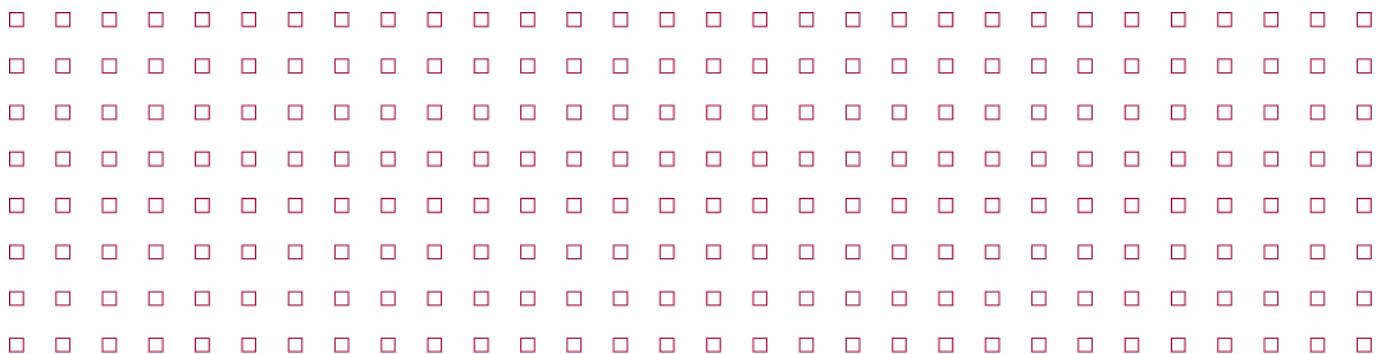




Delivering the Government Response to the Corston Report

A Progress Report on Meeting the Needs of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System

December 2008





Ministry of
JUSTICE

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Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the
Criminal Justice System

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Delivering the Corston Recommendations A Progress Report on Meeting the Needs of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System

Foreword



It has been a year since we published our response to Baroness Corston's Report: A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System. Since then we have made significant progress in delivering the commitments made in that response.

I made a statement in June setting out the achievements made over the first six months. This report outlines the continued progress we have made delivering those commitments and how we plan to continue to drive forward this agenda.

Meeting the commitments we made in our response to the Corston Report is just the start of our journey to improve services for women in the criminal justice system and to ensure that future services take account of gender differences. As you will see from this report, some of what we have achieved, and much of what we are planning, goes above and beyond those original commitments. This is just the start of a long-term and sustainable strategy to deliver a more sophisticated and better co-ordinated approach to address women's needs.

I was pleased to be appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Government Equalities Office alongside my role with the Ministry of Justice. This means that I continue to be the Ministerial Champion for women in the criminal justice system and I am now also responsible for a number of broader diversity issues. The joint role will enable me to strengthen and facilitate the cross government joint working that is fundamental to the success of this work and I look forward to the challenges and opportunities this joint role will bring.

Our continued progress in this work would not have been possible without my ministerial colleagues and the many officials who have contributed and I would like to thank them for their support and on-going belief in the value of what we're doing.

Maria Eagle MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

1. The Corston Report and its Recommendations

Baroness Jean Corston was commissioned in 2006 by the Home Office to conduct a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system following a series of six self-inflicted deaths of women prisoners between August 2002 and August 2003.

The Corston Report was published in March 2007. The Report calls for a radical change in the way women are treated throughout the whole of the criminal justice system, treating women both holistically and individually – a woman centred approach.

The Government response published in December 2007 accepted 40 out of the 43 recommendations and made a range of commitments across Government departments to take these forward.

Progress in the first six months was reported in June 2008. That report, published on the 24th June, detailed our achievements over those first six months, these are summarised below.

By June 2008, we had:

- Established pilots to test a new kind of search in women's prisons which does not require the removal of underwear unless there is intelligence or suspicion at any stage that an item is concealed in the underwear.
- Identified a site in Bristol for piloting an integrated approach providing access to a range of community based services and residential facilities.
- Supported financially the establishment and continued development of the women's Turnaround Project in Wales.
- Set up a short project to consider the recommendation advocating small custodial units for 20 to 30 women. The principles Baroness Corston developed are accepted by the Government, but the findings of the project identified significant issues that suggest standalone units of that size are neither feasible nor desirable.
- Published the Ministry of Justice Gender Equality Scheme on 1st April 2008.
- Published a National Service Framework for Women Offenders on 30th May 2008. This is supported by the Offender Management Guide to Working with Women, also published on the 30th May 2008, and gender-specific standards for women's prisons, which were published on 28th April 2008 in a new Prison Service Order (4800).
- Established a cross-departmental Criminal Justice Women's Unit to manage and co-ordinate the work on Corston across all relevant Departments.

This report should be read in conjunction with the June report to get a full picture as to what has been achieved as a whole over the first 12 months. Below is a summary of commitments made in the Government Response and also those made in the last update.

By December 2008 we committed to:

- Following consultation, produce the Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan which will address particular issues for women offenders, and seek to improve the strategic response to the needs of this group.
- Produce revised guidance for pre-sentence report writers on targeting offenders, including women, for community orders.
- Work to ensure Sentencing Guidelines Council guidelines on 'Seriousness' and 'Drug Couriers' address issues for sentencing of women.

And in the June 2008 progress report we undertook to:

- Issue guidance to Probation Areas on making greater use of capacity in the current female Approved Premises.
- Develop options to create a deliverable plan of action to divert more women from custody into community provision
- Make better use of the conditional cautioning scheme for women as an alternative to court proceedings.

This document summarises our progress against each of these objectives, and outlines our next steps for those which require longer term action.

2. Significant Developments in Improving Services to Women

Diverting Women from Custody project

The diverting women from custody project, has been set up to deliver the Government's commitment to ensure vulnerable women who are not a danger to the public are dealt with appropriately in the community.

The Corston Report recommended a dramatic reduction in the number of women being held in prison. Part of the Government's commitment, in its response to Baroness Corston's report, was to "explore what more can be done to avoid the use of custody for those women who do not need to be there because they have not committed serious or violent offences and do not present a risk to others" (David Hanson MP, in Foreword).

Short sentences are disproportionately less effective for women than for men. Women with less than 12 month sentences commit 321 crimes per hundred offenders compared to 292 by men. Conversely, women on community sentences commit 122 crimes per hundred offenders, compared to 141 crimes committed by men per hundred offenders. Prison is therefore less effective for women with short custodial sentences than community punishment. The system is designed for men – unsurprisingly as men make up the overwhelming majority of offenders – but as currently designed the system is failing to meet the needs of vulnerable women offenders.

To deliver on the Government commitment to reduce the number of women in prison the Ministry of Justice is committed to providing additional resources in the New Year. We aim to increase provision of services in the community for women offenders and women at risk of offending.

The resources will be directed towards two main areas:

- Building capacity of one stop shop services at women's centres and other specialist provision for women in the community through investing in existing third sector providers to enable them to work with courts, police, probation and other statutory agencies to provide support and services to vulnerable women.
- Further development of bail support schemes to better meet the needs of women.

Conditional Cautioning Pilots for Women

In June 2008 the government announced that consideration was being given to testing out a type of conditional caution specifically targeted at vulnerable women. Pilots commenced in Leeds, Bradford, Keighley and Liverpool on 1st September 2008. The pilots will run for a period of 6 months, and are subject to an evaluation by The Crime Reduction & Community Safety

Research Group, London South Bank University. This will assess the impact of this intervention on the lives of the women concerned and their propensity to re-offend.

Under the scheme, police and prosecutors identify women offenders who might benefit from the opportunity, by accepting a conditional caution, to turn their lives around and tackle the problems which are causing them to commit crimes. The condition they have to comply with is to attend one of the Together Women centres for a full needs assessment. Although only the assessment is compulsory, centres are finding that women referred through the pilots continue to engage with the centres and take advantage of the full range of services they offer. We are very grateful for the support being provided to the pilots by local police, prosecutors and the staff of the Together Women centres.

Full Searching Review

Following successful pilots, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is now implementing the introduction of the new arrangements for full searching (as set out in Prison Service Instruction 38/2008) in each women's prison. To date this has taken place at HMP Send, HMP Bronzefield and HMP New Hall, and will be implemented in all women's prisons by 1st April 2009.

The embedding of these new arrangements addresses Baroness Corston's recommendation that the number of strip searches in women's prisons be reduced. The existing mandatory requirement that all prisoners be full searched every time they enter or leave a prison and during cell searches will be removed for women's prisons. The Government recognises that this can be intimidating and distressing, particularly for women who have experienced domestic violence or sexual abuse.

The new arrangements consist of the removal of all clothing except underwear, unless there is intelligence or suspicion at any stage that an item is concealed in the underwear. Over the course of the piloting stage this produced a more intelligence-led approach to the full searching of women.

Probation Circular issued on making greater use of female Approved Premises

Guidance issued on 9th October 2008 to Probation Areas (PC16/2008 Expanded use of female Approved Premises) on making greater use of capacity in the current female Approved Premises. Areas are being encouraged to consider placing more women in them, who may not necessarily present a high risk of harm to others, but who could benefit from the supervised, structured environment and the support that an Approved Premise can provide. The cost and need surveys stemming from the Approved Premises Service Review are under way; the need survey includes separate analysis of the need for and provision of Approved Premises space for female residents.

Joint Ministry of Justice, Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force study on women offenders

The Ministry of Justice and the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force have undertaken a short study on women offenders and women at risk of offending. The project aims to improve the life chances of women offenders, women at risk of offending, and their families, whilst meeting the community's need for justice and protection. The project is currently on schedule to report back with findings and recommendations early in the New Year.

3. Progress to Date and Next Steps

The following section sets out progress against each of the recommendations and the actions for taking these forward.

Recommendation 1

Every agency within the criminal justice system must prioritise and accelerate preparations to implement the gender equality duty and radically transform the way they deliver services for women.

- The **Ministry of Justice Gender Equality Scheme was published on 1st April 2008.**
- **Following organisational changes made to NOMS in April 2008, diversity programmes being taken forward by the Prison Service and the old NOMS are being reviewed and developed to bring them together.** A full action plan will be published in the NOMS single equality scheme 2009–12, which will be published by April 2009.
- **Gender Specific Standards, which were published on 28th April 2008** in Prison Service Order (4800) on Women Prisoners, cover all areas of regime provision and should enhance the significant improvements that have already been achieved in the care and management of women prisoners and planning for their resettlement.
- **The National Service Framework for Women was published on 30th May 2008.**
- **The Ministry of Justice will publish a full report on Women and the Criminal Justice System (CJS) under Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.** The report will document the representation and experiences of women as suspects, defendants, offenders and victims within the CJS and as practitioners and employees within criminal justice agencies. The report is due to be published in January 2009.

Recommendation 2

The government should announce within six months a clear strategy to replace existing women's prisons with suitable, geographically dispersed, small, multi-functional custodial centres within 10 years.

- **Following detailed consideration of the recommendation the Government concluded that standalone units for 20 to 30 women are neither feasible nor desirable.** However the Government fully accepts the principles Baroness Corston developed and the design of a new 77 place wing at HMP Bronzefield (due for completion in 2009) will provide an opportunity to test out these principles. Full findings of the working group were published in the June 2008 Progress Report.

Recommendation 3

Meanwhile, where women are imprisoned, the conditions available to them must be clean and hygienic with improvements to sanitation arrangements addressed as a matter of urgency.

- **The Prison Service agrees that high standards of hygiene must be maintained** and gender specific standards in this area were published on 28th April 2008 (see recommendation 1).

Recommendation 4

Strip-searching in women's prisons should be reduced to the absolute minimum compatible with security; and the Prison Service should pilot ion scan machines in women's prisons as a replacement for strip-searching women for drugs.

- **NOMS is introducing the new arrangements for full searching** (as set out in Prison Service Instruction 38/2008) in each women's prison (see Section 2 – Significant Developments).

Recommendation 5

The work underway in respect of foreign national offenders should take account of the views expressed in my report. The strategy being developed should include measures designed to prevent prison becoming a serious option.

- **In 2007 the Government concluded a prisoner transfer agreement with Jamaica.** The agreement requires the consent of both states and the prisoner before the transfer can take place. The agreement is subject to ratification which cannot take place until amendments are made to Jamaican law. **A prisoner transfer agreement with Ghana was ratified in September 2008. The prisoner transfer agreement with Nigeria is still under negotiation.**
- **Strategy development is ongoing** to create a system where foreign national offenders are diverted from the system where possible and where we seek to remove those in the system at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation 6

Public funding must be provided for bereaved families for proper legal representation at inquests relating to deaths in state custody that engage the state's obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

- This recommendation was not accepted. See the Government Response to the Corston Report dated 6th December 2007.

Recommendation 7

Establishment of an Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group for women who offend or are at risk of offending.

- As reported in June 2008, **a Ministerial sub-group was established to drive this work forward**. Since October 2008 the sub-group has expanded its membership to include Ministers from both the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Recommendation 8

Establishment of a Commission for women who offend or are at risk of offending.

- As reported in the June 2008 update, **a cross-departmental Criminal Justice Women's Unit has been created to manage and co-ordinate the work on Corston across all relevant departments**. The unit is based in the Ministry of Justice and has a core team of staff from the Ministry of Justice plus staff from the Department of Health, Government Equalities Office, Attorney General's Office and the Home Office. Additionally a Chief Officer of Probation has been seconded to the unit to lead on the Diverting Women from Custody Project.

Recommendation 9

The Inter-Ministerial Group for Reducing Re-offending should re-examine its aims and ensure that its approaches properly address specific issues relating to women's criminality.

- **The Inter-Ministerial Group on Reducing Re-offending now has a standing agenda item on cross-departmental issues relating to women's offending and provides governance for the work on implementing the commitments made in the Government Response to the Corston Report**. It is supported by the sub-group convened by Maria Eagle MP as ministerial champion for women and criminal justice matters.

Recommendation 10

There should be greater visible direction in respect of women in custody and a much higher profile.

- The Prison Service published Gender Specific Standards on 28th April 2008 in Prison Service Order (4800) on Women Prisoners (see recommendation 1).

Recommendation 11

Systematic safeguards should be put in place so that good practice approaches like Carousel are not lost.

- **The Carousel programme continues to be run at HMP Eastwood Park and has achieved promising results.** Carousel was designed to meet the needs of women who self-harm. It consists of a rolling group-support programme combined with individual counselling, physical exercise and relaxation, educational activity, art therapy and music sessions. The development of alternative coping skills is a key element running through the programme.
- **The multi-modal CARE programme (Choices, Actions, Relationships and Emotions) has been developed specifically for women in custody convicted of violent and/or substance-related offences.** The programme addresses a number of personal and circumstantial difficulties known to be linked to self-harm, substance misuse, mental ill-health, violence and re-offending. A pilot CARE programme was completed in August 2008 at HPM Downview and both HMP Downview and Foston Hall are at an early planning stage for implementation of CARE.

Recommendation 12

I do not recommend a separate sentencing framework for women but this should be re-considered in the light of early experience of the statutory gender discrimination duty.

- The Government accepted this recommendation and will look into this further once the Gender Duty is fully embedded.

Recommendation 13

The Griffins to act as a central repository for information for and about women who offend or are at risk of offending and to promote its use by others.

- Grant funding from the Ministry of Justice of £32,000 has been provided to the Griffins Society as a contribution towards the costs of providing services to support women through the criminal justice system by developing and promoting best practice in meeting women's specific needs, particularly by developing the **Women's Information Network Resources Database**.

Recommendation 14

The seven pathways should be much better coordinated strategically for women and should incorporate pathways eight and nine for women.

- **Domestic violence, sexual abuse and prostitution were embedded in the National Service Framework for Women Offenders** published on 30th May 2008 (see recommendation 1).

- By December 2008 we committed to, following consultation, produce the **Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan** which will address particular issues for women offenders, and seek to improve the strategic response to the needs of this group. The Reducing Re-Offending Strategic Plan ('Reducing Re-offending: Everybody's Business') was withdrawn and we no longer intend to publish a Strategic Plan. However, the report responding to the consultation on the 'Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan: working in partnership to reduce re-offending and make communities safer' was published on 13th October 2008. This highlighted the needs of women as a particularly vulnerable group.
- The third sector paper, '**Working with the Third Sector to Reduce Re-offending 2008-2011**', was published on 13th October 2008. The paper, based on feedback received in the public consultation held earlier this year, outlines the Ministry of Justice and NOMS' commitment to further improve partnership working with the third sector. It supports ongoing work with third sector organisations, including the work of the third sector task force set up to ensure that the Best Value Review for Probation will be credible, transparent and neutral.

Recommendation 15

Work to establish regional and local pathway strategies and action plans is vital and good practice relating to women should be promoted and disseminated.

- **NOMS is working with the Improvement and Development Agency and the winners of the Reducing Re-offending Beacon Theme** – Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council; London Borough of Tower Hamlets; Sunderland City Council; and Leicester City Council and Partners **to promote best practice on reducing re-offending to local authorities across the country**. A range of publications have been produced and events held, including a Learning Exchange Conference on reducing re-offending on 18th September 2008. Further events are planned between November 2008 and the final legacy event scheduled for May 2009. Projects promoted include specialist activities focused on women such as the Tower Hamlets drug and hostel service and Bolton's Together Women's project.
- **The Criminal Justice Women's Strategy Unit hosted a workshop for NOMS regions to assist them in implementing the National Service Framework**. The objectives of the workshop were to share good practice, discuss barriers and how these can be overcome, and plan future activity (see recommendation 31).

Recommendation 16

The accommodation pathway is the most in need of speedy, fundamental, gender-specific reform and should be reviewed urgently, taking account of the comments in my report. In particular, more supported accommodation should be provided for women on release to break the cycle of repeat offending and

custody and the intentional homelessness criterion for ex-prisoners should be abolished.

- **Guidance was issued to probation areas on 9th October 2008 encouraging greater use of the female Approved Premises estate** (see Section 2 – Significant Developments for further detail).
- **Low Newton women’s prison and Middlesbrough Council are running one of two Preventing Offender Accommodation Loss (POAL) demonstrator projects.** Jointly funded by Communities & Local Government and Ministry of Justice, this is a partnership with other local authorities, housing providers and the Probation Service. The project is a pilot scheme that seeks to reduce the loss of accommodation by offenders serving short custodial sentences, in order to help offenders access accommodation on release. The project will also be important in developing practice about how local prisons and local authorities can work together to address housing issues.
- **Funding was allocated to NOMS South West for the development of a specification and commissioning model for accommodation services for women offenders.** The project has developed a toolkit that includes: a commissioning model for accommodation services for women offenders; a service specification; guidance for probation representatives on Supporting People commissioning bodies; a regional directory of services; a summary of the strategic and policy framework; and a case study based on the South West.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government are currently exploring the issues raised relating to local authorities' decision making under the homelessness legislation and will report back to ministers with their findings and recommendations next year.

Recommendation 17

Life skills should be given a much higher priority within the education, training and employment pathway and women must be individually assessed to ensure that their needs are met.

- **The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has taken full account of the conclusions in Baroness Corston’s report in the development of its proposals for the reform of the offenders’ learning and skills service (OLASS).** Those proposals were set out in ‘Reforming the Offenders Learning and Skills Service: the Prospectus’ published by the LSC in October 2007. Work to map the current provision of offender learning across the estate in order to inform the specifications for the new service was completed during summer 2008 and these have now been incorporated in to an Invitation to Tender which was issued on 9th October 2008. New OLASS providers will commence delivery of the newly specified service in August 2009.

Recommendation 18

Custodial sentences for women must be reserved for serious and violent offenders who pose a threat to the public.

- By December 2008 we committed to: Work to ensure Sentencing Guidelines Council guidelines on 'Seriousness' and 'Drug Couriers' address issues for sentencing of women. **On 8th July 2008, the independent Sentencing Advisory Panel (SAP) published its consultation paper on the overarching principles of sentencing.** The Panel was asked by the Sentencing Guidelines Council to review the definitive guidelines 'Overarching Principles: Seriousness and New Sentences: Criminal Justice Act 2003'. The consultation paper contains an important discussion of the principles of sentencing of women offenders. Further work needs to be done to understand current sentencing practice but we welcome the steps the Panel has taken. **Publication of the SAP's consultation paper on sentencing for drug offences including drug couriers is expected early in 2009.**
- **The Government is funding seven Intensive Alternatives to Custody demonstration projects to test out extra intensive community orders.** Demonstrator projects are currently running in Derbyshire, West Yorkshire, South Wales and Dyfed Powys, with a further three planned to start in April 2009. All projects are available to female offenders and, up to the end of October 2008, 14% of offenders on the overall programme caseload were female. In West Yorkshire, the project is actively working with the Together Women project to provide a bespoke pathway of management and intervention. This approach is being rolled out in the two Welsh projects in the New Year.
- **Under the Integrated Offender Management programme, announced in the Government Drug Strategy in 2007, West Yorkshire police, probation and prison services have embedded firm links with the local Together Women project,** to ensure that the supervision and intervention provided under the project takes account of the differing needs of women. Integrated Offender Management aims to cut crime by combining community intelligence led policing with rigorous community supervision that holds young and adult offenders to account for complying with the interventions that support their rehabilitation. We are encouraging the other four pilot sites to assess how they interact with female offenders and also with third sector organisations in the New Year.

Recommendation 19

Women unlikely to receive a custodial sentence should not be remanded in custody.

- **A new type of conditional caution specifically targeted at vulnerable women** is being piloted at four sites in the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside (see Section 2 – Significant Developments).
- **A Gender Impact Assessment has been conducted on the Bail Accommodation and Support Scheme** which will be used to identify

actions needed to ensure the accommodation and support services provided are appropriate for women and that the contractors have considered what is required to address women's needs (see recommendation 21). Additionally, the Diverting Women from Custody project will further develop bail support services to better meet the needs of women (see Section 2 – Significant Developments).

Recommendation 20

Women must never be sent to prison for their own good, to teach them a lesson, for their own safety or to access services such as detoxification.

- **Revised guidance on the use of the Drug Rehabilitation Requirement will be published on 12th December 2008.** It includes specific guidance for working with female offenders.
- **The Alcohol Interventions Guidance, which will include advice on the delivery of Alcohol Treatment Requirements, will be published in Spring 2009.** In the interim, the NOMS Alcohol Information Pack for Offenders under Probation Supervision has been revised to make it even more appropriate to the needs of women offenders, with a section on women and alcohol and information about services which are women specific. The Offender Management Guide to Working with Women Offenders published in May has a section on alcohol misuse.

Recommendation 21

More supported bail placements for women suitable to their needs must be provided.

- **The Bail Accommodation and Support Scheme delivers accommodation and support services for offenders on bail and Home Detention Curfew.** Referrals of women are being monitored and a review group has been established to look at broader issues for women on the BASS scheme (see recommendation 19).

Recommendation 22

Defendants who are primary carers of young children should be remanded in custody only after consideration of a probation report on the probable impact on the children.

- The Government agrees in principle, but does not consider that there is a need for a separate probation report on the impact of a custodial remand on dependent children. For further detail see the Government Response to the Corston Report dated 6th December 2007.

Recommendation 23

Community solutions for non-violent women offenders should be the norm.

- See Section 2 – Significant Developments in Improving Services to Women. The **Diverting Women from Custody project** focuses on strengthening community provision. See also response to Recommendation 18.
- In April 2008 the Secretary of State for Justice announced **an additional £40million investment in the activities of the Probation Service for 2008/09 to provide more tough and effective community sentences.** The funding is not gender specific but examples of women specific deliverables in Probation Area local plans are:
 - Hertfordshire: increasing Women's Safety Work provision by recruiting additional women's safety workers and partnering with the third sector to provide women's safety work.
 - Greater Manchester: Strengthening the use of community orders for female offenders and improving compliance by developing packages to divert women from custody both at pre-sentence and sentence stages.
 - West Yorkshire: increasing the use of residential requirements as an alternative to custody at specialist Approved Premises (Ripon House for women). Action Plan with partners to increase the number of women at risk of a custodial sentence, who are referred to, accepted and successfully worked with at Together Women and Evolve (one stop shop women only services).
 - Devon and Cornwall: Develop a model which offers facilities for women who are at risk of custody or for whom there is no existing combination of requirements which would enable a community order to be made

Recommendation 24

Community sentences must be designed to take account of women's particular vulnerabilities and domestic and childcare commitments.

- **The Ministry of Justice is issuing guidance to pre-sentence report writers; this is the first comprehensive guidance to be issued on pre-sentence reports since the introduction of the 2003 Criminal Justice Act.** Its primary aim is to ensure that custodial sentences are not imposed when a community order provides an appropriate sentencing option. It identifies how the report should take account of the particular needs of each offender and encourages close attention to the practical obstacles to successful completion of a community order, such as addressing child care needs and transport problems.
- As reported in the June 2008 Progress Report the National Service Framework and The Offender Management Guidance for Working with Women were both published on 30th May 2008. **The Offender Management Guide to Working with Women Offenders will be formally launched on 11th December 2008.** The launch will explain how

the guide complements the National Service Framework for Women Offenders as well as how probation areas, offender managers, prisons and Regional Offender Managers and Directors of Offender Management can make best use of the guidance to improve service delivery to women in the criminal justice system. This will be supported with a Probation Circular and probation areas will be required to address these areas of good practice.

Recommendation 25

Sentencers must be informed about the existence and nature of those schemes that do exist and should support and visit them.

- In focusing on improvements as to how we deal with women offenders in the community we recognise how important it is to keep sentencers fully informed. With this in mind **we will work to inform sentencers of the particular circumstances common to many women offenders** and to provide information about the full range of disposals and interventions available for women offenders within and beyond the criminal justice system throughout each stage of their case.
- **Guidance has been developed with NOMS and issued by the Senior Presiding Judge to the judiciary reinforcing liaison arrangements with probation.** These arrangements specify that the type of information presented at liaison meetings will include details of specific programmes. It also states that NOMS expects opportunities to be made available to sentencers to observe work and other activities being done locally.
- **Pilots have been undertaken in Thames Valley and Cheshire involving magistrates and judges in visits and debates, under the auspices of the Esmee Fairbairn Trust.** Findings from these projects and other easily replicated best practice examples have been published and circulated.
- **'Community Sentencing – Reducing Re-offending, Changing Lives'** was published on 3rd June 2008. The report shows how community sentences work, bringing together the experiences of probation officers, offenders, victims, academics and third parties. Alongside this an on-line sentencing exercise has been released that demonstrates probation supervision and a short programme of regional discussions on community sentencing has been developed.
- **As part of their work to implement the National Service Framework for Women, NOMS regions are working to improve communication with sentencers.** For example:
 - North West and Yorkshire and Humberside: Together Women inform assessments, contribute to Pre Sentence Reports for women and set-out the support they can offer a woman in addition to statutory support;
 - In September 2008 the East of England held an event for sentencers which included discussion around alternatives to custody; and

- The Women's Turnaround Project has achieved additional funding to employ extra staff to deliver court reports for women offenders in courts in South Wales and Dyfed-Powys.

Recommendation 26

The restrictions placed on sentencers around breaches of community orders must be made more flexible as a matter of urgency.

- This recommendation was not accepted. For further detail see the Government Response to the Corston Report dated 6th December 2007.

Recommendation 27

Section 178 Criminal Justice Act 2003 should be implemented more generally.

- **Section 178 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 is currently being piloted in community justice courts in Liverpool, Salford and 11 other magistrates' courts in England and Wales.** A feasibility report on the use of section 178 in a community justice context from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at King's College indicated there was insufficient data at this stage to conduct a full evaluation. Extension of the pilot exercise is currently being considered to provide more data to properly assess the costs and impact on HMCS and probation resources.

Recommendation 28

Bail information schemes in women's prisons must be properly resourced, monitored and used.

- **A review of bail information in women's prisons has been completed by NOMS.** Following on from the Review NOMS Learning and Development have agreed that a new training programme should be developed for all bail information officers in prisons and in courts. Work to develop the training programme has commenced, led by NOMS Learning and Development, with an aim to introduce the new programme in 2009.

Recommendation 29

The Together Women Programme must be extended as quickly as possible and a larger network of community centres should be developed in accordance with a centrally coordinated strategic national plan drawn up by the new Commissioner for women who offend or are at risk of offending.

- **The Together Women projects currently running in the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside have completed the first phase of their evaluation.** Action Research, published on 1st August 2008, found that overall Together Women had been efficiently implemented and had been welcomed by both stakeholders and service users. Lessons learned from Together Women will be used to see how similar approaches for women offenders and women at risk of offending might be developed in other

areas and are being fed back into the Diverting Women from Custody Project.

Recommendation 30

Services should be provided based on the one-stop-shop approach of centres like Asha and Calderdale and must be appropriate and coordinated to meet the profiled needs of local women, including minorities such as BME women.

- As outlined in Section 2 – Significant Developments, **as part of the Diverting Women from Custody Project, additional resources will be directed towards building capacity of one stop shop services** (see also responses to recommendations 29 and 31).
- **The development of a demonstration project is underway in Bristol, it will pilot an integrated approach, providing access to a range of community based services and residential facilities.** It will address the needs of women offenders and those at risk of offending within their local community. The project will be delivered in partnership with other agencies. Funding has been committed by the Ministry of Justice for 3 years, at £300,000pa. NOMS South West is engaged with local third sector and statutory agencies to identify the additional in-kind and cash resources required to establish the pilot. Safer Bristol and health are amongst key local partners supporting the development of the pilot. Service delivery will commence in 2009/10.

Recommendation 31

Regional commissioning must be fully in line with the strategic national plan.

- **As set out in the National Service Framework for Women NOMS will develop a series of costed service specifications for women offenders in custody and in the community.** The NOMS Specification, Benchmarking and Costing programme has prioritised women's services specifications. In the next phase of the programme between November 2008 and April 2009, two women's specifications will be produced. One will be an "as is" costed specification for a whole public sector women's prison, building on PSO4800. The other will be a specification for core probation services other organisations, such as women's centres, could deliver to women offenders in the community for probation areas. Both these specifications will be used in Service Level Agreements and contracts.
- **The Criminal Justice Women's Strategy Unit hosted a workshop with NOMS regions to assist them in implementing the National Framework for Women.** Since that workshop women's leads have been asked to identify their key deliverables that will be achieved by the end of the financial year. Progress in the regions includes:
 - In the East Midlands, Northamptonshire probation area has introduced specific provision for women in the form of a women's programme to promote health and emotional well being and to develop relationships.

The programme is being run in conjunction with Relate and the Bridge Project, a local social enterprise.

- In Wales the Women's Turnaround project continues to be successful (see recommendation 34).
- The North East has formed a Women's Policy Group which brings together representatives from prisons, probation, third sector, Youth Justice Board, Drug and Alcohol Action Team and Government Office. The group collected extensive data regarding women in the area and are now in a position to further assess the need of women in the region.
- Yorkshire & Humberside has commissioned NACRO to undertake a review of services for women offenders in the region to inform an improved regional response to the needs of women offenders, including identifying the most appropriate models to address these needs. NACRO will be reporting their findings and recommendations to NOMS Yorkshire & Humberside in December.
- The South East Regional Offender Managers Team has secured 12 month funding of £60,000 from the Ministry of Justice, and is working in partnership with both the statutory and voluntary sector on a project aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of services for women offenders and women at risk of offending in the South East Region, specifically in Surrey.

Recommendation 32

Women's centres should be used as referral centres for women who offend or are at risk of offending. Referral should be by schools, general practitioners, probation, prisons, police, courts, CPS, self and other individuals.

- As set out under recommendation 30, a site in Bristol has been identified for piloting an integrated approach providing access to a range of community based services and residential facilities.
- The Diverting Women from Custody project (see Section 2 – Significant Developments) will look to build capacity of women's centres and one stop shop services to work alongside statutory services and provide support to vulnerable women. Also, see responses to recommendations 29, 30 and 31.

Recommendation 33

Women's centres should also be used as court and police diversions; as part of a package of measures for community sentences; and for delivery of probation and other programmes.

- See responses to recommendations 29–32.

Recommendation 34

I urge the regional offender managers for Wales and Eastern Region to take forward the projects outlined in my report.

- **The full evaluation of the Women's Turnaround project in Wales for 2008/09 was published on 29th October – the findings are very positive with excellent feedback from service users.** The project is looking to develop an assessment process for courts in South Wales and Dyfed-Powys to assess women seen to be at risk of custody and to offer courts access to the Women's Turnaround project as part of a package to reduce the risk of custody. This will tie in with the Intensive Alternatives to Custody work being progressed – a bid for two additional full-time workers is being made to provide this service.

Recommendation 35

There must be a strong consistent message right from the top of government, with full reasons given, in support of its stated policy that prison is not the right place for women offenders who pose no risk to the public.

- **The National Service Framework for Women sets out the Government's high level strategic aims**, objectives, and service ambitions for improving delivery to women offenders in line with the commitment made in the Government's Response to the Corston Report. The strategic outcomes set out in the National Service Framework include objectives to:
 - Ensure the needs of women who are sentenced are met in the community wherever possible, and reserve custody for only the most serious offenders.
 - Reduce custodial remands for women.

See June 2008 progress report for further detail on the National Service Framework and also recommendation 18 above.

Recommendation 36

All magistrates' courts, police stations, prisons and probation offices should have access to a court diversion/Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Scheme in order to access timely psychiatric assessment for women offenders.

- As reported in the Government Response, **Court Diversion is a work strand within the new Offender Health Strategy**. Evidence under this strand has been submitted to Lord Bradley for his review (see also recommendation 38).

Recommendation 37

Sentencers must be able to access timely psychiatric reports and fail to remand in custody/sentence if not available.

- **Offender Health and HMCS have funded two pilot projects in London and the South West which are evaluating a Service Level Agreement for the provision of Psychiatric reports to the courts.** The pilots are due to finish in March 2009 and a report summarising the results will be produced.

Recommendation 38

DH at the highest level should reconfirm its commitment to implement not just its own Women's Mental Health Strategy but also to the action it signed up to in respect of the Women's Offending Reduction Programme (WORP).

- By December 2008 we committed to: Consult on the new Offender Health Strategy, including the Women Offenders Health Pathway, and publish the strategy by mid-2008. **The emerging Offender Health and Social Care Strategy for women, led by the Department of Health, will include specific commitments to meet the Corston recommendations.** Offender Health have consulted on the new Offender Health and Social Care Strategy and a written analysis of the consultation responses was published in August 2008. The final strategy will be published in spring 2009 following Lord Bradley's report to Parliament. The strategy will encompass the Government's response to the Bradley review and will include a restatement of the specific commitments to meet the Corston recommendations plus consideration of any new recommendations accepted following the Bradley Review. Specifically the strategy will explore:
 - The development of gender specific care pathways, for example pathways surrounding screening for breast and cervical cancer, obstetric provision and pathways to support women who self harm;
 - How to most effectively support the development of women specific mental health and well being risk assessments;
 - Opportunities for government departments to further develop integrated and sensitive approaches to the holistic management and resettlement of women across the CJS and health and social care interface, with a particular reference to women as key carers, and victims of violence and abuse;
 - Supporting the development of a workforce equipped to address the needs of women with multiple needs, through supporting the development of effective needs assessment approaches, training and guidance; and
 - Improvements in the support given to families of offenders.
- We also committed to produce health related commissioning guidance specifically focussed on services for women and their families by

December 2008. **Offender Health have commissioned the development of integrated health and social care commissioning guidance, which is specifically focussed upon services for women in contact with the Criminal Justice System (CJS).** An initial draft of the guidance document has been produced, which will be shared with relevant stakeholders for comments. A final version will be available at the end of December 2008.

Recommendation 39

A DH minister must sit on the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group for Women who offend or are at risk of offending and, at official level, DH must play a key part in the Women's Commission for this group. This must go wider than Prison Health and must include policy responsibility for women's mental health in the community.

- **Membership of the IMG sub-group includes the Department of Health** (see recommendations 7–9 and 38).

Recommendation 40

In recognition of the need to develop distinct approaches for women stated in the 2000 NHS Plan, the Department of Health should reinstate its commitment for the provision of a women-only day centre within every health authority and do so by 2008.

- This response was not accepted. For further detail see the Government Response to the Corston Report dated 6th December 2007.

Recommendation 41

There must also be an investment in more rigorous training and ongoing support and supervision for all those charged with meeting the complex needs of women.

- **The Women Awareness Staff Programme (WASP) has been designed to raise awareness of as many aspects of working with women prisoners as possible and to enable it to be delivered in each establishment or on a local cluster basis.** Pilots have been held in HMP Send, HMP Holloway and HMP Foston Hall. Feedback so far is generally positive and prisons are now signing up for the roll-out programme.

Recommendation 42

The NHS should provide health care services to police custody suites; in busy areas this will require a 24-hour presence and ideally be a registered mental health worker.

- In June 2008 we committed to review and set out recommendations for improvements for the health care provided to women in police custody, in court cells and during transportation to prison. **Offender Health are undertaking a scoping project to identify current models of care**

within police cells, court cells and during transportation to prison.

The project will make recommendations for improving health care for women in these difficult environments. A small expert reference group has been established to take this work forward. A series of visits to police custody cells, court cells and the prison transport headquarters were undertaken by group members in October 2008. Some focus groups have also been held with small numbers of women prisoners. A final report with recommendations will be available by the 31st December 2008.

Recommendation 43

The management and care of self-harming women should be led by the NHS, either in an NHS resource or shared multi-disciplinary care in prison.

- **An inter-agency three year research project known as Knowledge Transfer Partnership commenced in August 2008.** The project involves Durham University and PCT, HMP Low Newton, Yorkshire and Humberside HMPS area, NOMS and Department of Health. **The project aims to develop and introduce an innovative model of service delivery to reduce self-harm and improve well-being in women's prisons.**

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