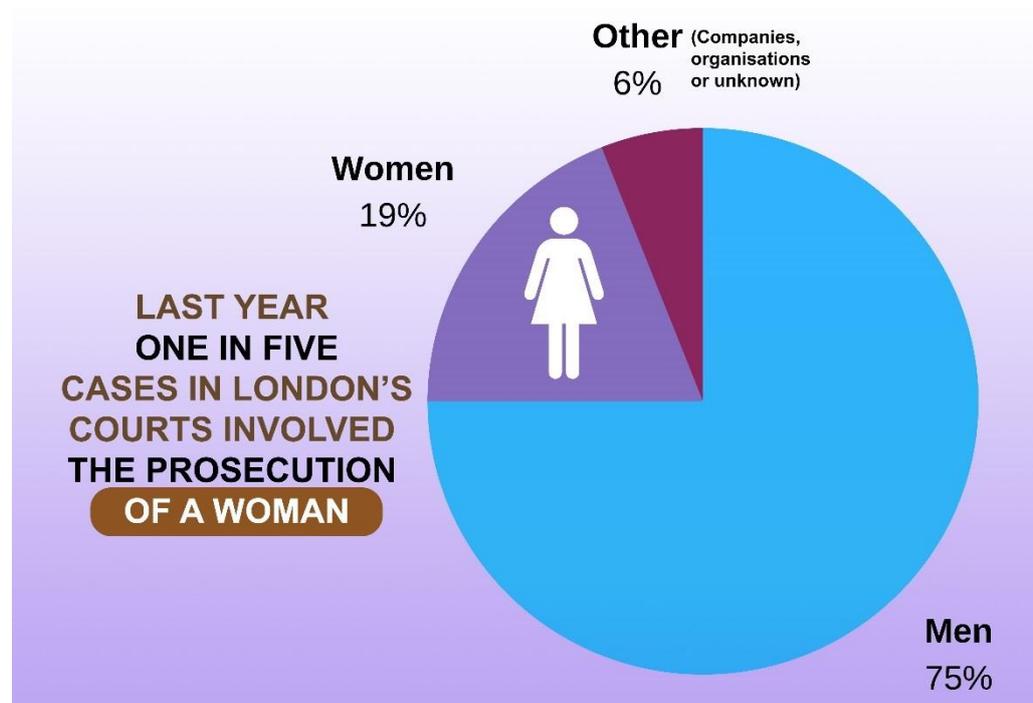
1. What we know

Key findings

- In 2017, around 22,000 arrests in London were of women. One in five cases in London's courts involved the prosecution of a woman.
- 1,204 women were sentenced to prison in 2017. With no prison in London all must serve their sentences outside the capital.
- Women who commit crimes are most often involved in low-level offences such as theft, common assault and TV licence evasion.
- The reasons why women commit crimes are often closely linked to problems like financial difficulties, drug and alcohol addictions, caring responsibilities or violent and/or coercive relationships.
- For over a decade there have been calls for radical changes to the way we deal with women who offend and those at risk of offending.
- The Government's new strategy provides an opportunity for London to create a system that improves rehabilitation and cuts reoffending rates.

There is a small number of women who commit crime in London

- 1.1 Women's involvement in crime in the capital is low. Around 15 per cent of the arrests made by the police in London each year are of women: in the year to March 2017, this equated to just under 22,000 of the 152,000 arrests made.¹ And in 2017, around 46,000 of the 246,000 cases that were dealt with by London's courts involved a woman being prosecuted.²



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017](#)

Women tend to be involved in 'low-level' offences

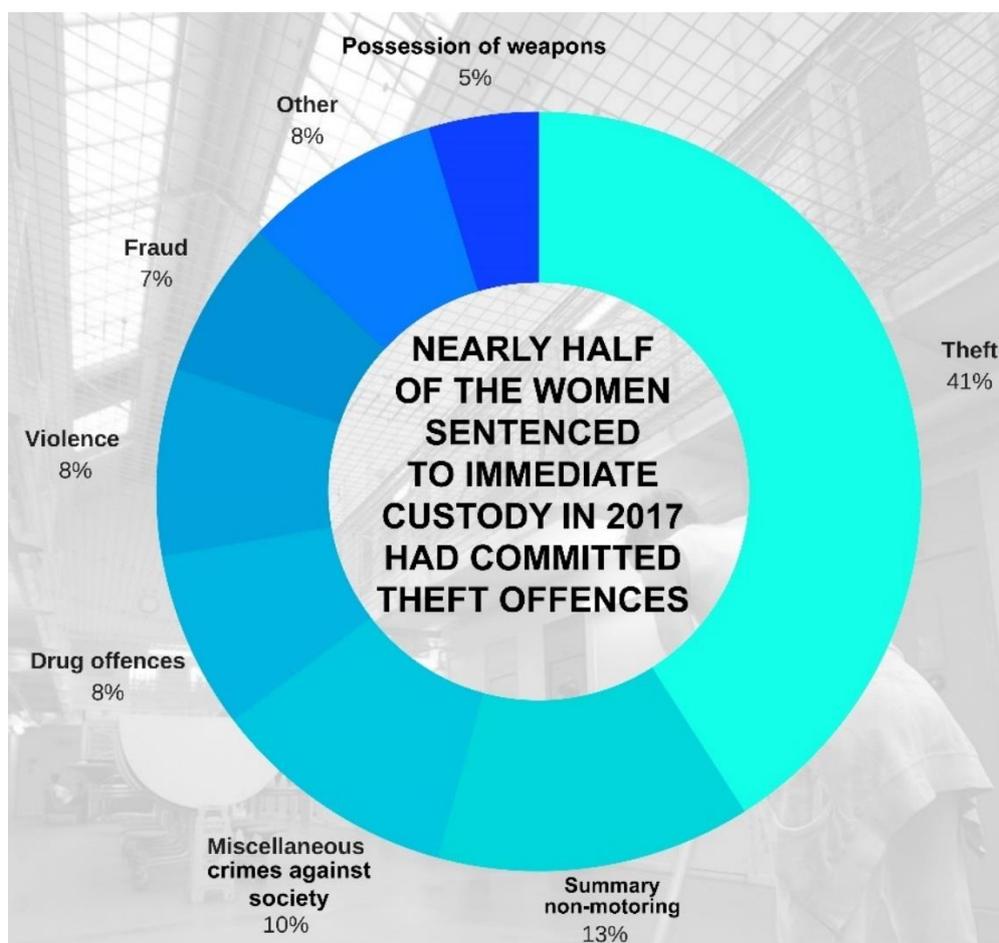
- 1.2 The types of offences committed by women tend to differ from those committed by men. Women tend to be more involved in summary offences like common assault or speeding, and miscellaneous crimes against society such as handling stolen goods, criminal damage and theft.³
- 1.3 Women are also more likely to be involved in offences related to struggles with money, such as welfare fraud, fare evasion, and TV licence evasion. In 2017, for example, TV licence evasion accounted for 20 per cent of all prosecutions of women and under two per cent of all prosecutions of men in London. 70 per cent of the roughly 15,000 defendants prosecuted for TV licence evasion in the capital were women.⁴
- 1.4 This is not to say that women do not commit more serious and 'high harm' offences. In fact, in 2016-17, violence against the person accounted for 40 per cent of all arrests of women in London.⁵ But where a woman is involved in

violence, it tends to be low-level violence. Prison Reform Trust (PRT) data shows that, nationally, women arrested for violence tend to be involved in actual bodily harm and breach of a restraining order, as opposed to offences such as grievous bodily harm or murder.⁶ The most recent criminal justice data for London also reflects this.⁷

- 1.5 In 2017, most of the women going through London’s courts were prosecuted for summary offences. This ranges from offences such as common assault, harassment, and drink driving, to begging and a child’s truancy from school. The summary offences that saw the most prosecutions—apart from TV licence evasion—were nearly all transport related, including railway offences, ‘public service vehicle’ offences, vehicle insurance offences and speeding.⁸

Nearly half of London’s women sentenced to prison have committed theft offences

- 1.6 Of the 46,000 prosecutions of women in London in 2017, 37,000 were sentenced. The majority of these—80 per cent—received a fine; around six per cent received a community sentence; and three per cent received a suspended sentence. Just over three per cent—1,204 women—were sentenced to immediate custody.⁹



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017](#)

- 1.7 Nearly half of the women sentenced to immediate custody had committed theft offences. This was followed by summary offences and miscellaneous crimes against society. Only eight per cent of prison sentences were for violence against the person offences.¹⁰

Women have specific needs to help with their rehabilitation

- 1.8 The reasons why people commit crime are varied and complex. For some, factors such as drug and alcohol problems, mental health needs, or financial difficulties and debt can all play a part in the decision to commit crime.
- 1.9 This can be said for anyone regardless of characteristics like gender, socio-economic status or age. But for women, these factors appear to be particularly acute. Offending by women is said to be commonly linked to the vulnerabilities listed above and to factors like coercive relationships, or a history of abuse.¹¹ Many have been victims of crime: the Prison Reform Trust reports that just over half of all women in prison have said they experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child.¹² The role of primary carer is also suggested as a driver of crime in some circumstances. Niki Scordi, Chief Executive of the charity Advance, told us:

“[being a primary carer] puts undue pressure on them to sustain their families and look after children, parents and so on. It often leads to financial difficulties, which therefore might lead to fraud on benefits, shoplifting for food to feed families [...] using offending, if you like, as a way of coping rather than choosing to do so because they want to.”¹³

- 1.10 It is these kinds of underlying factors in offending by women that have led many to question what the appropriate response by the criminal justice system should be.

Progress in improving the response to women’s offending has been slow

- 1.11 Eleven years ago, a major independent review conducted by Baroness Jean Corston called for radical change in the way the criminal justice system responds to women. The Corston report, published in 2007, examined how women with specific vulnerabilities could be diverted from prison, following the deaths of six women in HMP Styal in 2002 and 2003. It found that “there are many women in prison, either on remand or serving sentences for minor, non-violent offences, for whom prison is both disproportionate and inappropriate” and concluded that radical change was needed in the way women were treated in the criminal justice system, including those at risk of offending.¹⁴ It made recommendations around sentencing reform; the greater use of alternatives to custody; and use of liaison and diversion schemes to

address issues connected with women's offending before imprisonment becomes an option.¹⁵

The Corston Report: A review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice system.¹⁶

The 2007 report concluded that there are fundamental differences between male and female offenders and those at risk of offending that indicate a different and distinct approach is needed for women. It made 43 recommendations, including:

- the reservation of custodial sentences and remand for serious and violent women offenders
- stopping the use of remand for women unlikely to receive a custodial sentence
- the use of small local custodial centres for such offenders within 10 years
- community sentences used as the norm
- the development of a wider network of 'one-stop-shop' community provision for women offenders and those at risk of offending
- the use of women's centres as referral centres for women who offend or are at risk of offending. They should also be used as court and police diversions
- more supported accommodation for women on release from prison to break the cycle of repeat offending
- improvements in health services and support for women offenders

1.12 These recommendations were welcomed by women's organisations and service providers. Jenny Earle, Prison Reform Trust, described it as an "important landmark report", while Liz Hogarth, who worked with Baroness Corston on the report, told us that it presented a "blueprint for how a sustainable model for women-centred services might be developed in the future with the necessary devolvement of funding from central government."¹⁷ The Government said in its response to the report that "nearly all of the recommendations have been accepted" and committed, for example, to action to "maximise the use of the community order"; review the "merits of small custodial units" for women; and introduce "gender-specific standards for women in prison."¹⁸

1.13 In the ten years following that report, little changed. Liz Hogarth told us that the implementation of the report's findings stalled, and "its emphasis on system change and services to prevent women being criminalised was supplanted by a narrow focus on changes to criminal justice processes. As a result, policy-making became stuck in the justice loop of courts, probation and

prison”.¹⁹ In 2017, Women in Prison, a charity providing services for women in London and other cities, suggested that only a few of the recommendations had been implemented but many had made limited progress, such as more supported accommodation for women and the use of custodial sentences only for serious and violent offenders.²⁰

“Progress has been woeful in those ten years and we have certainly taken steps back in terms of funding women’s services [...] in terms of funding and developing a network of women’s centres, the position is pathetic, given that we have had ten years to make progress. In London in particular, things are really pretty bad compared to other big cities.”

Dr Kate Paradine, Chief Executive, Women in Prison

1.14 But now the Government has set out its new approach: one that builds on the principles of the Corston report and signals a significant change in direction. In June 2018, it published its Female Offender Strategy, which sets out a commitment to “a new programme of work for female offenders, driven by three priorities: earlier intervention, an emphasis on community-based solutions, and an aim to make custody as effective and decent as possible for those women who do have to be there.”²¹ The primary focus of the strategy is on addressing vulnerability and tackling the underlying causes of offending and reoffending through a ‘whole system approach’.²²

Commitments made by the Government in its new Female Offender Strategy include:²³

- an investment of £5 million of cross-Government funding over two years in community provision for women, including £2 million specifically for offenders who have experienced domestic abuse
- working with local and national partners to develop a pilot for ‘residential women’s centres’ in at least five sites across England and Wales
- reducing the number of women serving short custodial sentences
- developing a National Concordat on Female Offenders to set out “how local partners and services should be working together in partnership to identify and respond to the often multiple and complex needs of women”

The Government has also asked Lord Farmer to continue his work on the importance of family ties in improving outcomes for offenders and report back at the end of 2018.

1.15 The publication of a new Government strategy is welcome, particularly in light of reports earlier in the year that it had been postponed.²⁴ The focus on

diverting women away from the criminal justice system, reducing the number of women in prison, and improving the quality of community alternatives, has been applauded by campaigners and service providers. However, concerns have already been raised that “good intentions” still need to be turned into action; and that adequate resources and funding are needed if the Government is going to achieve what it is setting out to do.²⁵

The Mayor has committed to make progress on tackling offending by women

- 1.16 The Mayor has chosen to focus specifically on women as a target group for reducing offending and reoffending, along with young adults and persistent offenders. Through his Police and Crime Plan he has committed to divert low-risk women from formal criminal justice processes, and to expand access to specialist women’s centres, “so that female offenders across London have access to gender-appropriate provision designed to tackle reoffending.”²⁶ He has also made reference to female offenders in his Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, stating that MOPAC will ensure that its commissioned services are sufficiently accessible and, where appropriate, targeted to female victims and survivors who are also offenders.²⁷
- 1.17 The Mayor is seeking Government backing to achieve these aims. On 26 March 2018, he, along with the Justice Secretary and London Councils, announced the publication of a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ (MOU) on justice devolution to London. The aim is to “jointly identify how devolution can facilitate a transformation in criminal justice outcomes for Londoners”, with the long-term goal of “implementing a ‘whole system approach’ to the management of female offenders within London, whereby different justice agencies (and other public services) align to invest in prevention and community-based alternatives to the use of unnecessary and costly incarceration of women who present a low risk of harm.”²⁸ A London Justice Devolution Board is being established to oversee work related to the MOU.

The Mayor, Government and London Councils have agreed three priorities for women’s offending:

- Reducing the number of women in custody, particularly on short custodial sentences.
- Improving access to support services for women in prisons.
- Ensuring there is sufficient funding and investment for female offender services in the community.

- 1.18 The London Assembly has long argued that greater devolution of the criminal justice system to London government could enable a better tailored service for offenders which can cut reoffending rates. We have pressed MOPAC to set out how outcomes would be improved, and how the independence of the

court system would be safeguarded.²⁹ For women in the criminal justice system, as Liz Hogarth suggested, devolution presents an opportunity to create additional investment and develop a better ‘whole system’ response.³⁰ But what we do know is that achieving devolution of the criminal justice system is going to take a long time, and we heard that while it “does have great promise [...] all the things that we want can happen without that”.³¹

- 1.19 The Government’s new strategy, along with the Mayor’s devolution agreement with the Ministry of Justice, has revived the opportunity for London to deliver a better ‘offer’ for women who offend, and those at risk of offending. We want a London-wide service that delivers access to quality specialist provision for all women and ensures the best possible outcomes at each stage of the criminal justice system, wherever in the capital they may live.**
- 1.20 The Government has said that it wants local areas to “feel empowered to design approaches tailored for the specific needs of their populations and local circumstances”.³² We therefore call on the Mayor to adopt a set of objectives that demonstrate the capital is taking steps to deliver change, and to work with Government to deliver the resources that London needs to make its own vision a reality. This time, unlike over a decade ago, calls for change must result in action.**

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should, by May 2020, be able to demonstrate how he has used his powers and influence to contribute to:

- an increase in early problem-solving intervention and diversion by the police, where appropriate, of women who offend or are at risk of offending
- an improvement in the quality and use of community sentences for women who offend
- a reduction in the number of London’s women who are sent to prison for low-level and non-violent crime, where appropriate
- the establishment of at least one residential women’s centre in the capital, or a guarantee from the Government that it will establish and fund at least one in London as part of its pilot programme
- the establishment of a network of women’s centres specifically for female offenders and those at risk of offending, to ensure equal access for all women who need this level of support wherever they live

2. Police diversion

Key findings

- For many women, the police are the first point of contact with the criminal justice system.
- The police are being called on to better recognise vulnerability, and, where appropriate, signpost women to local services that can provide support that could prevent offending or reoffending.

The police are a critical first point of contact

- 2.1 For many women, the police are the first point of contact with the criminal justice system. In the year to March 2017, just under 22,000 arrests made by the Met were of women: we can assume that on top of this, there are many more women, potentially at risk, vulnerable, or on the fringes of criminality, that they will have encountered.³³

“There is a real opportunity for the police to be the only point of contact within the CJS for troubled women with multiple complex needs who commit low-level offences and who can safely be diverted if support services are available.”

Written evidence from Liz Hogarth

- 2.2 Some commentators argue that “women can be more effectively rehabilitated outside the criminal justice system”, and that the first point of contact with the police presents an opportunity to identify the best response from the start: be that diversion to specialist support, sanction, or arrest and prosecution.³⁴ Helga Swidenbank, Director of Probation at the London Community Rehabilitation Company, told us that “if we are able to get women when they start to become on the fringes of the criminal justice system and divert them [...] that has to be the right way of doing it, stopping them at the beginning.”³⁵
- 2.3 The Government’s new strategy says that police services should operate a model that takes “a gender-informed approach to all women with whom they come into contact, whether or not they are arrested” and include the approach in their policing plans.³⁶ The Mayor has already agreed with London Councils and the Government to “explore the scope for greater use of police diversion and triage.”³⁷ He has also committed, through his Police and Crime Plan, to “work to divert low-risk women from the formal criminal justice processes through police-led triage”.³⁸ A pilot triage system in the Met is expected in summer 2018, across eight to 12 boroughs in the first phase. We look forward to receiving further detail about the pilot in due course.

The Met's triage pilot³⁹

The Met's proposed pilot "is expected to integrate a comprehensive package of support with an out of court disposal in order to improve outcomes for the offender and offer a robust alternative pathway to prosecution through the courts." The expected benefits of this pilot include:

- Improved referral pathways for vulnerable women.
- Enhanced the police's problem-solving capabilities.
- Development of existing partnership arrangements in delivering a whole system approach to female offending in London.

The anticipated outcomes include:

- Reduction in the volume of women who enter the criminal justice system.
- Reduction in the number of women who are sentenced to short-term prison sentences.
- Improvement in the life chances (health and wellbeing) of the women who enter the diversion scheme and their children.
- Reduction in demand across the social care and criminal justice systems.

The response of the police to vulnerable and 'at risk' women is critical

- 2.4 Women with experience of the criminal justice system have said the police need to be able to "join the dots" to identify vulnerability and respond to that as well as any offending.⁴⁰ Part of the way they can do this is to signpost women to specialist services.
- 2.5 We heard many examples where this is not happening. One woman told us that she had been in custody many times because of mental health issues, but was provided with no information on support services. She eventually committed a crime and was put in prison. Another explained how she was placed into custody "to sober up" but then released with no information on where to find support for alcohol addiction.⁴¹

"It would have been nice if I felt heard."

Participant at Revolving Doors Agency forum meeting

- 2.6 The Met Commissioner, Cressida Dick CBE QPM, told us that women going through custody are signposted to specialist services but admits "there is further to go."⁴² And we agree. Police diversion will only work if frontline

officers can confidently identify vulnerability and have the local knowledge of the specialist provision available. The Government’s new guidance for the police on vulnerable women—which was published alongside the Female Offender Strategy—asks for the police to “identify and build partnerships with other organisations, both statutory and in the third sector, to whom women can be referred for support”.⁴³

- 2.7 The Met’s pilot is more likely to be successful if both are embedded across the frontline. At our recent visit to the Met’s training centre in Hendon we heard about the training that officers receive on safeguarding, such as victim care and identifying risk.⁴⁴ It would be beneficial to focus on women as a specific sub-group in that training. In respect of local services, we believe that work can easily be done now to provide officers with information on where they can signpost women.

Recommendation 2

The Metropolitan Police should review its foundation training to ensure that officers are equipped to take a gender-informed approach to risk, vulnerability, and offending.

Recommendation 3

The Metropolitan Police and MOPAC should ensure that, by the initial stages of the police triage pilot, frontline officers have access to information about the services that are available for women in their neighbourhood or borough.

We need to look at the use of out of court disposals for women

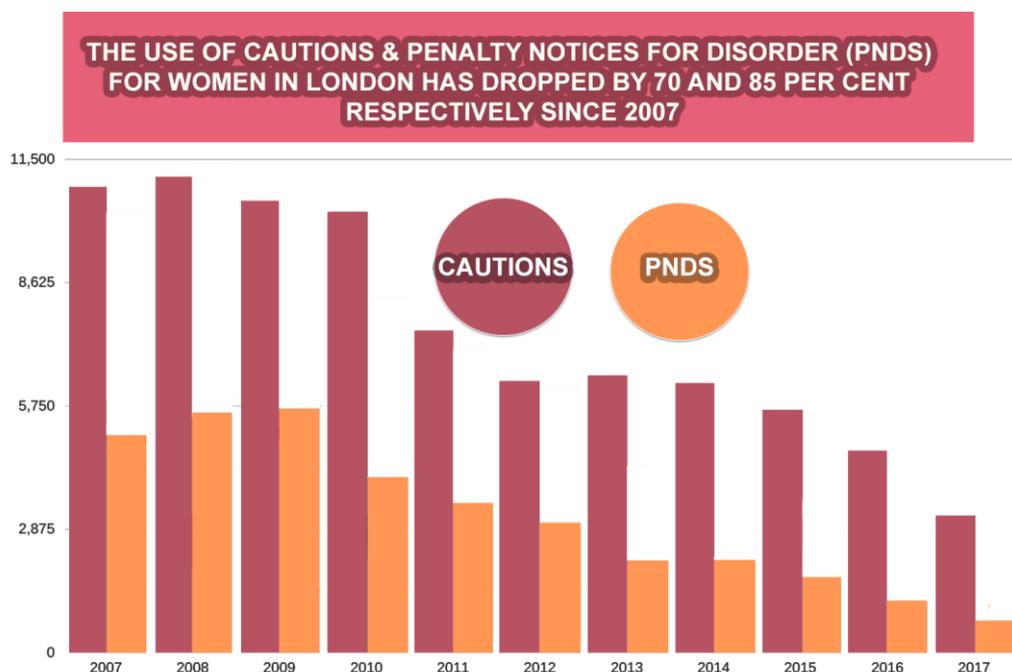
- 2.8 The police have a range of tools available to sanction low-level offenders, without them having to be prosecuted in court, known as ‘out of court disposals’. These tools include Cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs), and Community Resolution.
- 2.9 Community Resolution is used to deal with “less serious crime and anti-social behaviour, where the offender accepts responsibility.”⁴⁵ Actions used as a resolution could include restorative justice, an apology to any victim, or repairing any damage. This does not lead to a criminal record.
- 2.10 But both nationally and in the capital, the use of Community Resolution has been low. In 2017, 104,100 community resolutions were used by the police across England and Wales, a seven per cent decrease on the previous year.⁴⁶

Its use was piloted in London in 2014-15, with police encouraged to divert low-level offending women to a women’s centre. Those running the pilot said:

“it takes a very long time to educate and encourage the police to make the necessary referrals. You have to explain why it is required, what the benefits are to them, what the benefits are to the women and how you are going to work with the women differently.”⁴⁷

2.11 We are pleased to hear that Community Resolution is starting to be rolled out more across the Met. We heard it is an effective tool elsewhere, such as in Wales, where its use is said to be reducing pressure on the criminal justice system.⁴⁸ But we also agree with those we heard from that “the requirement for the police officers to use community resolutions needs to come from the top” and be embedded within the police culture.⁴⁹ It is in everyone’s interest, including that of the police, to improve outcomes at the earliest stage possible.

2.12 More formal out of court disposals include cautions and PNDs. In terms of reoffending, they appear to be effective for low-level offences. In the year to March 2016, for example, the national reoffending rate for all adults given cautions was just under 16 per cent, compared to nearly 48 per cent for prison and 33 per cent for community sentences.⁵⁰ But their use is falling. Across England and Wales their use has dropped by 79 per cent since 2007.⁵¹ The use of cautions for women in London has dropped by 70 per cent and PNDs by 85 per cent since 2007, a slightly greater decrease than for men.⁵²



Source: Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017](#)

- 2.13 The reasons for this reduction are not immediately clear. A person must admit an offence before a caution can be issued: are fewer women admitting to offences?⁵³ Cautions cannot be issued when a person has been convicted or cautioned for a similar offence in the previous two years: has the offender profile changed our ability to use cautions?⁵⁴ Are the police dealing with low-level offending via less formal and recorded routes? Or is it simply that the reduction is in proportion to an overall reduction in women who offend?⁵⁵
- 2.14 Given that these tools can produce lower reoffending rates than other methods of punishment, there may be benefit in further exploring why the numbers have dropped and whether the reduction is justified or reasonable, or if there is potential for them to be used more to deal with low-level and low-risk offending.

Recommendation 4

In support of the Mayor's objective to increase early problem solving and diversion, MOPAC should investigate the use of out of court disposals for women in London, to determine:

- whether they are being underused and any reasons for this
- the extent to which conditions attached to out of court disposals for women are addressing underlying offending behaviours
- how the Met can be enabled to make use of out of court disposals where appropriate

3. Improving sentencing practice

Key findings

- There are times when a prison sentence is the most appropriate punishment. But most women are sentenced to prison for low-level and non-violent offences.
- Just under three quarters of the women sentenced to immediate custody in London in 2017 received a sentence of six months or less.
- Short prison sentences are unhelpful in preventing reoffending as the system cannot deliver an effective package of provision in that time and it can worsen complex issues.
- The courts may not have enough confidence in issuing community sentences. Community sentences made up six per cent of all sentences given to women by London's Courts in 2017.
- The Mayor has no power over the courts, but he can help to increase confidence in the use of community sentences.

Short prison sentences are unhelpful for rehabilitation

- 3.1 Most women sentenced in London's courts receive a fine. But just over three per cent—1,204 women in 2017—are sentenced to immediate custody, of which nearly half have committed theft offences.⁵⁶ Just under 75 per cent of the women sentenced to immediate custody in London in 2017 received a sentence of six months or less. The use of short custodial sentences has increased over recent years: in 2012 that figure was around 66 per cent.⁵⁷
- 3.2 The use of short sentences is widely criticised, including by the Ministry of Justice, as they provide “little opportunity to address the underlying causes of their crimes and prevent their reoffending.”⁵⁸ The Governor of HMP Downview told us that an ongoing challenge is meeting the range of needs of people on a range of sentences, and short sentences in particular result in little time to try and make a difference to that person's outcomes. It can also exacerbate challenges around issues such as children being taken into care, and housing: we heard from one prisoner that her short sentence of 13 weeks in prison was a period just long enough for her landlord to classify her as an absent tenant, and she subsequently lost her home.⁵⁹

“Short prison sentences are short-sighted because they disrupt family ties, housing, employment and treatment programmes for example, but they do not provide any meaningful rehabilitation. These sentences contribute to prison ‘churn’ and volatility.”

Christina Marriott, Chief Executive, Revolving Doors Agency

- 3.3 Keeping women in prison is also costly. The Prison Reform Trust told us that “an average prison stay costs in the region of £38,000-£42,000 annually.”⁶⁰ This means that the prison stays of women sentenced to immediate custody in London in 2017, mostly for theft, cost a minimum of between nine and ten million pounds.⁶¹ This does not include the costs of getting those women through the criminal justice system and to prison.

There is a lack of confidence in community sentences and what they can achieve

- 3.4 The Mayor and the Government have agreed to work towards reducing the number of women in custody, especially on short term sentences.⁶² The Government wants its new strategy to achieve this by delivering quality community sentences and creating “an environment that encourages the use of community sentences instead of custodial ones where appropriate”.⁶³
- 3.5 Around six per cent of women sentenced in London's courts in 2017 received a community sentence. Over time, the use of community sentences has remained stable, making up between six and seven per cent of all sentences.⁶⁴

- 3.6 But concerns have been raised that the use of community sentences in London is too low. The Mental Health Treatment Requirement (MHTR), for example, is one of the community orders available to judges, but “despite high numbers of individuals with mental health conditions in the criminal justice system, the MHTR is rarely used (around 0.1 per cent of all community sentences).”⁶⁵ A recent analysis by the Ministry of Justice highlights this requirement as one that can support reductions in reoffending.⁶⁶
- 3.7 It is unclear why the use of community sentences in London is low, but we heard two reasons. First, the confidence of the courts in issuing community sentences, including a lack of awareness of what could be included in a community sentence. The Magistrates Association said it “notes the real risk that a lack of sentencer confidence in the content of community sentences could have an effect on their use.”⁶⁷ We also heard that sentencers lack awareness of what provision is being offered for women by probation services. Second is having effective pre-sentence reports: probation services are concerned about the push for ‘speedy justice’. Magistrates have said that they do not feel they are getting the information they need to make informed decisions.⁶⁸

The Mayor can help to increase confidence in the use of community sentences

- 3.8 The Mayor cannot direct the courts to take a particular course of action. But he has a role to play in ensuring that the courts in London have the confidence to use alternative sentencing tools to custodial sentences. He has committed in the Police and Crime Plan to “review the use of community sentences in London to ensure that the right interventions are used with offenders to reduce their risk of reoffending”.⁶⁹ He has also said that he will work with HM Prison and Probation Service “to aid the development of more effective Rehabilitation Activity Requirements (RAR) in London”.⁷⁰
- 3.9 The Mayor’s commitments have not been made specifically in relation to women. But for the Mayor to achieve his objective of reducing the number women in prison and improving the quality of community sentences, there would be benefit in looking at women offenders as a target group.

“Courts must also be properly informed about the community provision that is available in their area, to ensure that magistrates can give community sentences with confidence, knowing that they are suitable for female offenders and will help women to turn their lives around.”

Magistrates Association, 7 November 2017

- 3.10 The Mayor’s review, in addition to looking at the barriers in the use of community sentences, should explore the options for more ‘creative’ and alternative approaches to sentencing. The use of immediate custody, for example, often means no care plans for children are in place: but one guest highlighted to us that in some countries “if you are a primary carer, you get two weeks to sort out childcare arrangements before you are sent to prison.”⁷¹ Another suggestion we heard was that sentencers are given the power “to defer sentence and allow a woman to show, for example, that she is prepared to engage with local support services. Once she has shown some progress, then they can decide that rather than go for the default option of a short prison sentence, something else might be more appropriate in her circumstances.”⁷²
- 3.11 We were particularly interested in the use of problem-solving courts as a way of improving sentencing and outcomes for women. Greater Manchester is attempting to improve the use of community sentences through courts that work on a “particular issue (such as drug addiction), with a particular group, on a particular crime type or in a particular neighbourhood.”⁷³ It focuses on interventions or counselling that target the factors that lead to crime; and monitors offenders to make sure that they are engaging with treatment. Offenders are given a problem-solving court community order that lasts for either six, nine or 12 months and is managed by a probation officer.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor’s planned review of community sentencing should report on women as a target group, and assess:

- the quality of the community sentences that can be provided to women
- the effect of ‘speedy justice’ on the quality of sentencing decisions
- the awareness among magistrates and sentencers of the range and effectiveness of community sentences available to them and how this can be improved
- the potential for more creative sentencing, such as deferred sentences, to encourage engagement with specialist provision
- the potential for alternative approaches for women, such as the use of problem-solving courts

Residential women's centres might help to improve outcomes for some

- 3.12 The Government wants to reduce the number and frequency of women being given short custodial sentences through the introduction of 'residential women's centres'. In place of its previous commitment to build smaller prisons for women, the Government will pilot at least five of these centres, which are expected to "offer an intensive residential support package in the community for women at risk of, or having served, short custodial sentences, supporting them to address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour." In addition, and specifically for London, the Government has also recognised the lack of approved premises for women in the capital and is seeking to rectify it, which is a welcome step forward.⁷⁴
- 3.13 The proposals have not been fully fleshed out and many questions remain. This includes, for example, how a residential centre, which could require a woman to be away from their home for a period of time, would form part of a community sentence when these sentences do not require 'custody'?
- 3.14 There is much further work to do to establish how residential women's centres will operate and we welcome the Government's commitment to consult on the design of the pilot. **If there is potential that it could result in many more women remaining in London to serve their sentence, and having holistic support easily to hand, then we want London to be part of the initial pilot programme. Given the number of women sent to prison in London, especially on short sentences, we will press Government for at least one centre to be piloted in the capital, and call on the Mayor to do the same.**

4. London's women in prison

Key findings

- Despite sending the highest number of women to prison in England and Wales, there is no longer a prison for women in London.
- Sending women to prison outside of London creates difficulties in maintaining family ties and other social networks and hinders rehabilitation.
- The closure of HMP Holloway was rushed and poorly planned, which led to difficulties for prisons, prisoners, and specialist support services.

- 4.1 While we welcome the Government’s commitment to pilot residential women’s centres in place of short prison sentences, this does not solve the challenge that London faces. Namely, that women sentenced to jail for more serious offences, or those that do not receive a place at a residential women’s centre, would still be taken out of London.

There is no prison for women in London

- 4.2 Women sentenced to prison for any sentence by the London courts do not stay in London. They are placed in prisons such as HMP Downview, HMP Bronzefield, and HMP Send, all just outside London, or prisons further away.
- 4.3 London’s women who were sentenced to prison had been mainly imprisoned within the capital until the closure of HMP Holloway in July 2016. It was Europe’s largest female prison, based in Islington, and had capacity for around 500 women and young offenders. It had facilities such as a mother and baby unit, a mental health unit, and a visitor’s centre, a purpose-built space where information and guidance on prison procedures was available and family support workers were accessible; and there were a range of facilities for children so that prisoners could spend time with family. For many community services, Holloway served as a hub and assisted in drawing in funding.

“Crucially, for many women, Holloway, however uncomfortable a finding, has been regarded as a second home. For some it is the only safe place they have ever known.”

HMP Holloway Independent Monitoring Board, 14 June 2016

The closure of HMP Holloway makes rehabilitating women in prison from London more challenging

- 4.4 The implications of women being sent outside London to serve their sentences are stark. Most notably we heard that maintaining family ties—considered crucial to rehabilitation—is severely affected. The Governor of HMP Downview said that visits are a positive influence on prisoners. But prisoners told us that many families live too far away to visit, and both affordability and ability to travel caused problems.⁷⁵ On weekends, for example, train travel from different parts of London to HMP Downview can be difficult. And a child visiting a parent during the week can be difficult because of school. We heard that a travel allowance is available for families, but completing the form for this is complicated.⁷⁶

“It is hard to exaggerate how bad the situation is for London women now located so far out of London.”

Written evidence from Liz Hogarth

The views of women with experience of the criminal justice system

We were encouraged by the candour of the prisoners and women with experience of the criminal justice system who we spoke to and their suggestions for change. We heard, for example, that prisoners would like to see phone credit provided to women whose families cannot visit in exchange for the travel allowance, to maintain family ties. We also heard that they feel there is a lack of access and knowledge about educational services and courses outside prison, and how they can continue any learning they are undertaking in prison once released.⁷⁷ Given that the Adult Education budget is being devolved to the Mayor, there is perhaps more he will be able to do in the future to address this specific point.

- 4.5 The provision of specialist support has been particularly affected. Service providers told us that they struggle to meet with prisoners outside London and that they were concerned about the ability of the Community Rehabilitation Company to provide its support to prisoners.⁷⁸ Women in Prison said that Holloway's closure "had an impact on us as an organisation as we have been forced to relocate services to follow the women further away from our base, costing us much more to deliver the same service, both in travel time for staff and travel cost."⁷⁹ Dr Kate Paradine told us that:

"Even if you look at [HM Prison] Downview, it is two-and-a-half hours from Holloway so staff are doing a four or five-hour round trip just to do one meeting with a woman to try to link her into services. The logistics are a real challenge".⁸⁰

- 4.6 This can result in women not having the support they need on release and can damage efforts to prevent reoffending. The Governor of HMP Downview, among others, said that many women are homeless when they leave prison. In one example, a woman was released without accommodation on a Friday when housing services were not available, resulting in her being homeless for several days. In another example, a prisoner was released and expected to be placed in secure accommodation, but no one met her at the gates of the prison to take her there. In the end prison staff, in their own time, drove the woman to her secure accommodation.⁸¹

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should consider using his Adult Education and skills budget to support women in contact with the criminal justice system, and in particular to help women offenders continue any education and skills training they have begun in prisons on their release.

Prisons outside London are making efforts to replicate the positive elements of HMP Holloway

- 4.7 The closure of HMP Holloway was widely regarded as rushed, both in the decision-making and implementation.⁸² Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons told us that "there was significant distress and disruption for women who moved" and in its 2017 inspection of HMP Downview found that "there had not been enough time to get buildings ready, commission services for women and ensure enough staff were in place".⁸³ Prison staff at Downview told us that they themselves had to carry out basic maintenance for the estate to be ready for the new prisoners from London.⁸⁴
- 4.8 Those prisons that have taken in most of London's women prisoners are continually developing their facilities and responding to changing demand, and we commend them for their efforts. HMP Downview, for example, is looking at creative solutions to tackle problems experienced by prisoners, such as mental health and wellbeing or substance addiction, through art therapy and horticulture. It also runs family days, which are held on top of regular visits and give mothers the opportunity to spend four to five hours with their children and families.⁸⁵
- 4.9 In the longer term, many of the solutions to the problems, such as access to specialist provision, likely lie on bringing some form of custodial provision back into London. This does not necessarily mean the creation of a new large prison, but as the Corston model suggests, creating a small custodial unit, or units, across the capital for those women for whom prison is most appropriate. The Government had earmarked £50 million to create smaller prisons, or 'custodial units' but has dropped this in favour of residential women's centres.
- 4.10 Small custodial units are being implemented elsewhere. In Scotland, for example, the decision has been taken to open community-based custodial units as part of a plan to replace its only female prison with a smaller 80-capacity prison at the site and five new units each accommodating up to 20 women across the country. These smaller units for female offenders "aim to place them closer to their families and provide targeted support to address issues such as alcohol, drugs, mental health or domestic abuse": an initiative similar to the Government's approach to residential women's centres.⁸⁶
- 4.11 The implications of women being sent outside London to serve their sentences apply just as much to those serving longer sentences as they do short. We therefore need an approach that prevents London's women, regardless of sentence length, being taken out of London. The Government's strategy as it stands does not help to deliver this.
- 4.12 The Mayor and the Government, through the MOU, have agreed to "jointly explore opportunities for the commissioning of a new community prison

within London.”⁸⁷ **Despite the Government’s change in direction on community prisons, a truly devolved criminal justice system would enable London government to assess the value of such an option. We will press Government to ensure all options are open to us and call on the Mayor to do the same.**

5. Women's centres in London

Key findings

- Access to specialist provision for women offenders—particularly through women's centres—is key to enabling effective rehabilitation and improve life chances.
- However, in London access to such services is a postcode lottery, dependent on where that offender lives and their journey through the criminal justice system.
- Even with the Mayor's investment in women's centres, there are parts of London where women have limited or no access to this kind of provision.
- The site of the former HMP Holloway is well suited to host a women's building, including a women's centre and the opportunity exists now to secure it as a place to provide specialist support.

There is an inconsistency of specialist provision for women offenders in London

- 5.1 There is widespread recognition of the need for a tailored approach to offending behaviour to better prevent reoffending. Specialist support exists across London that focuses on specific issues such as substance misuse and mental health; and some services provide support for specific groups of women, such as BAME women, LGBT women, and women with children.⁸⁸
- 5.2 However, there are only two 'one-stop-shop' women's centres in the capital that provide a single access point to a wide range of services specifically for offenders and women at risk of offending. These centres provide a tailored package of support based on an assessment of individual need and are designed to tackle the underlying causes of an offender's behaviour.

The Beth Centre and the Minerva Project: London's two main 'one-stop-shop' women's centres for offenders

The Beth Centre in Lambeth works to reduce reoffending rates among women offenders, increase positive familial relationships and increase the use of community sentences, rather than custody. Case Managers provide support based on women's individual needs, including advice, advocacy and support around issues such as housing, benefits, education, health, leaving prison and exiting prostitution. There is a comprehensive group workshop timetable, where women can be creative, learn independent living skills and increase positive social networks.⁸⁹

The Minerva Project in West London works with women who are either leaving custody or serving their sentence in the community. The project delivers advocacy and support to women who have or are at risk of breaking the law and for women through the justice system and through the court process. It also provides support services and activities to women and girls both during and after statutory supervision by the Probation Service or Youth Offending Service.⁹⁰

- 5.3 Women's centres have been cited by many, including the Ministry of Justice, as an effective way of preventing offending and reoffending.⁹¹ Analysis by Advance states that through the work of the Minerva Project, for example, a significant number of women have reported feeling safer; having improved physical and mental health; and being more confident about gaining employment.⁹² It also reports that in the six months from October 2016 to March 2017, among the women supported, there was a 39 per cent reduction in number of arrests/reoffending; and a 28 per cent reduction in the number of charges made.⁹³
- 5.4 But provision in London falls short of demand. The Government recognises this and its strategy acknowledges the patchy provision of services in the

capital, noting that “even where services do exist, the level of provision does not always match local demand, such as in London, which accounts for the highest volume of female offenders by area in England and Wales”.⁹⁴

- 5.5 Women’s centres in London have a “limited catchment”: the Minerva Project, run by Advance, for example, covers around half the boroughs in London. The qualifying criteria for support also means that some women in the boroughs covered by these services still do not receive support. The two women’s centres provided a service to around 1,000 women in the past year, based on referrals from probation services and some other services.⁹⁵ One provider said:

“there are women right now that we are not supporting even in the boroughs that we are in [...] We only work with women who are referred to us from the London CRC. If she is not in custody right now and under licence with the [London] CRC she does not get any services”.⁹⁶

- 5.6 And as with other organisations, these services are struggling with sustainable funding. One women’s centre told us “by the time you have embedded the service and really understood what the needs are and built the relationship with the woman who really wants to stay with you, the funding often runs out and you have to then scale back your services”.⁹⁷ Funding remains an issue even with the Government’s new commitments on female offending. It has offered £2 million of grant funding in 2018-19, and £1.5 million 2019-20, for community provision for female offenders or those at risk of offending. This is already being criticised as insufficient.⁹⁸

The Mayor is seeking to make progress, but his solutions will only partly solve the problem

- 5.7 The Mayor has committed to “push for additional investment from partners to expand access to specialist women’s centres so that female offenders across London have access to gender-appropriate provision designed to tackle reoffending.”⁹⁹ He has also provided £4.6 million over three years for the expansion of women’s centres.¹⁰⁰ Even with this investment, however, there are parts of London where women offenders will continue to have no or limited access to a women’s centre that caters specifically for offending and reoffending.
- 5.8 There is more to be done to ensure that community based provision is embedded across the boroughs. The Mayor and the Government have committed to exploring the scope for a pan-London approach to the resettlement of female offenders, including “future investment in a network of women’s centres within London, which operate as hubs for community based provision, as a step towards the fulfilment of a genuinely whole system approach.”¹⁰¹ But, given the lack of progress on women’s centres in the past

decade, we will need to see that practical steps are being taken, to provide reassurance to those organisations that have been calling for progress on this issue over the past decade.

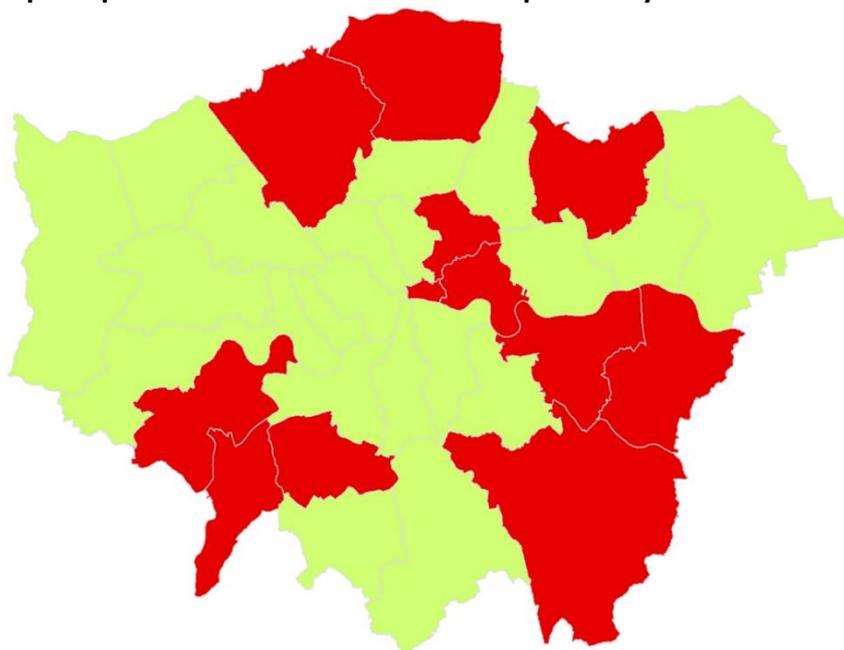
The Mayor's investment in women's centres¹⁰²

Advance Women's Centre and Advance Minerva Wrap Around support services for female offenders: £2,996,940 over three years for a service for female offenders in Barking & Dagenham, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hounslow, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Newham, Waltham Forest and Westminster. The service will provide female offenders with services including keyworker support, group-work, mentoring, and other specialist support to tackle women's offending and help prevent reoffending.

Whole System Approach to Female Offending - South London Alliance: £1,606,173 over three years for a female offending service in Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Sutton and Wandsworth. The service will support female offenders and those at risk of offending with early intervention, triage, resettlement and increasing women centre provisions.

Taking this funding into consideration, there are eleven boroughs in which women offenders will have no access to London's main two 'one-stop-shop' women's centres that focus specifically on offenders.

Map 1: There are parts of London where women have no access to the two 'one-stop-shop' women's centres that focus specifically on offenders.



Red = no access to the two 'one-stop-shop' women's centres that focus specifically on offenders

Source: Adapted from information in Mayor of London, [Mayor provides £10m for new projects to prevent serious crimes](#), 16 March 2018

Recommendation 7

As a first step towards developing a comprehensive network of women's centres in London, the Mayor and the London Justice Devolution Board should secure from the Ministry of Justice the dedicated funding for at least one more non-residential 'one-stop-shop' women's centre specifically for offenders in London, based on the two that already exist.

- 5.9 One solution may come from the sale of the HMP Holloway estate. The Prison Reform Trust, among others, has proposed that as part of Holloway's redevelopment the former visitor's centre should be retained as a women's centre, offering holistic support and supervision for women in the justice system.¹⁰³
- 5.10 That proposal has received cross party and pan-London support, as well as the support of community organisations and providers.¹⁰⁴ Islington Council has published Supplementary Planning Guidance on the Holloway site, which states that any developer should include "the continued presence of a base for women's services" on the redeveloped site, but one that also could "include affordable workspace to support local organisations and employment opportunities."¹⁰⁵ This could close a gap in provision and give greater coverage to north and east London if it goes ahead, but we need the Government, Islington Council and the Mayor to be absolutely clear that it is a women's centre, modelled on those that exist already, that is needed on that site.

Recommendation 8

In the process for agreeing the development of the HMP Holloway site:

- Islington Council, in its planning role, should ensure that a women's building, including a women's centre, and ideally community led, is specifically included in plans to redevelop the site, and that it can be funded through contributions by that developer.
- The Mayor should challenge any proposal for the development of the site that does not include a women's building of this kind.

Our approach

The Police and Crime Committee agreed the following terms of reference for this investigation:

- To examine the extent to which the closure of HMP Holloway has affected that rehabilitation of London's women in prison.
- To examine the provision of specialist support services for women offenders, in particular women's centres, across London.
- To assess the current and potential effectiveness of MOPAC's proposals to support the rehabilitation of women offenders through a Female Offender Service.

At its public evidence session, the committee took oral evidence from the following guests:

- Dr Kate Paradine, Chief Executive, Women in Prison
- Helga Swidenbank, Director of Probation, London CRC
- Jenny Earle, Programme Director - Reducing women's imprisonment, Prison Reform Trust
- Niki Scordi, Chief Executive, Advance
- Melanie Sheehan, Director for female offender services, Advance

The committee also met with the following groups:

- 7 November 2017: Revolving Doors Agency staff and representatives of its service user forum
- 17 January 2018: The Governor, prison staff and prisoners at HMP Downview

During the investigation, the committee also received written submissions from the following organisations:

- Advance
- Agenda – Alliance for Women and Girls at Risk

- Felicity Reed
- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- Khulisa
- Liz Hogarth
- LVSC and Clinks
- Magistrates Association
- Prison Reform Trust
- Revolving Doors Agency
- St Giles Trust
- The Howard League for Penal Reform
- Transition to Adulthood Alliance
- Wish
- Women in Prison

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⁶ Written submission from Prison Reform Trust

⁷ Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017](#) - Court Outcomes by Police Force Area data tool, 17 May 2018

⁸ As above

⁹ As above

¹⁰ As above

¹¹ See Home Office, [A report by Baroness Jean Corston of A review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice system](#), March 2007; and written submission from Women in Prison

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¹⁵ As above

¹⁶ As above

- ¹⁷ Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [1 November 2017](#)
- ¹⁸ Ministry of Justice, [The Government's Response to the Report by Baroness Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System](#), December 2007
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⁵⁴ The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, for example, states that a caution cannot be issued where “in the two years before the commission of the offence the person has been convicted of, or cautioned for, a similar offence”. See [Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 Section 17](#)

⁵⁵ The Ministry of Justice has observed a number of factors that have contributed to the reduction: the removal of a 2008 target on bringing serious crimes to justice; changes in targets set within police forces on ‘clear up’ rates; a decrease in police recorded crime and stop and searches; and other changes in legislation that have restricted the use of cautions. See Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice Statistics quarterly, England and Wales, 2017](#), 17 May 2018

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⁵⁸ Written submission from Agenda

⁵⁹ Police and Crime Committee visit to HMP Downview, January 2018

⁶⁰ Written submission from the Prison Reform Trust

⁶¹ Cost calculated by taking the number of sentences given in 2017 (pro-rata for sentences of less than a year and taking into account the average time served), multiplied by the average cost of a public and private prison place

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⁶³ Ministry of Justice, [Female Offender Strategy](#), June 2018

⁶⁴ Ministry of Justice, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2017](#) - Court Outcomes by Police Force Area data tool, 17 May 2018

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⁶⁶ A report by the Ministry of Justice said “For those with identified mental health issues, mental health treatment requirements attached to court orders were associated with significant reductions in reoffending where they were used, compared with similar cases where they were not.” See Ministry of Justice, [Do offender characteristics affect the impact of short custodial sentences and court orders on reoffending?](#), May 2018

⁶⁷ Written submission from the Magistrates Association

⁶⁸ Speedy justice encourages Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the Met to complete same-day reporting to move cases through the criminal justice system more rapidly e.g. if someone pleads guilty they are dealt with that day, rather than adjourning to decide on a sentence at a later date. See Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [1 November 2017](#)

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⁷⁶ Round table discussion with representatives of the Revolving Doors Agency Forum, November 2017

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- ⁸³ Written submission from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
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- ⁸⁵ As above
- ⁸⁶ See Glasgow Live, [Community-based custody unit for women to be built in Glasgow as Cornton Vale demolition starts](#), 11 July 2017; and Scottish Prison Service, [First two Community Custody Units for women announced](#), 14 September 2017
- ⁸⁷ Mayor of London, Ministry of Justice and London Councils, [Working Towards Justice Devolution to London. Memorandum of Understanding Between the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, the Ministry of Justice and London Councils](#), March 2018
- ⁸⁸ The charity Agenda has mapped the organisations providing specialist support to women: see [Mapping the Maze](#)
- ⁸⁹ Women in Prison website, [The Beth Centre](#)
- ⁹⁰ Women's Breakout website, [ADVANCE Advocacy – The Minerva Project](#)
- ⁹¹ Ministry of Justice, [Re-offending Analysis: Women's Centres throughout England](#), May 2015
- ⁹² Written submission from Advance. The assessment carried out by Advance covers the period from October 17 – June 17 (9 months)
- ⁹³ Written submission from Advance. Advance notes that the reduction in arrests and charges is taken from a small sample size over a short period and therefore these results should be treated with caution. A more robust evaluation will be conducted and made available once sufficient time has elapsed to meaningfully identify changes in reoffending rates.
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- ⁹⁵ Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [1 November 2017](#)
- ⁹⁶ Nicki Scordi, Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [1 November 2017](#)
- ⁹⁷ Nicki Scordi, Meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, [1 November 2017](#)
- ⁹⁸ See, for example, Prison Reform Trust, [PRT comment: Ministry of Justice Female Offender Strategy](#), 27 June 2018; Agenda, [Open letter to the Justice Secretary on Female Offender Strategy](#), 27 June 2018; and Women in Prison, [Female Offenders Strategy](#), 27 June 2018
- ⁹⁹ Mayor of London, [A safer city for all Londoners. Police and Crime Plan 2017-21](#), March 2017

¹⁰⁰ Mayor of London, [Mayor provides £10m for new projects to prevent serious crimes](#), 16 March 2018

¹⁰¹ Mayor of London, Ministry of Justice and London Councils, [Working Towards Justice Devolution to London. Memorandum of Understanding Between the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, the Ministry of Justice and London Councils](#), March 2018

¹⁰² Mayor of London, [Mayor provides £10m for new projects to prevent serious crimes](#), 16 March 2018

¹⁰³ See, for example, Prison Reform Trust, [Proposals for Holloway women's centre](#), 14 June 2016

¹⁰⁴ Prison Reform Trust, [A proposal for the establishment of a women's centre on the site of the existing visitors centre](#), June 2016

¹⁰⁵ Islington Council, [Holloway Prison Site Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\). A plan for the future of Holloway Prison site](#), 4 January 2018

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If you, or someone you know, needs a copy of this report in large print or braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on: 020 7983 4100 or email: assembly.translations@london.gov.uk.

Chinese

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Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

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Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

الوصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغةك،
فارجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على
العنوان البريدي العادي أو عنوان البريد
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.



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