



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

The quality of work undertaken with women

A joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation
and HM Inspectorate of Prisons



HM Inspectorate
of Probation



About us

Our vision

High-quality probation and youth justice services that change people's lives for the better.

Our purpose

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of probation and youth justice services in England and Wales. We set the standards that shine a light on the quality and impact of these services. Our inspections, reviews, research and effective practice products provide authoritative and evidence-based judgements and guidance. We use our voice to drive system change, with a focus on inclusion and diversity. Our scrutiny leads to improved outcomes for individuals and communities.



Methodology






Core inspection data

Probation Sample 1 (PDU): 10 cases in six PDUs. Qualitative sample, with an emphasis on understanding issues and illustrating wider findings through case Where possible, we interviewed the responsible officer. User Voice contacted the women on probation. Total of 60 cases.

Probation Sample 2 (Approved Premises): 30 cases with focus on the role of the approved premises. User Voice contacted women in this sample.

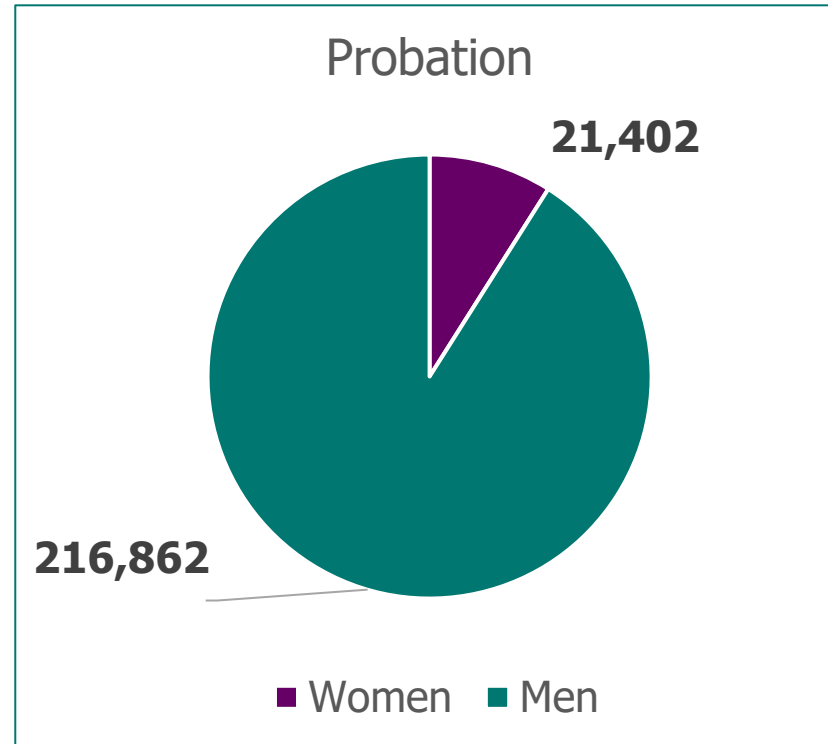
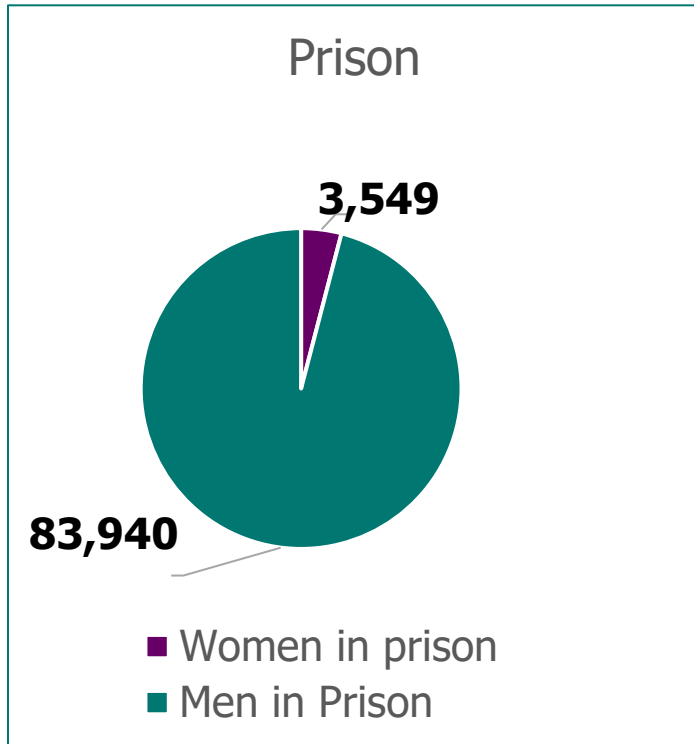
Prisons: 42 women across four prisons, mostly sentenced to 12 months or less.

-  HMP
-  Approved Premises
-  PDU





Contextual Facts



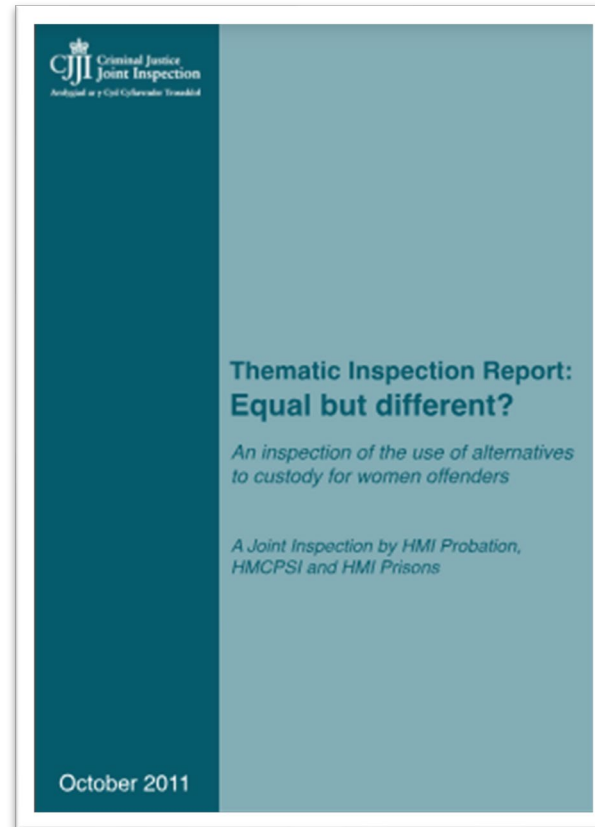
Approved Premises

- 165 Beds
- 4,683 Available bedspace days
- 2,550 Occupied bedspace days



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

Background





Policy, strategy and national leadership



Improved ability to track progress against the Female Offender Strategy



Regional SPO roles



Requirements or aspirations?



Staffing and training



25 out of 45 practitioners said their workload was manageable, caseload numbers alone were not the key factor



Not all staff had completed eLearning specifically aimed at working with women – in one region 78, in another only 11 – total completions 385 – for context, nationally 11,126 PO/PSO staff. Forty-nine per cent of staff told us they had not had sufficient training.



Misinterpretation of trauma-informed practice

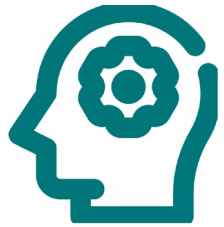
“Online learning has a place but it’s not the answer to everything – we have gone too far down that road. I learn as much from colleagues on face-to-face training as from the content.”



HM Inspectorate
of Probation



Interventions and services



Thinking Skills Programme



Practitioner Toolkits



Structured Interventions



**Commissioned Rehabilitation
Services (CRS)**



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

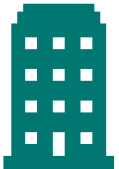
Community sentence management



Court work



Sentence delivery



Assessment and planning



Unpaid work

“My relationship with my probation officer was great and she asks me and listens to me about my life worries and about potentially what is going to happen [...]in the future.”



Safety and wellbeing

Sufficient attention had been paid to keeping women safe in less than half of inspected cases

Too often, known risks or risk-taking behaviour were not sufficiently considered or acted upon.

“Once I have done the breach paperwork, I do not think about them again until the case is heard.”



Approved premises



- Governance and resourcing does not suit the needs and profile of residents
- Facilities management can be problematic and put people at risk
- Regular, good quality keywork sessions are delivered which address resettlement needs
- Move-on plans are often problematic

“I feel safe and supported here because support is available twenty-four hours a day and the other girls are great. There are twenty-one activities a week available and three meals. I know it’s a privilege to be here because I was in one [...] years ago that was awful so when they first said I was going into an approved premise I was dreading it!”



Fourteen recommendations

Prison and Probation:	For prisons:	Probation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better use of shared case management and IT systems• Better knowledge and understanding of the impact of trauma• Include sex work and domestic abuse in CRS pathways• Evaluate interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplify CRS and provide prison leaders with outcome data• Provide good quality key-work and address practical resettlement needs• Make realistic plans and arrangements for day of release	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure delivery is in line with the Women's Policy Framework• Ensure interventions are identified and delivery is monitored• Review the governance and resourcing for Approved Premises• Ensure court report authors are up to date with available interventions



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

Custody

How well are women's resettlement
needs identified and met before
release?



Methodology

- In November and December 2023, inspectors from HMI Prisons visited four closed women's prisons: two larger prisons serving the courts (Bronzefield and Styal) and two training prisons (Downview and Drake Hall).
- We interviewed 42 women, mostly sentenced to 12 months or less, and reviewed the help they had been given by reading their files and talking to staff.
- We also interviewed a wide range of managers at each site.



Leadership

- Adaptation of the men's resettlement model has been problematic
- Impact of population pressures
- Overcomplicated and poorly staffed model introduces delays
- Women lack a consistent, easily identifiable source of support
- Lack of accountability and responsibility
- Prison leaders often unable to influence outcomes
- CRS outcomes are not clearly evidenced
- Introduction of strategic housing specialists and prison employment leads has been positive



The impact of short sentences

- Short sentenced women missed out on lots of support
- Unable to open bank accounts, gain qualifications, address public protection issues, complete interventions
- Women serving under 12 months were also much more negative in our survey responses since May 2021
- They were more likely to be caring for a child under 18 and more likely to have problems with housing, money, drugs and alcohol
- They were less likely to get time out of their cells, go to education and their contact with staff and their own families was more limited



Assessment and planning

- High levels of need among the cases we inspected
- Short staffing of pre-release teams (PRTs) meant not all need was identified promptly
- Co-location of CRS providers and the PRT supported good joint working at Styal
- The pivotal role of the COM in activating the CRS referral was a problem – they are often allocated late, carry high caseloads
- Low numbers of referrals to the CRS providers
- The POMs tended to lead the resettlement process
- Mixed quality of public protection work



Interventions and support (1)

- Not enough support for remanded women
- Recalled women often struggled to access help during some very short stays.
- Recruitment and retention a huge issue for the CRS providers
- Some CRS support was very good but overall inconsistent and very dependent on a woman's release address
- Only a minority of CRS providers attend prisons for face-to-face contact – for the others, video-link facilities weren't always adequate
- CRS providers did not always help women at sentence end date and sometimes unhelpfully closed referrals at the point of recall
- Not enough good quality keywork



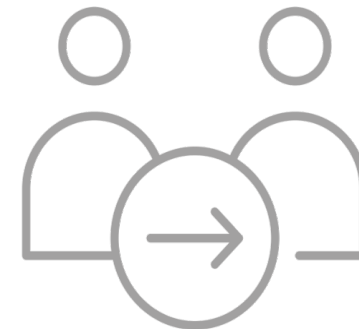
Interventions and support (2)

- Information sharing among resettlement stakeholders undermined by a lack of consistent access to all relevant IT systems
- A small number of women accessed ROTL and a small proportion found employment
- Much too hard to obtain a national insurance number
- Too little support to help women manage finances and debt and too many barriers to getting a bank account
- Not enough interventions to help women learn simple life skills
- Not enough support for victims of domestic abuse or those involved in sex work



Interventions and support (3)

- Very high need for housing but too much was temporary/short-term
- No specialist housing workers on site
- Housing outcomes beyond the first night of release still not available for each prison to determine if their provision is effective
- Many housing plans were last minute and provoked anxiety in women
- Not enough CAS3 housing for women yet
- Responsibility for 'duty to refer' not clear in practice
- The introduction of family resettlement workers and children's social workers was very positive
- Healthcare support for release met immediate needs



Day of release

- Too little Through the Gate support where staff would accompany the most complex and vulnerable women on the day of release
- Not all prisons offered women a basic mobile phone
- Not all prisons had a departure lounge where women could make calls, get help and prepare for their journeys
- Good access to benefits on the day of release under a DWP pilot
- Reporting requirements were much too intensive sometimes



Conclusions and implications

- The main problems were overcomplicated arrangements, staff shortages, gaps in contract delivery expectations and lack of face-to-face help for women.
- A decent service often depended on staff going far above and beyond their role, which was not a sustainable position.
- Where women had accessed good support and planning, it was much too hard to determine if they then achieved good outcomes.
- Overall, the current delivery model inserted too many potential barriers to success, and most managers we spoke to during our inspection queried its effectiveness.

USER VOICE

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING

THE VOICE OF WOMEN ON PROBATION REVIEW INSPECTION

LAUNCH EVENT

APPROACH

User Voice surveyed and conducted remote semi-structured interviews with women on probation.



OBJECTIVES

The overall objective was to better understand how gender affects women's probation experience.

Furthermore, our objectives were:

- To understand the experience of women on probation and what support they have (or haven't) had both in general and in relation to their gender.
- To understand how women on probation's experience in relation to their gender has changed since the previous inspection in 2016.
- To collate women on probation's views on what probation needs to do to better to support women.
- To highlight any good practices that could be built upon by the service as a whole.

2 IN 3 WOMEN SAID THEIR OVERALL PROBATION EXPERIENCE WAS GOOD

- Women who had a good overall experience said they feel supported and not judged by probation staff. Majority said their needs as women are taken care of.
- What is working well in probation for women: female practitioners, female only days, services and activities designed for women (under one roof), and consideration of childcare and feminine health issues.
- Those who had a poor overall experience in probation mentioned changing practitioners and therefore having to re-live their trauma, having to mix with men, and lack of staff as reasons for that.



PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Probation should develop 'caseload sharing' practices where few practitioners share caseloads and know people on probation 'stories' so when the main practitioner is not available their case load sharing colleagues can stand in for them.

With this model, people on probation do not need to repeatedly share and relive their trauma.

"It would be helpful if there was more consistency, having the same officer. Re-telling your story can be traumatic."

OVER HALF OF THE WOMEN HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF ABUSE AND/OR OTHER CRIMES

- 71% of the women think being victim of abuse and / or other crimes was the reason they ended up in the criminal justice system.
- Women who had experienced abuse mentioned female spaces and groups, and flexibility around childcare as positive impacts their gender has on their probation experience.
- However, some women felt practitioners do not fully understand or take into consideration women's' past experiences and / or trauma.



PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Probation should offer more mandatory training on 'trauma informed approach' to all practitioners. These skills should be refreshed annually.

"My practitioner listened and sympathised with my history, but I don't think they fully appreciate the trauma I went through."

4 IN 5 WOMEN HAD A GOOD OR EXCELLENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PROBATION PRACTITIONER

- A good practitioner goes 'above and beyond' in supporting women.
- Only **23%** of the surveyed women had been asked whether they would prefer male or female practitioner. Most had been automatically given a female practitioner.
- The women who preferred to have a female practitioner had either been victims of male abuse and therefore did not trust men or stated that a man would not understand all gender related issues like being a mother, giving birth or menopause.



PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Every person on probation should be asked their preference of practitioner, and whether they are comfortable reporting in mixed gender PDU's.

"I think women should be given the choice about male/ female workers and all offices should have women only days."

3 IN 5 WOMEN HAVE THEIR APPOINTMENTS IN MIXED GENDER FACILITIES

- Women who do not like reporting in mixed facilities have felt intimidated, anxious, nervous and even scared having to mix with men, this was mostly due to their past abuse related trauma.
- Emotional support and the ability to have remote appointments when needed were mentioned by those who felt they get what they need from appointments.
- Third of the women were not getting the services they need due to their remote location and insufficient signposting by probation.



PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Practitioners should assess people's situation on individual base and offer more remote and / or home appointments to women who clearly benefit from them.

“The main thing is that if someone like myself who is low-risk, has a stable home, it should be considered that we don't necessarily need to attend the offices. There should be some flexibility where perhaps there could be telephone interviews.”



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

THE VOICE OF WOMEN ON PROBATION REVIEW INSPECTION

LAUNCH EVENT





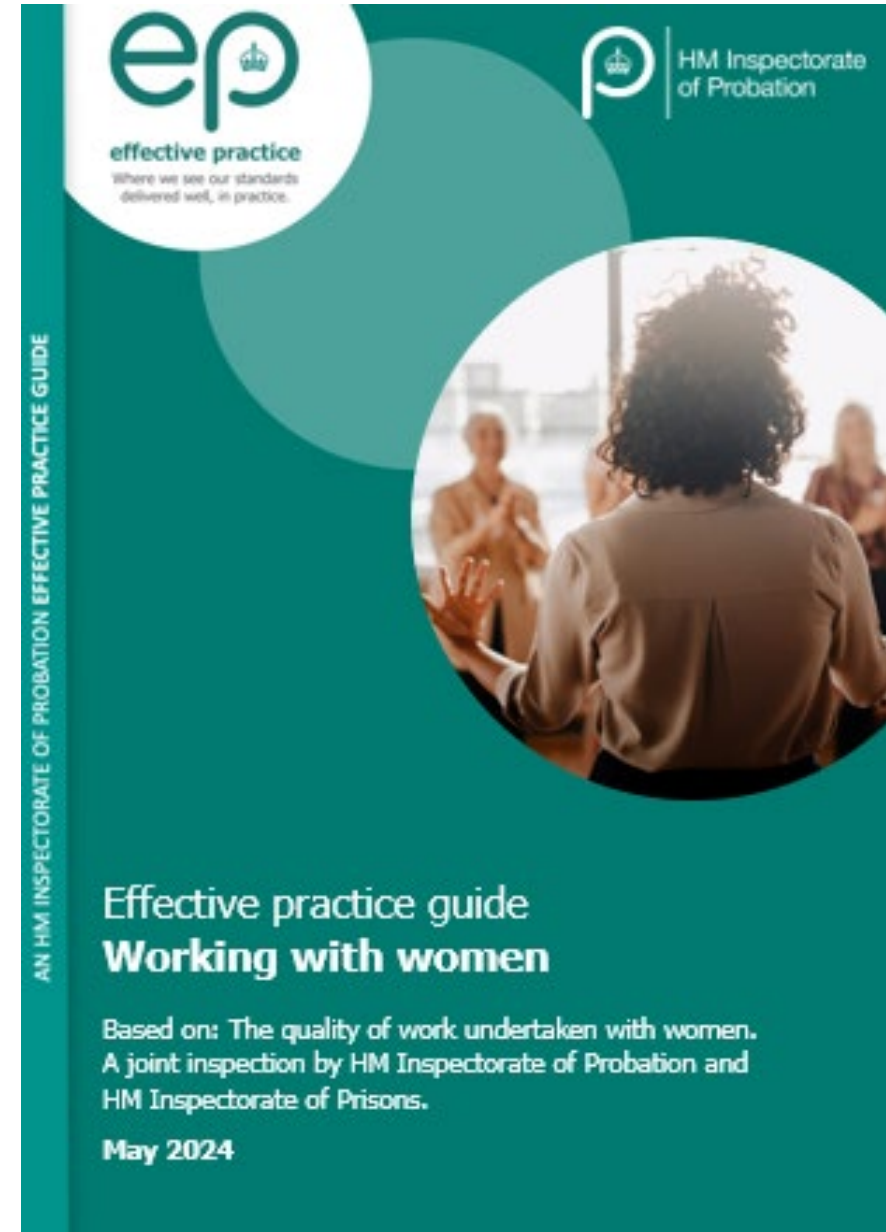
Effective practice guide

Guide contents:

- **Introduction**
- **Background**
- **Our standards:** what we looked for and our expectations
- **Examples of effectiveness including**
 - Organisational delivery
 - Training for practitioners
 - Partnerships and services
 - Prison Resettlement
- **Case management themes including:**
 - Court work
 - Sentence delivery
 - Approved premises
 - Unpaid work



Where we see our
standards delivered
well, in practice.





Effective practice guide

Finding your way



Tools for practitioners



HM Inspectorate of Probation recorded interview



Useful links



External video



Reflection questions

Questions for middle managers and practitioners:

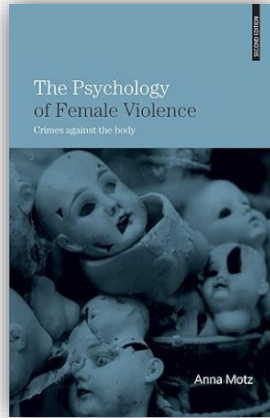
- How well is the Female Offender Strategy embedded within your region?
- Have you accessed appropriate training to build your confidence in working with women on probation?
- How familiar are you with the specialist organisations that work with women in your PDU?
- How do you build effective working relationships with women's organisations in your area?





Spotlight on Greater Manchester

Example of effectiveness:
Commissioned training
on women and violence,
Greater Manchester



Example of effectiveness: Problem Solving Court Greater Manchester

"...it's a judicial based review of a females progress on probation using a more relaxed and trauma informed approach..."

"...PSC approach aims to help stop offending. To help women get out of the criminal justice system and also an alternative to prison..."

"...brings a sense of stability to their order so they know that things are going to be continuously reviewed in a formal way..."

"...the problem-solving court has made me a better magistrate..."



Example of effectiveness: Greater Manchester Integrated Rehabilitative Services

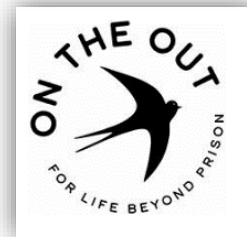


Prison Resettlement

Notable positive practice – HM Inspectorate of Prisons

'...evidence of our expectations being met to deliver particularly good outcomes for prisoners and/or detainees, and/or particularly original or creative approaches to problem-solving'.

Example of notable positive practice: Departure lounge, supporting women on the day of release, HMP Styal



Example of notable positive practice:
Provision of mobile phones and preloaded SIM cards on release, HMP Downview





Effective Practice

Example of effectiveness: Alana House PSR consultancy, West Berkshire



Example of effectiveness:

Willowdene Rehabilitation,
West Midlands.



Example of effectiveness: Barry Cookery Project, Vale of Glamorgan



Example of effectiveness: Using creative opportunities,
Worcestershire





HM Inspectorate
of Probation





HM Inspectorate
of Probation

Contact us



• Civil Justice Centre, Manchester, M3 3FX



• HMIP.enquiries@hmiprobation.gov.uk



• 0161 240 5336



• www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation



• @hmiprobation



• <https://www.linkedin.com/company/10285534>