



Ministry of
JUSTICE

NOMS National Offender
Management Service
Working together to reduce re-offending

NATIONAL SERVICE FRAMEWORK

IMPROVING SERVICES TO WOMEN OFFENDERS



Ministerial Foreword



As the ministerial champion for women in the criminal justice system, I am pleased to be able to launch this National Service Framework. The Framework – the first of its kind – marks a significant step on our journey towards delivering on the commitments the Government made in its response to Baroness Corston’s Report on Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System in December last year.

The National Service Framework aims to improve the services we deliver to women offenders. It does so by setting out the Government’s strategic aims and objectives for how we propose to meet the needs of women offenders in the short, medium, and long term. It goes on to set out high-level service expectations, both through the reducing re-offending pathways, and for the delivery of statutory services. It is supported by the recently published Prison Service Gender Specific Standards, and the Offender Management Guide to Working with Women, which is also published today. These provide the more detailed operational guidance for prison and probation staff delivering services on the ground.

Together, these documents will form the basis upon which NOMS will develop a series of costed service specifications for women in custody and in the community. The intention is to put in place a sustainable system to deliver a co-ordinated approach to addressing the needs of women coming through the criminal justice system, recognising that those needs are often different from those of men. It is essential that we design and deliver services to ensure that women have equal opportunities to address their offending. This will help to fulfil our commitments as set out under the 2006 Gender Equality Duty. It will also bring us further forward in fulfilling our headline aim, which is to ensure that women who come into contact with the criminal justice system are treated appropriately so as to protect the public and reduce re-offending, whilst also meeting their specific and individual needs.

MARIA EAGLE MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

CONTENTS

<u>DOCUMENT SPECIFICATION</u>	Page 4
<u>1: INTRODUCTION AND VISION</u> The Purpose and Shape of this National Service Framework Next Steps The Government's vision for women offenders	Page 5
<u>2: NATIONAL STRATEGIC AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES</u> The Government's strategic aims and priorities for delivering services to women offenders	Page 7
<u>3: THE NEEDS OF WOMEN OFFENDERS AND PATHWAYS TO REDUCING RE-OFFENDING</u> The needs of women offenders Effective services Pathways to reduce re-offending	Page 9
<u>4: REQUIREMENT FOR STATUTORY SERVICES</u> Service requirements for each phase of the offender journey, including the service ambition, what success would look like and where primary and associated responsibilities lie. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phase 1 – pre-court offender assessment and potential diversion either from court process or custodial remand• Phase 2 – sentence planning, for either community or custodial provision• Phase 3 – community interventions• Phase 4 – custodial categorisation and allocation, and interventions• Phase 5 – offender release and subsequent community supervision and interventions• Phase 6 – breach and recall	Page 19
<u>ANNEX A</u> The Corston Report's recommendations and the Government's response	Page 24
<u>ANNEX B</u> Fawcett Society conditions and questions for commissioners	Page 26

Document Specification

Document purpose	A strategic framework to achieve improved and effective service delivery to women in the Criminal Justice System to enable them to reduce their offending.
Other key reference documentation	The Corston Report. The Government Response to the Corston Report. HM Prison Service Orders and Instructions. Probation Service National Standards. Offender Management Guidance.
Authorship	Ministry of Justice (MOJ), National Offender Management Service (NOMS)
Publication date	May 30 th 2008
Target audience	NOMS managers and delivery partners; Sentencers; Police; Local Authorities; Other Government Departments; HM Prison Service; Private Prison Providers; Probation Service and other providers of offender assessment and community supervision; YJB; other relevant service providers in custody and the community, including health and learning and skills; HM Prison Inspectorate; HM Probation Inspectorate; other Inspectorates (OfSTED; CSCI; CHI).
Description	<p>The requirements set out in this NSF will be turned into detailed and costed service specifications by NOMS to ensure sensible implementation, resources allocation decisions, local factors and implications.</p> <p>The intention is to underpin the best possible provision for this generally vulnerable offender group at all stages of their 'journey' through the criminal justice system, with the aim of breaking cycles of re-offending and keeping socially excluded women at risk of offending out of custody.</p>
Actions required	NOMS and delivery partners to use this framework to develop detailed, costed service specifications for women in custody and the community, to target specific improvements in the context of regional and local needs and, where required, to vary existing contracts and service level agreements (SLAs) during 2008/09, and to secure specific attention to women offenders in such contracts and SLAs for 2009/10.
Timings	For use from publication.
Contact details	Nicola Lowit, Tel: 020 7035 0914
Document purpose	A strategic framework to achieve improved and effective service delivery to women in the Criminal Justice System to enable them to reduce their offending.

1. INTRODUCTION AND VISION

Purpose and shape of this National Service Framework

- 1.1 In March 2007 Baroness Corston published her report into Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System.¹ Her report was initially prompted by a series of suicides in prison, and called for a greater focus and gender specific approach to women in the Criminal Justice System and those at risk of re-offending. The Corston Report made 43 recommendations for improving the approaches, services and interventions for women in the criminal justice system and women at risk of offending. The detail of the key recommendations can be found at **Annex A**.
- 1.2 The Government Response to the Corston Report² accepted 40 out of 43 of the recommendations. This National Service Framework for Women Offenders provides the context within which NOMS, and their delivery partners, should be delivering on that commitment. This builds on the work achieved by the Women's Offending Reduction Programme, launched in 2004 and followed in 2005 by the announcement £9.15 million for the Together Women Programme to demonstrate how a multi-agency approach in the community could address women's complex needs more effectively.
- 1.3 NOMS will turn this into costed service specifications for women offenders in custody and in the community to ensure that services to women offenders are improved in line with the recommendations of the Corston Report and the Government's response to it.
- **Chapter 2** sets out the Government's strategic aims, priorities and service expectations for women offenders.
 - **Chapter 3** sets out the needs of women offenders and the pathways to address re-offending.
 - It then sets out our high level expectations for service provision at each stage of the offender journey to meet those needs. It describes what success would look like, setting out where primary and associated responsibilities lie, linked to the pathways to reducing re-offending, including the two new dedicated pathways for women.
- 1.4 This framework provides the strategic aims, priorities and expectations for delivering services to women offenders. NOMS needs to specify the exact size, cost and nature of provision in order to deliver upon these priorities. In addition, while NOMS can address specific prison and probation commissioning and delivery issues, it needs to work effectively with its partners across the reducing re-offending pathways at national, regional and local levels. This will require close liaison between all relevant sectors as the implementation moves forward.
- 1.5 It is not within the remit of this framework to specify the resources required to deliver services to women offenders. This is a matter for the more detailed specifications of services over time. Providers need to meet the particular needs of this offender group from existing resources by a combination of improving efficiency and potentially re-ordering priorities.

¹ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/corston-report/>

² <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/gov-resp-corston-review.htm>

The Government's vision for women offenders

- 1.6 This framework is intended to deliver the Government's high-level vision for how services should be delivered to women offenders. The headline aim is to ensure that women who come into contact with the criminal justice system are treated appropriately so as to protect the public and reduce re-offending, whilst also meeting their specific and individual needs. To do this we must:
- 1) Reduce the number of women coming through the criminal justice system
 - 2) For women who are sentenced, ensure that their needs are met in the community wherever possible; and
 - 3) For women who are sentenced to custody ensure that the facilities are appropriate to their needs
- 1.7 By fulfilling these aims we will realise the following outcomes in support of our Departmental Strategic Objectives for "protecting the public and reducing re-offending" and "improving criminal justice":
- 1) Fewer women being sentenced
 - 2) Fewer women being held in custody
 - 3) Reduced re-offending
 - 4) Improved well-being and a reduction in self-harm for women in contact with the criminal justice system.

Next Steps

- 1.8 NOMS will develop this framework into a series of costed service specifications for women in custody and in the community. In the meantime, NOMS will consider regional and more local implications and potential changes to current service provision, including the opportunity for early gains through implementing changes to current services.
- 1.9 The broad service requirements set out in this framework must be cross-referenced to:
- Offender management standards;
 - The newly published Offender Management Guide to Working with Women Offenders, a revised guide to replace the National Probation Service Good Practice Guide on 'Delivering Effective Services for Women Offenders in the Community,'
 - National standards for probation; and
 - Prison service orders and instructions, including the newly published prison service order on gender specific standards in the custodial estate (PSO 4800).

2. NATIONAL STRATEGIC AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The Ministry of Justice strategy for providing services to women offenders forms part of the Government's strategy for women who come into contact with the Criminal Justice system. This wider strategy is being taken forward through the Government's response to the Corston Report. This cross-government programme is co-ordinated via the Reducing Re-offending Inter Ministerial Group. The intention is to put in place a long-term and sustainable system to deliver a co-ordinated approach to addressing the issues identified in the Corston Report, and in the new three year reducing re-offending partnership plan.
- 2.2 The headline and measurable **strategic outcomes**, which support the MoJ Departmental Strategic Objectives, are to:
- 1) Reduce the number of women entering the criminal justice system;
 - 2) Reduce custodial remands for women, and where such remands are required make them as short as possible;
 - 3) Ensure sentencers are better informed about the difficulties currently experienced by women offenders in the criminal justice system;
 - 4) Ensure that the needs of women who are sentenced are met in the community wherever possible, and reserve custody for only the most serious offenders, usually serving more than 12 months;
 - 5) Ensure that for women who are sentenced to custody, the facilities and interventions are appropriate to their needs and that there is better continuity of provision of services on their release;
 - 6) Reduce levels of self-harm by women offenders;
 - 7) Reduce re-offending by women.
- 2.3 The Corston Report recommended that the majority of women held on short sentences or held on remand should not be sentenced to custody in most circumstances. The Report also suggested that fewer women should be returned to custody as a result of breaching their licence or community supervision. If this vision is to be realised we must ensure that more robust and consistent alternative provision is available in the community, and that access to supportive services from other sectors is secured. In addition, many women have multiple and inter-connected needs. All custodial or community-based provision has to recognise this.
- 2.4 The Corston Report suggested that prison and probation services have a long way to go to meet the needs of female offenders, designed as they are for primarily meeting the needs of male offenders. The 2006 Gender Equality Duty means that we are legally obliged to ensure that we deliver equality of opportunity for women offenders.
- 2.5 To deliver our overall strategy, **in the short term**, we will:
- Work with sentencers to increase their understanding of the needs of women offenders and enable fuller use of existing community provision;
 - Develop Bail Accommodation Support Service provision of appropriate quality for women to reduce the numbers of women entering prison on remand;
 - Review the scope for providing residential or intensive services for women as pilot projects in former Prospects' premises;

- Expand the function of existing Approved Premises to provide supervised and supported accommodation for vulnerable women offenders;
- Request that the Bradley report into how to improve the processes for diverting offenders with severe mental health problems away from prison provides specific recommendations for women offenders;
- Update guidance to improve the quality of service Offender Managers offer to women offenders publish concurrently with this framework;
- Implement Gender Specific Standards to ensure that prison regimes are appropriately designed and delivered to meet women's needs; and
- Establish a robust evidence base to determine the key needs for women offenders, the achievable desired outcomes, and our effectiveness in meeting them, and continually review those assumptions in the light of new evidence or changing circumstances.

In the medium term, we will:

- Work with other Government departments, the private and the third sector to develop and increase access to women's centres providing wraparound service provision;
- Encourage offender managers to recommend community sentences augmented with the supportive interventions offered by such centres as an alternative to custody in all cases where this can be justified;
- Analyse the potential demand for further Approved Premises provision in more depth, based on geographical location and criminogenic need
- Design flexibility into the women's custodial estate so that it can respond to the differing and inter-connected needs of women offenders, including those of high-risk-of-harm and serious offenders;
- Utilise any headroom gained from increased community provision to manage the women's custodial population with closeness to home as a priority for primary carers subject to short sentences, and continue to provide support services to ensure regular family contact when this is not possible;
- Pilot alternative models of provision in the women's estate to test how far they meet the needs identified by the Corston Report and the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty; and
- Work with the Department of Health to ensure that women with mental or other health issues are diverted to suitable health care on arrest or from court.
- Develop an information strategy to ensure that issues around gender, race and ethnic background, and disability are identified and reflected in policy and planning.

In the long term, we will:

- Utilise any headroom gained from increased community provision to re-configure the prison estate if necessary, and if resources allow, so that women's establishments are of optimum size and specification for meeting women's needs; and
- Ensure that any established Sentencing Commission considers the differing needs of women offenders

3. THE NEEDS OF WOMEN OFFENDERS, EFFECTIVE SERVICES AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

The Particular Needs of Women Offenders

- 3.1 Consistent messages from the literature on women offenders show that:
- Although male and female offenders have broadly similar histories, women offenders tend to have more significant offending-related unmet needs including education, training and employment, health (including mental health), housing and income. Many women have multiple and inter-connected needs;
 - Their sexual and violent victimisation can play a part in the onset and persistence of offending;
 - Research indicates high rates of substance misuse, especially opiates, amongst female offenders;
 - Women's offending is most often associated with poverty and financial difficulties; and,
 - Many women's financial situations are further strained by their having sole responsibility for dependent children.
- 3.2 Whilst over 90% of offenders are men, women make up around 6% of the total prison population. Between 1996 and 2006 the women's prison population increased by 94% compared to a 38% increase for men. This is neither because there are more women offenders nor the result of their offending becoming more serious overall – the increase reflects the fact that courts have been using custody more frequently for women for less serious offences.
- 3.3 A snapshot of the female prison population in February 2008 showed that there were 4,389 adult women held in custody. Of these, 877 (20%) were being held on remand, spending on average 4-6 weeks in custody, with nearly 60% remanded in custody not going on to receive a custodial sentence. A further 789 (18%) were held on sentences less than twelve months. 193 of those sentenced from January 2008 onwards were being held as a result of breaching their licence conditions. This snapshot lays out a picture of a largely short-term female prison population. Although the numbers are small, there has been a recent increase in the number of women convicted for offences involving violence.
- 3.4 Data from the Prison Service Offender Assessment System and OASys for the year ending September 2007³ show that a considerably larger percentage of women offenders have emotional well-being and relationship needs than men. Women offenders have all too often been victims themselves in the past. OASys indicates that 46% of women offenders have been the victim of domestic violence compared to 6% of men, or suffered from disrupted childhoods. 27% of women offenders are considered a suicide risk and 27% are considered at risk of self-harm.
- 3.5 In addition, many women offenders with mental health issues end up in prison when there may be a case for treatment within the community. Up to 80% of women in prison have diagnosable mental health problems. The comparable figure in the community is less than 20%. Approximately 50% of all self-harm incidents in prison are

³ Based on over 26,000 women offenders in prison and the community

committed by women, even though they comprise only 6% of the total prison population. Women recently released from custody are 36 times more likely than the general population to commit suicide.

Effective Services and Pathways to Reducing Re-offending

- 3.6 Effective offender management is characterised by a rounded approach where interventions are matched to meet identified re-offending risks and needs. The resources available to achieve this are provided by prison and probation, as well as increasingly mainstreamed through partnerships and commissioning and joint commissioning arrangements.
- 3.7 Social Exclusion Unit's 2002 report, 'Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners' identified a number of social factors which contributed towards the re-offending of ex-prisoners. These were adopted by NOMS in 2004 as the seven 'pathways' around which partnerships would reduce re-offending. The pathways were designed to support offender management by making it easier to deliver this function, access resources for offenders and meet any gaps in provision. The Corston Report recommended that further consideration should be given to these pathways, to ensure that they address the needs of women, including addressing domestic violence, sexual abuse and prostitution. Commissioners and providers across NOMS also need to consider that women often have multiple inter-linking needs, and plan provision accordingly. Our aim is to ensure women can access mainstream and specific provision. The Prison Service Order on Gender Specific Standards and the Offender Manager Guide to Working with Women Offenders provide guidance on how this must be achieved, and we will develop this further in service review and design.
- 3.8 Effective services are underpinned by rigorous individual offender assessments which can then be aggregated to give a picture of cumulative needs. OASys is a useful tool for this, though providers will need to consider alternative means of assessing for women offenders who may for one reason or another not undergo an OASys assessment.
- 3.9 The Corston Report, and the Government's response to it, confirmed that meeting the needs of women offenders is a Government priority. As a result, NOMS commissioners and providers need to work closely with providers of services for women from all sectors to ensure that they are:
- Completing high quality needs assessments, particularly taking account of 'women-specific' factors, and joint planning between commissioners and providers;
 - Mapping and quality-assessing existing services, and particularly other mainstream services, to identify how effectively they meet women offenders' special needs;
 - Identifying the 'gap' between current services and what is needed – either to secure necessary funding (which may be through re-directing current resources), or to drive up the quality of existing services;
 - Designing and delivering services to fill the 'gap';
 - Making services known to potential referrers, overcoming organisational barriers and ensuring good information exchange; and
 - Continually monitoring and improving service delivery outcomes to ensure cost effectiveness.

3.10 Effective packages of integrated services require⁴:

- **Flexibility** – Eligibility criteria and narrow agency boundaries within the statutory sector do not fit well with the complexity of women offenders' lives. Partnership working is more likely to meet their needs if it is formulated in a more rounded manner, with well formulated services that are responsive to women's needs.
- **Collaboration between statutory agencies** – Services can feel over stretched and under resourced. Some fail to accept responsibility for meeting women offenders' needs. Many women are not referred to the services available. Low referral rates lead to concerns about the sustainability of projects, and agencies need to implement locally robust governance arrangements to ensure that collaborative working delivers results.
- **Consistent Funding** – Ad-hoc funding arrangements, coming from a wide range of sources can be destabilising particularly for the third sector. The third sector in particular reports concerns about precarious funding arrangements, and providers can spend disproportionate time bidding for funding.

Reducing Re-offending Pathways

3.11 Work focused on the pathways has led to many successes at a national, regional and local level, focusing attention on the range of offender needs and the resources required to meet these needs. Work must now focus on developing these to meet the needs of women and identify the cross cutting issues. Our ambitions for these pathways, to ensure they provide effective services for women offenders, are set out below:

Accommodation

3.12 Each region and Wales has been tasked to revise their accommodation delivery plans to ensure the needs of women are addressed and women specific interventions and services are considered. To assist in this, NOMS Partnerships Unit has published a briefing paper for housing and support advisers in prisons; *The Importance of Housing for Women Prisoners*⁵.

3.13 The cross-governmental National Accommodation Pathway Group, jointly chaired by MoJ and CLG, is working to develop specific outcomes for women offenders through the following actions:

- CLG has commissioned research to produce guidance on preventing homelessness and addressing the housing needs of offenders for local authorities and others. This will include case studies on a range of different types of offender. This is due to be published in the autumn. MoJ, Home Office and Youth Justice Board officials are on the steering group.
- CLG and MoJ are planning to fund a joint project in 2008/09 on Preventing Accommodation Loss (POAL) for offenders which will aim to share best practice and promote partnership working between two prisons and local authorities. The

⁴ 'Provision for Women Offenders in the Community', Loraine Gelsthorpe, Gilly Sharpe and Jenny Roberts

⁵ http://noms.justice.gov.uk/news-publications-events/publications/guidance/women_prisoners_housing?view=Standard&pubID=529505

project is to look at ways of preserving existing accommodation, correctly closing down accommodation where necessary, and seeking agreements with housing providers to re-house on discharge from prison. POAL is likely to be of most benefit to those offenders serving shorter sentences. The majority of women offenders fall within this category.

- CLG are exploring the issues raised in the Corston report relating to local authorities decision-making under the homelessness legislation in England, including on intentionality. CLG will undertake an assessment of local authorities' decision-making regarding offenders in England in order to consider what steps can be taken to improve how decisions are made.

Skills and Employment

3.14 Some women and their families will benefit from acquiring skills which will improve their chances of getting employment. This in turn will reduce the chances that they will re-offend. Women are more likely to undertake training but less likely to complete their courses – we will take the factors below into account to improve this:

- More than half the women in prison have a child under 16, and more than a third have a child under the age of five. To gain employment, women will need access childcare. Women offenders may need guidance on how to contact mainstream services, such as local authorities Children Information Services who can help parents find suitable childcare.
- With the emphasis on Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) and individual learning plans women should have equal access to provision and have their skills development needs met more effectively.
- The LSC has a defined process for assessing the needs of offender learners – and their prospective employers – through a series of Offender Skills and Curriculum Area Reviews (OSCARs). The particular needs of women are assessed as part of the process, and this analysis will underpin the joint commissioning decisions between ROMs/DOMs and the LSC in putting in place a comprehensive package of provision available to offender learners and from which offender managers can draw when deciding the tailored programme of services to meet the punishment, rehabilitation and personal needs of the women offender. The LSC's Prospectus⁶ (*"Developing the Offender Learning and Skills Service: the Prospectus"*) made clear that "we accept Baroness Corston's recommendation that life skills should be given a much higher priority within the offender skills and employment pathway and women must be individually assessed to be sure that their needs are met".
- There are several European Social Fund (ESF) funded projects that have looked at the specific needs of women getting into work and we will look to learn lessons and apply them to future policy.
- A Practice Guide on offender skills and employment is being drafted which will provide a number of examples, including those covering issues of diversity
- MoJ is scoping out a joint project with Business in the Community to look at pathways into work for women offenders which will also inform future policy

3.15 Welsh regions have adopted a separate strategy in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Director of Offender Management Wales, as neither the remit of the DIUS or the LSC extends to cover Wales.

⁶ <http://olass.lsc.gov.uk/NR/exeres/BBCE18C8-4D2A-4340-AEE4-0A0E9E2FAFCA.htm>

- 3.16 If needed, offenders in prison and supervised in the community should have access to learning skills to enable them to gain skills and qualifications. This includes access to volunteering and mentoring opportunities that can increase motivation and skills and provide flexible arrangements in line with childcare and other needs.

Health inequalities

- 3.17 Many women offenders have health problems, including mental health problems. Up to 80% of women in prison have diagnosable mental health problems and women recently released from custody are 36 times more likely, than the general population to commit suicide and to die from an accidental drug related overdose in the first two weeks on release. Identifying these needs to enable early access to suitable NHS services, including CAMHS for younger women, if appropriate, is essential.
- 3.18 We will work, together with Offender Health (Department of Health), to develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the health and social care needs of women offenders in the community. This will form part of the forthcoming Offender Social Care and Health Strategy⁷, and will take account of the following factors:
- Services for these women must meet their needs in terms of range and acceptability of service. These services may take the form of outreach facilities practising within the locations where women offenders are - such as in court, in refuges, or police stations.
 - PCTs should be encouraged to register women offenders with a local GP and access regular 'well women' provision. Some GPs specialise in the care of homeless people or drug users and women with these needs should be referred to such provision where it is available.
 - Women working in the sex industry should be encouraged to access specialist health services where available.

Drugs and Alcohol

- 3.19 A high proportion of women entering prison mis-use drugs and alcohol, with rates among remand prisoners being slightly higher than amongst sentenced prisoners. With pregnant women there can also be knock-on implications for their children. Support for expectant mothers should be prioritised. The same applies for the use of tobacco.
- 3.20 Effective delivery of drug interventions is essential. If drug addictions are not addressed, offenders risk remaining dysfunctional and incapable of engaging with wider rehabilitative programmes that, collectively, could help them lead law-abiding lives on release.
- 3.21 Clinical Substance services should be available in all local women's prisons including opiate substitute maintenance regimes. Access to continued clinical treatment should also be available upon release back in community. There should be specific advice for clinicians for treating pregnant, or suspected pregnant, drug users. Pregnant substance mis-users should be managed jointly with the relevant local midwifery service, where they receive treatment which is equivalent to the services provided in the community.
- 3.22 CARATs (Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare) offer a low-threshold drug service to deliver treatment and support to Problematic Drug Users,

⁷ For more detail see http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_080816

providing access to a range of wider drug and non-drug services both in custody and on release. CARATs create a Care Plan based on the specific needs of an individual prisoner. If assessed as necessary, prisoners should be referred to drug rehabilitation programmes and/or other appropriate drug services. CARATs are available in all prisons in England and Wales.

- 3.23 CARATs should take the lead role in engaging in the Home Office led Drug Interventions Programme designed to engage and retain offenders in drug treatment at every stage in the criminal justice system and beyond.
- 3.24 Alcohol detoxification services should be available in all local prisons for any woman who is alcohol dependant on arrival in prison.
- 3.25 Where alcohol is part of multiple drug misuse CARATs (Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare) services should be available to all prisoners in England and Wales. Where local funding has been identified, the CARATs framework can be used to provide sole alcohol users with appropriate care.
- 3.26 Women with substance misuse problems should have equal access to a Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRR). Outcomes for women offenders on DRRs must be carefully monitored, including access to clinical substance misuse services for all offenders as required.

Finance, Benefits and Debt

- 1.1 Financial problems can be a major cause of offending behaviour for many low-income women, potentially exacerbated by outstanding fines and living in an abusive relationship. In addition, the family finances may have been managed by the partner with the woman not even having a basic bank account. Having an individual financial identity may be important for women who tend to suffer low self-esteem in order to gain confidence and stronger sense of identity.
- 1.2 Regions should make use of existing resources in the community or through local partnership arrangements to seek to advise and support women offenders with low incomes and debt. Offender managers should note that where debt is a significant issue it will be important to present advice and assistance in a sympathetic fashion, where trust and a long-term relationship can be built on consistent advice. In many cases, especially where there is interaction with a number of agencies, sign-posting may not be sufficient and more pro-active support may be necessary, not least to assist with perceived complex matters such as tax credits or re-receiving child benefit

Children and Families

- 3.27 Recent OASys data suggests that women are six times more likely to be carers than men, and twice as likely to live in a house with children. Once they are in prison, the children are looked after by partners (25%), grandparents (25%) or other family and friends (29%) or are taken into care.
- 3.28 We will publish a cross-government Framework to help offenders to maintain their family ties to reduce re-offending and to improve support for their children and families. This will address the specific needs of women and complement the Gender Specific Standards for women prisoners. It will set expectations of offender managers and

other local partnerships at each stage of the criminal justice system, from arrest through to the end of the sentence and beyond.

3.29 To support the framework, we are developing a service specification for NOMS taking account of the following requirements:

- Services should 'Think Family' when working with women offenders, and recognise that they will not engage successfully with interventions which do not enable them to manage their child care responsibilities, especially in cases where they are the primary carer.
- Strong local partnerships are needed to ensure women offenders can access support and advice to help them manage family concerns, particularly around their children, including working with universal services like children's centres and extended schools, family support services for drug mis-users and Third Sector providers. An assessment of the family needs should be made if their children are being cared for by extended family, friends or in the children-in-care system, in consultation with local authority children's services. Children's services must be informed when a prisoner is due to leave a Mother and Baby Unit. Women should be referred to children's centres on release from prison, and local children's centres should prioritise women offenders and their children for support.
- Not all family ties are good: some women offenders will need support to break away from partners, ex-partners or family members who are violent, abusive or are reinforcing their offending behaviour. In these cases they are likely to require on-going support from the expert, women-centred organisations in the community.
- Offender Managers should address both the safeguarding and the well-being of offenders' children. They need to work in partnership with local authority children's services including where the children of women offenders are being cared for by extended family, friends or in the children-in-care system.
- For women in prison, visiting arrangements should be child-friendly with regular special child-centred visits and services should work in partnership to provide suitable housing and other support on release, so women can be re-united with their children where this is in the child's interest.

3.30 High risk of harm offenders may be eligible for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) management. Under the MAPPA, offender managers must consider which other agencies need to be involved in drawing up the risk management plan for the offender. Where the assessment reveals child safeguarding issues around the offender's or other children, they will liaise with Children's Services. MAPPA strategic management boards are required to establish effective working relationships with local safeguarding children boards. NOMS will continue to work with probation areas and the Department for Children, Schools and Families to ensure that the twin focus upon safeguarding and the well-being of children is maintained in all MAPPA work.

Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour

3.31 Women offenders are not a homogenous group and decisions about risk, need, eligibility and suitability for an intervention should be based on a thorough individual assessment. Accredited Programmes must be implemented thoughtfully to reflect the needs of women. In many cases these will provide the best opportunity to change the attitudes, thinking and behaviours linked to their offending. It is likely that issues arising from the supportive pathways for women offenders will need to be addressed in the way programmes are delivered to women.

- The community based One to One Programme has proved a supportive and successful means to deliver pathway 7 focused work to women that responds to their individual circumstances.
- CARE (Choices, Actions, Relationships and Emotions) is a pilot programme developed in consultation with non-statutory agencies. CARE has been developed specifically for women in custody convicted of violent and/or substance related offences. It addresses a number of personal and circumstantial difficulties known to be linked to self-harming, substance misuse, mental ill-health, violence and re-offending.
- The Adults facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) pilots led by the Cabinet Office include work in HMP Holloway to provide a counselling programme that aims to increase life skills, emotional literacy, self esteem and confidence to reduce re-offending and protect the public.

Strengthening provision for women

3.32 We will strengthen and integrate the following support in the pathways for women:

Support for women who have been abused, raped or who have experienced domestic violence

- 3.33 Many women have experienced, and may still be in, abusive relationships, which can present a barrier to change and should be identified as an issue where relevant. Offender Managers need to be aware of resources available in the community to support women who are survivors of abuse and be able to encourage women to access these resources. To do so they need to make strong and productive links with local authorities, and work together with them and other local partners to ensure that there is capacity available to cope with the demand.
- 3.34 Women still in abusive relationships may be pressured by partners, e.g. to reveal credit card pin numbers. In some cases, children may also be at risk of being harmed.
- 3.35 Women who have left an abusive relationship may need protection. Providers of hostel accommodation and or training providers need to demonstrate their understanding of such women's vulnerabilities by ensuring they provide an appropriately supportive environment, especially for training in traditionally male-stereotyped skills areas.
- 3.36 Hostels should have links to appropriate links to facilities for women in the local area, e.g. women's centres, well women clinics, mother and toddler groups, etc.
- 3.37 Providers of all kinds of support should be able to demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills in supporting women through assessment, questioning and any counselling. It is important that women offenders who are survivors of abuse have positive role models, both male and female. Providers of specialist domestic violence training or counselling, and providers of specialist alcohol dependency advice or counselling should have appropriate accreditation.

Support for women who have been involved in prostitution

- 3.38 Women should be given every support to build a new life away from prostitution. Offender Managers should aim to help women build a positive self-image and become empowered to develop other skills and access employment opportunities so that they may develop to their full potential.

- 3.39 Women should be assisted to keep safe and healthy while in prison and on release, and given ongoing support with parenting and family relationships. Offender Managers should, where this is available, establish links with Local Authority special provision. For example, the London Borough of Camden has a project which works with women in Holloway to help them avoid returning to prostitution on release.
- 3.40 Support for women who have been involved in prostitution has been integrated into the reducing re-offending pathways for women, and local resettlement strategies and women's prisons have identified leads to carry this forward. Offender Managers should refer to the strategies and liaise with the leads as appropriate.
- 3.41 Many of the characteristics of vulnerability apply as in the supportive pathway above.

Recommended Good Practice

- 3.42 Existing examples of good practice include the Together Women Programme and the South West Accommodation Gateway. Both these projects assess the needs of women offenders in their regions and some of the necessary linkages with other organisations to provide a more rounded service. In Wales the Women's Turnaround Project has rapidly achieved an excellent reputation for working with women offenders and women vulnerable to offending. It also clearly demonstrates the value of multi-agency, multi-sector work with offenders and is making a significant impact with stakeholders and service users. In Leeds the Together Women project works with a range of agencies to provide a refuge and training for women and to break the cycle of re-offending. These approaches, bringing together 'wrap-around services, are very much in keeping with the Corston Report.
- 3.43 Women's Centres are providing a range of services from accommodation to employment, and are a good example of how to provide services for women in one place – the one stop shop. Services provided extend beyond those which are designed to meet offender needs, but would be a good opportunity for commissioners from different organisations to joint commission women offender-orientated services.

Together Women

- 3.44 To help support a community based response to women's offending, £9.15 million funding was allocated in March 2005 to establish new initiatives to tackle women's offending in the community – **the Together Women Programme (TWP)**. The aim of TWP is to address the needs of women offenders to prevent re-offending; to address the needs of those 'at risk' of offending; and to divert both groups from prosecution and custody. Two regions, Yorkshire and Humberside (YH) and North West (NW) were identified to set up TWP demonstration projects. In YH, a consortium of Voluntary Sector agencies, led by Foundation Housing is delivering the TWP in 3 locations: Doncaster, Leeds and Bradford. In the North West, there are 2 suppliers delivering TWP: Liverpool Lighthouse and Salford Foundation.
- 3.45 Both centres use key workers to work with the women and they have systems in place to recruit and train volunteers and mentors, often women who have been helped by TWP. TWP is designed to provide a wrap-around service for women with multi-complex needs and to do this the centres have established good links with local third sector agencies to provide services for homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction and

mental health. TWP also provides services in the centres, such as 1 to 1 counselling, basic skills training including IT and group work around confidence, self esteem and parenting. There are also activities in the centres, such as acupuncture, holistic therapies, keep fit, cooking and nutrition, sewing and home furnishing.

The Asha Centre

- 3.46 The Asha Women's Centre in West Mercia was identified by the Department of Health in 2003 as a model of good practice for women with mental health problems, and in 2005 was one of two identified by the Home Secretary as a basis for the development of the Together Women Programme. The Centre is a generic one-stop shop, providing advice sessions with agencies, signposting to external advice sources and a range of courses and programmes that develop confidence, self-esteem and empowerment, skills and qualifications, and support progression to mainstream employment, training, and voluntary work. The Centre also undertakes prison in-reach and resettlement work.
- 3.47 A personal story:

The Turnaround Project – Jane

Jane was sentenced to 12 months community supervision for assault and faced a possible 14-28 day custodial sentence. She was highly distressed and vulnerable, living alone and suffering harassment from her ex-boyfriend, father and her family. After years of domestic violence, she was experiencing problems with both her mental and physical health and was not confident enough to attend her medical appointments. County court proceedings were pending to evict her for rent arrears of £1,000.

***The Women's Safety Unit** took immediate action to provide a police mobile phone and to report her property damage. **The Turnaround Project** submitted an urgent application to prevent her eviction and help her maintain her tenancy. Further investigation by project staff revealed warrant notices for unpaid fines and for her TV licence. **A project team member** accompanied her to her next probation appointment, and contacted the court to arrange a date for her to attend voluntarily. Project staff contacted **Jobcentre Plus** to investigate how her incapacity benefit could be reinstated and provided help in making a further Crisis Loan claim. They arranged an appointment for her with a medical team.*

*The **Council's Tenant Support Scheme** was alerted, and a supporting statement was provided about the complexity of her case. She was introduced to a **Tenancy Support Worker** and agreement was secured that eviction proceedings would be delayed to give time for investigation. The supporting statement was also passed to her solicitor - in relation to her unpaid fines. With this evidence about her case and the support she was receiving, the magistrates were able to impose a non custodial sentence, including requiring her to attend for welfare advice, rather than send her to prison.*

4. SERVICE REQUIREMENTS FOR STATUTORY SERVICES

4.1 This section addresses in greater detail the statutory service requirements for women offenders as they pass through the various stages of their journey from arrest to sentence to community supervision or imprisonment to release, and potentially breach or recall to prison. Each phase of the offender journey includes commentary about the underpinning ambition, what success would look like and where the primary responsibility and associated responsibilities for success lie. The offender journey, in chronological order, can be characterised as follows (and not applicable to all offenders):

- Phase 1 – pre-court offender assessment (including pre-sentence reports). and potential diversion either from court process or custodial remand.
- Phase 2 – sentence planning, for either community or custodial provision.
- Phase 3 – community interventions.
- Phase 4 – custodial categorisation and allocation, and interventions.
- Phase 5 – offender release and subsequent community supervision and interventions.
- Phase 6 – breach and recall.

4.2 The effective management of this offender group demands the close co-operation of those delivering offender services in the community and custodial sectors. It is critical to ensure that the interfaces between different partners occur in a timely and accurate manner, with clear expectations and agreement on what is to be delivered, when, and by whom. The key criminal justice agencies are:

- police;
- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS);
- sentencers;
- probation providers;
- prison providers; and,
- youth offending services.

4.3 Where women offenders are included in offender management the central person co-ordinating supervision and services is the offender manager. Currently offenders receiving a custodial sentence of less than 12 months are not in scope for offender management.

1. Pre-court offender assessment

1 .Pre-court offender assessment	
Service ambition	The key outcome is that women offenders get the right sentence. The fundamental input is that pre-sentence reports are timely and accurate and set out the risks and needs the offender presents to help the court to decide on the appropriateness their sentence, and that the court is encouraged to consider community penalties.
What success looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women remanded in custody are afforded the opportunities of offered by the Bail Accommodation Support Service and other bail information schemes; and those schemes are tailored to specific needs of women offenders, which might include childcare responsibilities, and the impact on the children and family members left behind

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are put in touch with supportive social care provision in the community, which may in some cases be able to provide relevant assessments of specific needs, or offer a package of intervention to support community supervision. • The probation service ensures that pre-sentence reports on women offenders include information on their specific needs and provision, targets those most likely to go into custody, and quality assures pre-sentence reports on these women. • The court remands women offenders where custody is being considered for pre-sentence assessment where a pre-hearing report is not available (e.g. in cases of findings of guilt after a not guilty plea). • The court requests additional assessment reports (e.g. psychiatric) prior to sentence. • There are effective liaison arrangements between the courts and the probation service to address any systemic weaknesses speedily. • Effective liaison arrangements exist between probation and prison establishments to enable assessments of offenders remanded in custody.
<p>Primary and associated responsibilities</p>	<p>The primary responsibility for pre-court offender assessment lies with the probation service, and therefore it also carries a central co-ordination role. Secondary responsibilities lie with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CPS, to enable prompt and accurate information exchange to assist the probation service to carry out its assessments, and to create opportunities for potential diversion from the court process. • The prison provider to enable the probation service to carry out its assessments. • Health and psychiatric services to deliver timely and accurate health assessments.

4.4 The ClearSprings Bail Accommodation and Support Service provides support and housing in the community (not hostels) across England and Wales and was established from June 2007. The initial focus has been on those already remanded in custody being referred. The ClearSprings service also takes prisoners released on Home Detention Curfew, who would otherwise be unable to provide an address to be released to.

4.5 Both schemes seek to find move-on housing after the end of the bail or HDC period. Both are able to meet the particular needs of women. A parent may be joined by dependent children. Up to the end of March about 20% of those on the scheme were women; 11% of bail referrals into the service were women. 20% of HDC referrals were women, although women were only 8.3% of HDC eligible prisoners and 11.3% of HDC releases in 2006. Women were more successful than men at gaining bail and release on HDC into the scheme. 29% of female bail referrals were successful against 27% for men, and 47% of female HDC referrals were successful against 36% for men. But, women were more likely to fail to arrive at the address, and commissioners and providers need to consider ways of addressing this – perhaps through the use of voluntary sector or key worker ‘guides’ or mentors.

2. Sentence planning

2. Sentence planning	
Service ambition	The key output is a timely and accurate clear plan centred on addressing the risks and needs of the offender that sets out how those risks and needs are to be addressed, at what stage of the sentence and by whom, with identified expected achievements that are monitored and reviewed. A key challenge is to enable co-ordinated services for women receiving short custodial sentences who are not in scope for offender management.
What success looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The probation service (offender manager) writes sentence plans that address women's specific offending-related needs, and that are quality assured for how well they meet that goal. • There are effective liaison arrangements between the offender manager and the prison based offender supervisor to agree and implement the detail of the sentence plan, where women receive a custodial sentence. • There are effective liaison arrangements between the offender manager, the offender supervisor and others contributing to the sentence plan, including external partnership agencies such as health providers. • The sentence plan is shared in a timely manner with appropriate others by the offender manager.
Primary and associated responsibilities	<p>The primary responsibility for the sentence plan lies with the probation service working closely with the offender supervisor (for those sentenced to custody). The probation service (offender manager) therefore also carries a central co-ordination role.</p> <p>Secondary responsibilities lie with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prison provider, where the offender supervisor is located. • Health and psychiatric services to deliver timely and accurate health assessments.

3. Community intervention

3. Community intervention	
Service ambition	The key output is the timely allocation of women to the requirements of their community sentence, and then the outcome is their successful completion of the elements of their programme of supervision and the implementation of the sentence plan.
What success looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely access to a range of required interventions. • The probation service delivers or sub-contracts appropriate supervision and timely interventions as specified in offender sentence plans and any licence requirements. • Interventions address the specific needs of women offenders (e.g. as may be related to work in the sex trade, or to abuse) and, where appropriate, are delivered in women only environments. • Interventions take into account any primary childcare role the woman may have • There are effective liaison arrangements between the offender manager and others contributing to the offender's interventions, such as health, drug and educational providers (public, private or third sector). It must be recognised that other interventions, other than programmes, can make a significant contribution to offender changes in risks and needs. • Progress is monitored and reviewed. • Where needed the police and other relevant organisations play their full part in any multi-agency arrangements designed to improve public

	protection.
Primary and associated responsibilities	<p>The primary responsibility for delivering community supervision and interventions lies with the probation service working closely with providers of other services. The offender manager therefore carries a key co-ordinating role.</p> <p>Secondary responsibilities lie with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The private, public and third sectors, which may provide specific services. • Health, drug, education and any other providers. • Police and others contributing to multi-agency public protection arrangements.

4. Custodial categorisation and allocation, and custodial interventions

4. Custodial categorisation and allocation, and interventions	
Service ambition	The key outputs is the timely and successful categorisation and allocation of the woman to the appropriate custodial setting (and any subsequent moves) to enable the implementation of the sentence plan; and the completion of required custodial interventions before release.
What success looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prison system categorises and allocates women prisoners efficiently and effectively, placing them as close to home as possible where appropriate. • The prison service delivers appropriate and timely interventions as specified in offender sentence plans and monitors and reviews progress. • There are effective liaison arrangements between the prison based offender supervisor and the offender manager about the offender's progress through programmes of interventions. • There are effective liaison arrangements between the offender manager, the offender supervisor and others contributing to the offender's interventions, such as health, drug and educational providers (private, public or third sectors). Interventions other than programmes are developed and fully utilised where they can make a significant contribution to offender changes in risks and needs. • Effective delivery of drug interventions to ensure drug addiction can be addressed. • Service provision is aligned to ensure equal outcomes for women offenders, even where women's needs and profiles differ from men's. • Effective and timely continuity of care available through effective liaison between CARATs, CJITs, Offender Managers, Offender Supervisors and others contributing to the offender's individual needs.
Primary and associated responsibilities	<p>The primary responsibility for categorising and allocating offenders and delivering custodial interventions lies with the prison service working closely with other providers. The offender supervisor, working closely with the offender manager therefore carries a key co-ordinating role.</p> <p>Secondary responsibilities lie with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The third sector, which may provide specific services. • Health, drug, education and any other providers.

5. Offender release and subsequent community supervision / interventions

Offender release and subsequent community supervision / interventions	
Service ambition	The key output is the release of women who have either completed their custodial intervention, or who can go on to complete their programme in the community. The key outcome is their successful completion of any period of community supervision.

What success looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The offender manager and offender supervisor monitor and review the women's progress before release and liaise to agree how any sentence plan will be completed. • There are effective liaison arrangements between the offender manager, the offender supervisor and others contributing to any ongoing interventions, such as health providers, where women are supervised in the community. • Custodial and community interventions become more 'joined up' to enable continuity of provision, including after the end of licence or breach period if necessary. • The police and other relevant organisations play their full part in any multi-agency arrangements designed to improve public protection.
Primary and associated responsibilities	<p>The probation service (offender manager) carries a central co-ordination role as the focal point for the required assessments and continuity of interventions.</p> <p>Secondary responsibilities lie with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prison service, where the offender supervisor is located, and their support of offender assessments. • Health and psychiatric services to deliver timely and accurate health continued interventions and assessments as required.

6. Breach and recall

6. Breach and recall	
Service ambition	The key outcome is that offenders who are in breach of their requirements are dealt with promptly, either by the courts or through recall. Careful consideration must be given to proposals to the courts when offenders are breached, recognising that 'relapses' may not present unacceptable risks to the community.
What success looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The probation service undertakes breach / recall assessments, taking account of the needs of women as primary carers. • The probation service completes a revised sentence plan for the woman who may remain in the community or be sentenced to custody (see sentence plan section). • The probation service quality assures breach / recall assessments and decisions. • The prison service allocates recalled women in the context of the revised sentence plan. • Effective liaison arrangements exist between probation and health and psychiatric services where additional offender assessments are required to support breach / recall decisions.
Primary and associated responsibilities	<p>The primary responsibility for offender breach / recall and associated assessments lies with the probation service, and therefore it also carries a central co-ordination role.</p> <p>Secondary responsibilities lie with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The police, to arrest recalled offenders. • Relevant contributors to MAPPA. • Health and psychiatric services to deliver timely and accurate health assessments.

Annex A: Corston Recommendations

1. The **Corston Report** made 43 recommendations, the most key

- Recommendation 1 (and related Recommendations 3, 4, 5, 11) – *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*
- 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*
- Recommendation 14 (and related Recommendations 11, 15, 16 & 17) – *The seven pathways should be much better co-ordinated strategically for women and should incorporate pathways eight [for women who have been the victim of sexual abuse or domestic violence] and nine [for women who have been involved in prostitution]*
- Recommendation 18 (and related Recommendations 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24, 25, 26, 28) – *Custodial sentences for women must be reserved for serious and violent offenders who pose a threat to the public*
- Recommendation 33 (and related Recommendations 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35) – *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*

The **Government Response to Corston** addressed the sentencing related recommendations very fully. In particular it committed to the following actions:

- Ensuring planned improvements to the quality and range of information available to sentencers will include specific information relating to women offenders. This will be incorporated in work with local Criminal Justice Boards to develop better information on a range of areas including crime patterns, sentencing practice and the cost and effectiveness of various disposals. Improved information to sentencers will ensure that they are better placed to make decisions on the appropriate type of sentence for each woman offender, depending on her circumstances.
- When providing information to sentencers, and reminding courts of the powers available to them, prosecutors will ensure that in cases of women offenders, the information provided enables the court to make the correct decision in terms of disposals and interventions which are appropriate to address those women’s needs and which are likely to be most effective at reducing the risk of further offending.
- The use of Conditional Cautioning, for example, may be a particularly useful response for some women offenders and could allow for some of the underlying factors which affect their offending to be addressed. Further work will be carried out to identify how this kind of integrated approach to the sentencing of women can ensure the use of more effective and appropriate disposals for them.
- Action will be taken to ensure sentencers are better informed about community provision for women and how it can address their needs more effectively than custody. New liaison arrangements between the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the judiciary will be used to ensure that sentencers are made aware of the schemes and

provision for women that are available through NOMS and also the private and voluntary sectors.

- Revised guidance on the use of the Drug Rehabilitation Requirement and Alcohol Treatment Requirement will stress that Offender Managers should take account of domestic arrangements, childcare and other issues in sentence planning.
- Guidance for pre-sentence report writers is being revised to ensure that all offenders, including women, are targeted for community orders rather than custodial sentences where appropriate
- The revised National Probation Service Good Practice Guide on 'Delivering Effective Services for Women Offenders in the Community' will ensure that the necessary changes are made to improve interventions and services for women in the community. The guide will set out what is required in a number of areas to ensure the needs of women are met, including in relation to bail and remand, pre-sentence reports, Offender Management, resettlement pathways, domestic violence, unpaid work and staff training.
- New liaison arrangements have been put in place at national and regional level between the National Offender Management Service and the judiciary. At local level there are 42 area level, bench level and Crown Court liaison arrangements primarily involving the probation service. Regional Offender Managers are already meeting with sentencers and formal arrangements for this are being finalised. Regional Offender Managers are profiling existing services and provision for women in their regions and the results will be used to identify what packages of measures are required to address women's multiple needs. Sentencers will be encouraged to support the services and provision for women identified by the Regional Offender Managers and to visit schemes wherever possible.
- And although breach arrangements will not change, under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 they already allow for sufficient flexibility. They were introduced as a deliberate measure aimed at strengthening the previous arrangements under which a court could (and often did) choose to do nothing in response to breach, or simply impose a fine. Under the 2003 Act, once a breach has been proved, the court must take action, the aim being to encourage compliance with the original order, not to imprison people.

Annex B: Fawcett Society Conditions and Questions for Commissioners

In their report *Provision for Women Offenders in the Community*, the Fawcett Society proposed nine effective practice conditions and questions commissioners to consider:

1. Be **women-only** to foster safety and a sense of community and to enable staff to develop expertise in working with women;
2. **Integrate offenders with non-offenders** so as to normalise women offenders' experiences and facilitate a supportive environment for learning;
3. **Foster women's empowerment** so they gain sufficient self- esteem to directly engage in problem- solving themselves, and feel motivated to seek appropriate employment;
4. Utilise ways of working with women which draw on what is known about their **effective learning styles**;
5. Take a **holistic and practical stance** to helping women to address social problems which may be linked to their offending
6. Facilitate **links with mainstream agencies**, especially health, debt advice and counselling.
7. Have the **capacity and flexibility** to allow women to return to the centre or programme for 'top up' or continued support and development when required;
8. Ensure that women have a **supportive peer-group or a mentor** to whom they can turn when they have completed any offending-related programmes. Personal support is as important as direct input addressing offending behaviour;
9. Provide women with **practical help with transport and childcare** so that they can maintain their involvement in the centre or programme.

We would support these conditions though question whether, although women only services will be most suitable for many women this may not be the case for all. In a difficult financial environment prioritisation also applies to working with women. The nine questions commissioners and providers need to ask:

1. What is available within the region specifically for women (including young women, ethnic minority women, older women and other disadvantaged women)?
2. To what extent could existing mainstream provision for women be utilised for women offenders? Are there useful partnerships that could be forged between agencies to help address women offenders' needs (including both intra and inter voluntary and statutory provision)?
3. In what ways could any barriers to working with women who offend, within existing service provision, be addressed and overcome?
4. Do any of the potential service providers already have a stable setting/or building which might be used as a base for a women's service?
5. Who, if any, are the other service users within the same building or setting? Would any of these other service users militate against the creation of a safe supportive environment for women? Or, conversely, can any of the other activities within the same setting be used to enhance the work with women (for example, Women's Aid or counselling)?
6. Is there appropriate childcare provision? If not, could childcare provision be created / accessed?
7. Is the building / setting easily accessible and otherwise conducive to women's needs? Could transport be provided?
8. Does the project initiate styles of working with service users which are conducive to women's learning needs?
9. Does the provision provide opportunities for women to be integrated within non-offending groups?