



Glasbrint Cyfiawnder  
i Fenywod

Women's Justice  
Blueprint

SWYDDFA COMISIYNYDD HEDDLU  
A THROSEDD GOGLEDD CYMRU



OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER NORTH WALES

Office of the Police and Crime  
Commissioner North Wales

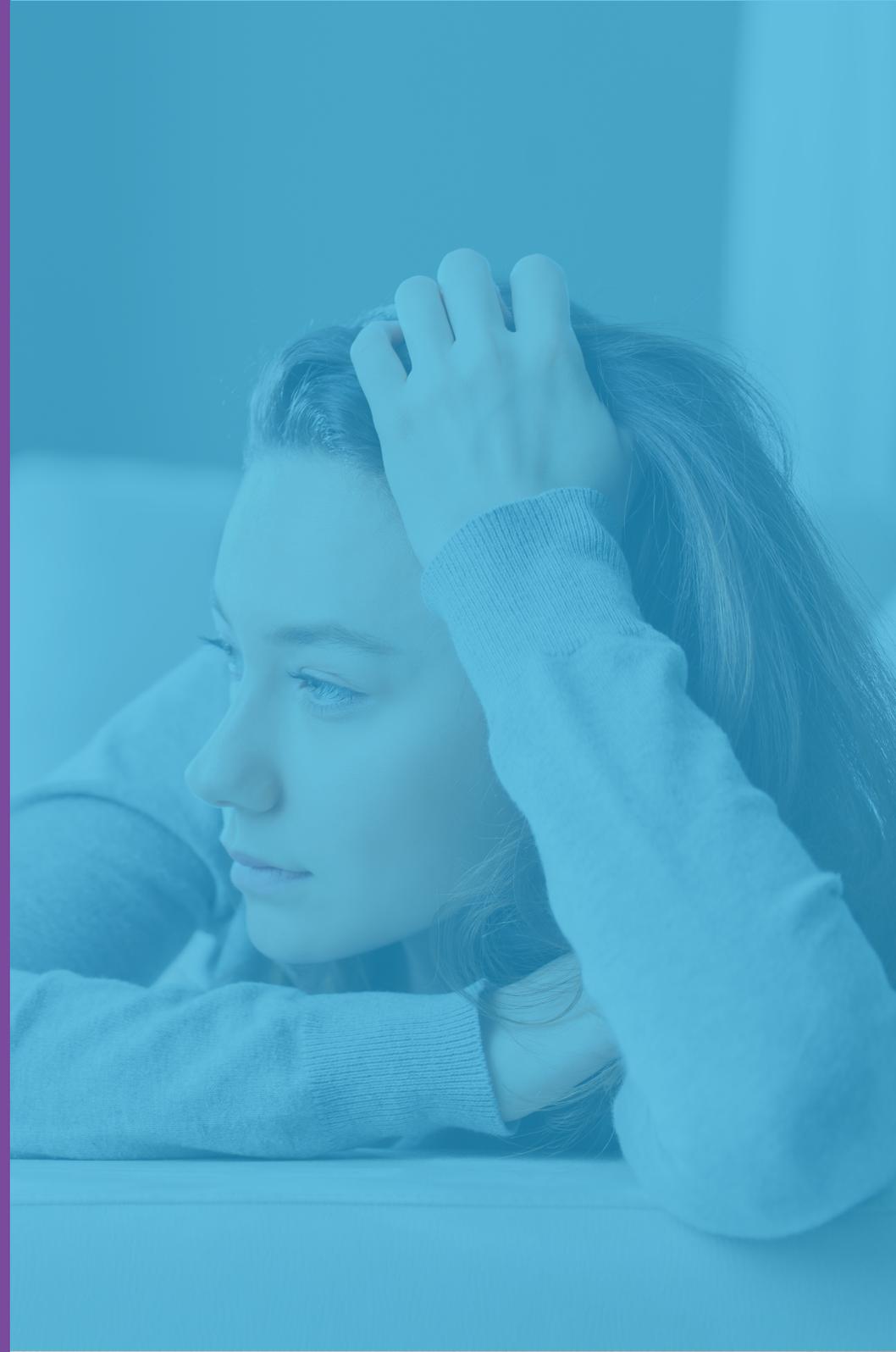
## **WOMEN'S JUSTICE STRATEGY**



“ *Supporting women to live crime-free, positive and healthy lives,  
improving well-being and making communities safer* ”

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# Foreword

## Andy Dunbobbín, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales

In May 2021 I was elected to be the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales. A key part of my role is to work with criminal justice partners to reduce crime and keep communities safe. Furthermore, I work closely with local authorities, health, and education services to create joined up solutions to local problems.

I outlined a clear vision for a safer North Wales during my election campaign through my manifesto. It is the vision the public voted for, it is the vision contained within the Police and Crime Plan, and it is the vision I work hard to deliver on behalf of our communities every day. One of my priorities is to deliver a fair and effective criminal justice system and create a Female Offending Strategy. Following further consultation, I have adapted this to become a Women's Justice Strategy to better represent what I want to achieve. The strategy is informed by, and aligned to, the joint Ministry of Justice and Welsh Government Female Offending Blueprint (2019), which seeks to revolutionise the development of services for women in the criminal justice system and to help keep women and communities safe and free from crime. I am proud that North Wales is the first area in Wales to develop such a strategy, which is being delivered in partnership with Policing, Police and Crime Commissioners and wider criminal justice partners. Furthermore, the strategy is adopting a whole system approach to focus on improving outcomes for women supported across all criminal justice agencies.



Andy Dunbobbín

## WOMEN'S JUSTICE STRATEGY

Women represent less than 5% of the prison population in Wales and England and are more likely than men to be serving short prison sentences. The majority of female offending is financially motivated rather than violent and many women are also sent to prison for committing an offence to support someone else's drug use. There are strong links between women's offending behaviour and their experience of trauma and domestic abuse both physical and emotional, coercive control and sexual abuse. In 2018, 77% of prison sentences given to women were for less than, or equal to, 12 months. These short-term imprisonments have a huge impact on children who are badly affected by maternal imprisonment. Research indicates that children who have experienced maternal imprisonment are at greater risk of unemployment, drug use, alcoholism and coming into contact themselves with the criminal justice system in later life. These Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs are now receiving earlier identification as to the wide-ranging harm they cause, particularly as children grow into adult life.

Estimates by the Ministry of Justice reveal almost 60% of female offenders have experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives. There is no effective defence for women driven to offend because of abuse. The commitment in the North Wales Women's Justice Strategy will recognise women's distinct needs and vulnerabilities within the criminal justice system. It will outline the measures that the Ministry of Justice, Welsh Government and wider partners are taking to achieve cross-government reform. There will be an emphasis on the importance of early intervention, including liaison and diversion, out of court disposals and a focus on community-based solutions. Primary early intervention and prevention is something I want the strategy to have at its heart. The aim will be to reduce the use of short custodial sentences for women by taking a more preventive, community-based approach which is not only an opportunity to do something radical in seeking to reduce the prison population, but also to improve long-term outcomes for women and their families. I also want to involve those with lived experience of criminal justice services to share their knowledge to shape prevention and rehabilitation. I am committed to working with all criminal justice agencies and my fellow PCCs in England and Wales to improve the criminal justice system in North Wales, so it works fairly and effectively.

**Andy Dunbobbin PCC**

# Executive Summary

This Strategy takes account of the joint Ministry of Justice and Welsh Government Female Offending Blueprint (2019), which seeks to accelerate the transformation of services for women in the criminal justice system, through a pan Wales whole system multi-agency approach to help keep women and communities safe and free from crime.

In recognition of the importance of the women's agenda, the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner has prioritised tackling issues relating to women's justice and has identified the benefits in aligning this strategy with the national Blueprint programme, to support and accelerate delivery within North Wales.

## KEY FACTS (Data from NAO improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system January 2022)

- 1) 71% of women reoffend following custodial sentences of less than 12 months (as of April to July 2016), compared to 63% of men.
- 2) Ministry of Justice and HM Treasury estimated that female offenders cost the government £1.7 billion in 2015-16, including £1 billion in police costs.
- 3) The average annual cost of a women's prison place in 2019-20 was £52,000.



## Our Purpose

In order to reduce crime and make a difference to people's lives, we need to consider the underlying causes of offending and reoffending behaviour. This will be achieved using a partnership approach, supported by evidence-based practice for diverting those at risk of offending and supporting the rehabilitation of those who have offended. A large body of research has been conducted that clearly demonstrates the link between vulnerability and involvement with the criminal justice system (both as perpetrator and/or victim). Research also demonstrates the impact of ACEs on criminogenic risk factors that increase the instances of entering the Criminal Justice System. Many of the complex needs of offenders crosscut various agencies and that is why working together towards the joint vision of the strategy, agencies can have a far greater impact of creating positive chances to be diverted from offending and engage in rehabilitation.

Women account for less than 5% of the prison population and 15% of offenders in the community. On average they commit less serious offences than males and often pose a low or medium risk of serious harm to the public. However, 71% of women reoffended following a custodial sentence of less than 12 months in 2016, compared to 63% of men. Furthermore, disrupted, chaotic lives and complex needs often mean women in (or at risk of entering) the criminal justice system have repeated needs for services and a disrupted family life. Female offenders cost the Government approximately £1.7bn in 2015/16, including estimated policing costs of £1bn. Outcomes for women in custody can be worse than for men, for example, the rate of self-harm is nearly five times as high in women's prisons.



## North Wales Context

The North Wales Women in Justice Delivery Group will allow implementation at a local level of the All-Wales Women's Justice Blueprint aspirations, ensuring a gender-informed approach to all women with whom agencies come into contact, including before arrest. By working in partnership, we can ensure that the needs of women in (or at risk of entering) the criminal justice system are assessed, and women are either diverted into support, or are helped to address underlying issues whilst awaiting their court hearing and beyond. Working with both statutory partners and with the third sector this will enable as broad a range of support and intervention as possible and embed such approaches.

There is a clear need to tackle the vulnerabilities associated with women's offending that the Delivery Group supported by the Women's Justice Blueprint Team can offer. The opportunity for agencies in North Wales to work together to target cross cutting needs is evident, allowing better chances to divert, rehabilitate and empower women to lead fulfilling lives away from the criminal justice system. Tailored approaches at a local level give the best chance for this strategy to succeed. The benefit to women, children and families to break the offending cycle will benefit the communities of North Wales as a whole.



## Our Vision

“ Working in partnership to support women in North Wales who are at risk of offending to have opportunities and support through diversion and rehabilitation.

”

# Strategic Aims and Objectives

The North Wales Women's Justice Strategy aligns to the All-Wales Women's Justice Blueprint Delivery Principles:

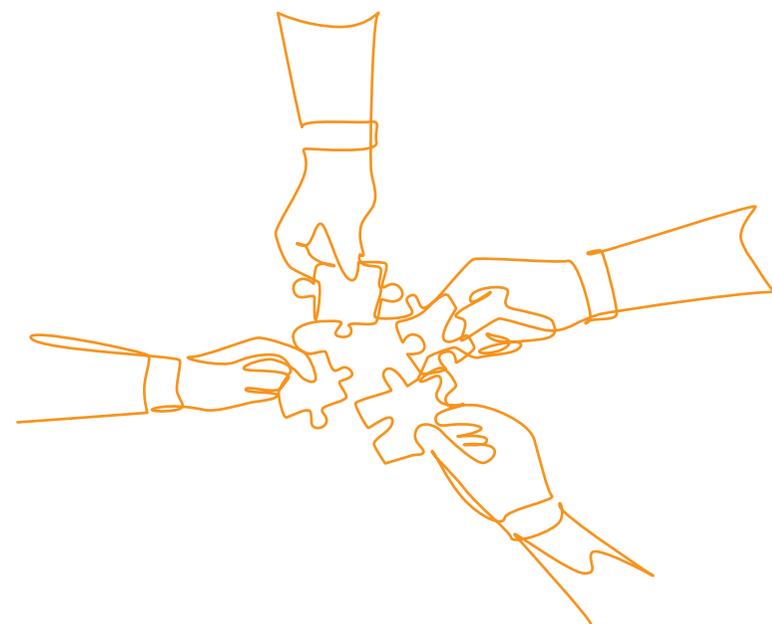
- Support women to live crime free, positive and healthy lives; improving well-being and making communities safer.
- Reduce the number of women in the system by intervening earlier to keep them safe and address the vulnerabilities that often lead to crime.
- Deliver a bold ambitious approach with transformative, sustainable services that are distinct to Wales and locally led; building on and learning from the successful Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach model.
- Create safe environments in which children and women are protected/guarded from harm and are supported to thrive.
- Integrate services to offer targeted support for women from start to finish, recognising the far-reaching, long-term impact resulting from the imprisonment of women, when there are more effective alternatives to tackle the causes of offending behaviour, drawing on relevant research and data.
- Work with the Youth Justice Board and partners to share learning that can be adopted for girls under the age of 18 and work together to ensure continuity of interventions in respect of young women who transition into adult services.
- Set the standard for future work and cooperation between the Welsh Government, Ministry of Justice and partners, applying the principles and adopting a similar approach to adult males at risk of offending.

The Blueprint proposals support several wider strategic priorities including those of the Ministry of Justice Female Offending Strategy (2019), which reflects an ambition for early intervention, community-based solutions and making custody for women as effective and decent as possible. The proposals also support the Welsh Government and HM Prison and Probation Service Framework to Support Positive Change for those at Risk of Offending in Wales (2018 - 2023), which seeks to reduce the number of women in the criminal justice system in Wales. The Women's Justice Blueprint Programme intends to contribute to the delivery of these priorities through a focus on local-leadership, partnership working and a firm evidence-base.

## Key Delivery Principles

The Women's Justice Blueprint has committed to delivering the above ambitions in line with the following key principles:

- 1) **A commitment to co-production** – meaningfully involving women with lived experience in the design of products and services.
- 2) Taking an approach that acknowledges and **builds on sector-leading work** in Wales for both women and children in the design, commissioning and delivery of services for women.
- 3) Ensuring approaches are underpinned by the **best evidence and are supported by research**.
- 4) Ensuring justice is **centred on the individual** and that services are delivered around the person.
- 5) A commitment to embedding a **gender-specific & trauma-informed approach** across all areas of practice and skills development.
- 6) Seeking to integrate and **align devolved and non-devolved services** through establishing shared vision, values and approach.
- 7) Working in synergy with the pan-Wales Women's Justice Blueprint.



## Governance

The North Wales Women in Justice Delivery Group will be accountable for this strategy. The Delivery Group will provide oversight, direction and support to local partners to ensure a collaborative approach aligned with wider Blueprint principles. The Group will meet on a quarterly basis to monitor and evaluate progression towards the Strategic Aims and Objectives and Key Delivery Priorities. Delivery Group representatives will be encouraged to update and report on their progress and barriers to achieving success, commensurate with the Strategy. The Delivery Group will report progress to the North Wales Justice Board and will be represented at the All-Wales Women in Justice Board, as the principal advisory group for matters relating to women in the criminal justice service in Wales. This will enable cross-pollination of Delivery Group representation within the Blueprint project governance structure.



## Key Delivery Priorities

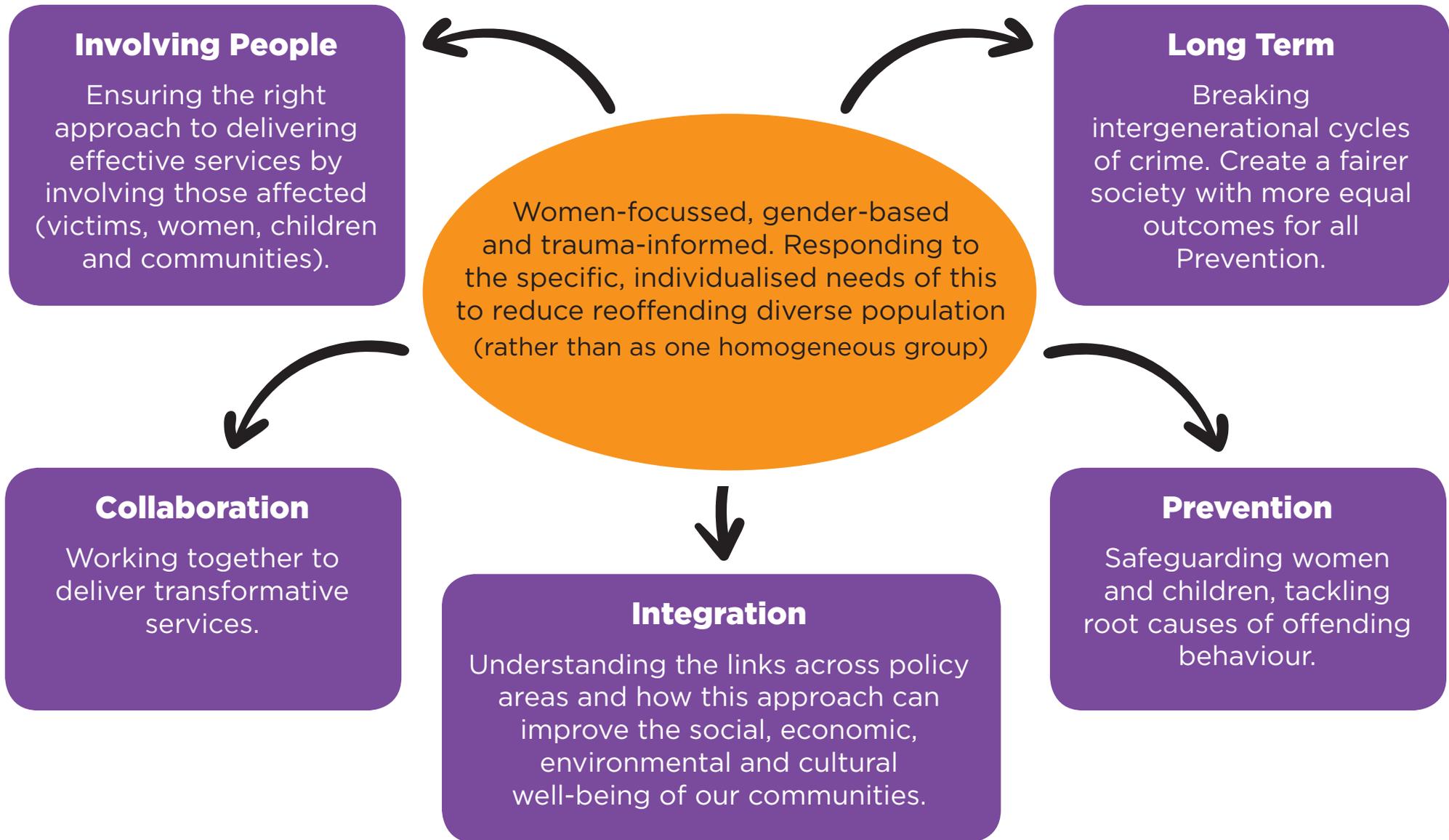
The North Wales Women's Justice Strategy will mirror the Women's Justice Blueprint Multi-Agency Workstreams covering the following thematic areas.

THEMATIC AREA	DELIVERY PRIORITY
<p><b>Early Intervention and Prevention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Working with partners to tackle root causes of crime</i></li> <li>• <i>Diverting women, where appropriate, away from the CJS and into women-centred, community-based, sustainable support services that meet their needs</i></li> <li>• <i>Exploring options for trauma-informed services which can best meet the needs of vulnerable women, and families, affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).</i></li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Robust diversion service in place for women in North Wales, that considers the principles of the Blueprint psychologically led gender-informed model (and set of principles underpinning a gender and trauma informed holistic assessment process).</li> <li>2. Work with the Blueprint project to deliver the vision for an integrated, end to end service delivery model for women in North Wales; building on (and sharing) learning and evidence from existing whole system approaches.</li> <li>3. Support the development of a Welsh evidence base to understand primary prevention opportunities for women prior to entering the criminal justice system and the role of partners within the early intervention and prevention space.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Courts and Sentencing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Building confidence in alternatives to short-term custody and remand</i></li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with courts and sentencers in North Wales to build understanding of community services available for women in North Wales to address-offending related needs amongst women and build confidence in alternatives to custody.</li> <li>2. Support local delivery of gender-informed training (developed through the Blueprint) for front-line professionals within the court context in North Wales to recognise &amp; respond to women and families experiencing trauma.</li> <li>3. Consider establishing a referral process in police custody or on remand for referring women not eligible for diversion into pre-sentence support.</li> <li>4. Progress any opportunities to strengthen use of community sentence treatments for women in North Wales.</li> </ol>

THEMATIC AREA	DELIVERY PRIORITY
<p><b>Community Sentences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Supporting women, including those at risk of offending, to engage with services in the community</i></li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support local delivery of gender-informed training (develop through the Blueprint) for professionals working with women.</li> <li>2. Support application of Blueprint psychologically led gender and trauma informed model in the North Wales context.</li> <li>3. Scope opportunity/need for further roll out of Women's Pathfinder Case Conference arrangements in North Wales.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Custody and Resettlement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Supporting women in custody and resettlement back into the community</i></li> </ul>	<p>Work with Blueprint custody and resettlement workstream to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider current provision for women in prison from North Wales aimed at strengthening and maintaining links with children and families to identify any gaps or opportunities to strengthen this provision.</li> <li>2. Map current pre and post-release interventions in prisons where women from North Wales are located, identifying any gaps in provision.</li> <li>3. Help deliver the Blueprint ambition to test a model for a safe, secure accommodation option for women within the North Wales context, linking in with existing Blueprint activity on this.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Systems and Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ensuring systems are in place to enable effective delivery of the women's agenda in Wales</i></li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commit to ensuring equality and diversity needs are considered in development of products and services in North Wales through application of Equality Impact Assessment/Screening tool.</li> <li>2. Work with the Blueprint team to develop a robust involvement model to ensure representation of the voices of women from North Wales.</li> <li>3. Work alongside the Blueprint project to support any potential opportunities around establishing an improved data integration and management system for women in the CJS.</li> <li>4. Ensure effective national and local governance arrangements to enable delivery of the strategy, including links to local partnerships and forums (community safety, Safeguarding, PSBs etc) to influence women being recognised as a priority.</li> <li>5. Seek to enhance relationship between the programme of work on women who offend and the work on violence against women.</li> </ol>

THEMATIC AREA	DELIVERY PRIORITY
<p><b>Research and Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Further develop a Welsh evidence base in respect of what works for women and to better understand the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of women</i></li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feed into the development of an integrated partner data set to enable better monitoring of trends in relation to women in contact with the criminal justice system.</li> <li>2. Develop a local evidence base around the effectiveness of services and support for women who are in or at risk of entering the CJS in North Wales (such as the North Wales Women's Centre). Feed back good practice locally and to the national Blueprint programme.</li> <li>3. Enhance and build understanding of current service provision for women in North Wales (including any gaps), through mapping services along the women's journey to help inform specific objectives and pathways service for PCCs and local commissioners to consider.</li> </ol>

# Guiding Principles





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