



HM Prison &
Probation Service



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

Greater Manchester's Problem Solving Court for Women

Fiona Deacon (GMPS) & Helen Fox (HMCTS)

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Developing the Model

➤ **Background to the model:**

81% of women sentenced to custody do not present a risk of harm to the public. They often have a high level of mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse and self harm needs and 50% of these women will serve sentences less than six months.

Women are a minority in the criminal justice system representing 4% in custody and 12% in the community (MOJ, 2023).

➤ **Aims:**

To reduce short custodial sentences & reduce reoffending – addressing the root cause of crime

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Background

Timeline for female offender strategy and policy

March 2007	Corston Report <small>The recommendations of the Corston report represented the first step on a roadmap towards change</small>
Sept 2015	Better Outcomes for Women Offenders
April 2017	Lammy Review
June 2018	System Approach for Female Offenders – Emerging Evidence
June 2019	Farmer review – family relationships
Dec 2020	The Concordat on Women in or at Risk of contact with the CJS
June 2021	HMPPS Women’s policy framework
Jan 2023	Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-2025
Jan 2023	Progress Report on the Concordat

Gendered pathways

Patterns of offending

Women are more likely to commit acquisitive crimes and less likely to commit serious and violent offences

Social and economic context

Women are more likely to experience poverty and be primary carers of dependent children; many women are victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse, and their offending is more likely than men's to be linked to their relationships

Patterns of substance use

Women in prison report higher rates of opiate use (e.g. heroin and crack cocaine) and use of (legally or illegally obtained) prescription drugs

Health inequalities

Women have higher rates of self-harm, eating disorders, depression and anxiety. They are more likely to have symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and are more likely than men to have a mental illness

The impact of human trafficking

Women are vulnerable both to sexual exploitation and to coercion into criminal activity

Prison Reform Trust (2014)

Gendered pathways

Women are more likely to:

Receive imprisonment for first time offences and non-violent offences

Be remanded

Have poorer outcomes on release

Have their mental health, use of alcohol and sexual history analysed as a way to undermine their legitimacy when in court

Struggle to secure employment on release in part owing to feminised sectors of employment often requiring security clearance checks

Have experienced domestic abuse (60% of female prison population)

Be recalled

Prison Reform Trust (2017) Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment?
London: PRT

Who WPSC is for

➤ **Criteria:**

- A resident in Greater Manchester, sentenced at either a Magistrates or Crown Court
- At risk of Custody or a medium to high level Community Order/Suspended Sentence Order
- Have multiple complex needs that may include: debts, physical and mental health, adverse childhood experiences and trauma, parenting, accommodation, substance misuse, and domestic abuse
- Motivated to address their problems

➤ **Cohort of women:**

- Volume of cases and the identified needs

How it works and next steps

WPSC:

- The Panel of Magistrates & the review process
- Links to Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Women Centres Alliance & more agencies
- Current FDAC links in Greater Manchester

Next steps:

- A smarter approach to sentencing White Paper Sept 2020
- ISC pilots
- HMIP women's thematic

The problem-solving Court has made me a better magistrate....

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Proven Re-offending Rates

Cohort period	Apr 2018 to Mar 2019	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022
Greater Manchester	16.0%	12.8%	15.0%	18.4%
Merseyside	25.0%	20.1%	22.1%	21.1%
South Yorkshire	23.8%	21.3%	22.0%	21.9%
West Midlands	25.4%	22.4%	17.2%	19.6%
West Yorkshire	25.0%	24.5%	21.6%	25.5%
E&W	22.6%	20.0%	19.2%	20.2%

The re-offending rates relate to the cohort released from prison or starting a community order/ suspended sentence in the periods shows above. The cohort is tracked for 12 months and then a further 6 months is given for any cases to be concluded at court (proven). Women in the 21/22 cohort are tracked until Mar 23, and then until Sept 23 for cases to conclude at court.

The 2019/20 and 2020/21 figures are impacted by Covid restrictions resulting in a reduction in people arrested and prosecuted.

GM has seen a rise in re-offending rates between 2018/19 and 2021/22 compared to most other areas. This may be in part to the fact that GM had more Nightingale courts to assist with Covid recovery during 2022.

Outcomes for women and their communities

"I have used the women's centre a number of years ago, so when I needed help again, I knew where to go. I really like my case worker she is very compassionate and easy to talk to, I have never felt judged here." **Service User – Together Women's Project**

"The women's centre has always been there for me and not judged me. If it wasn't for the help and support, I wouldn't be here" **Service User – Tameside Women and their Families Centre**

"...with the woman's court, you are sort of being more relaxed and you, you feel a bit more human than when you when you're in court..."

Successful completions:
60.1%

Socio Economic Cost Benefit Analysis:
£1 invested, £17.60 saved

Every time the panels always been on, they've always been really supportive and full of praise, and, you've put yourself in these situations, but it's good to hear that you're from someone that you are actually doing good. Yeah, just a bit of validation. It's nice to hear."

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