



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **New briefing highlights promising work by police and crime commissioners to reduce women's offending**

**\*Please note: embargoed until 00:01am, Thursday 22nd October 2015\***

With the government “committed to further improving the treatment of female offenders and reducing the number of women in custody”, [a new briefing has been published by Revolving Doors Agency<sup>ii</sup> and the Transition to Adulthood Alliance \(T2A\)<sup>iii</sup>](#) highlighting promising work already underway by police and crime commissioners at a local level.

Women’s offending has a distinct profile compared with men. Women make up just 5% of the prison population, with 81% of them committed for non-violent offences.<sup>iv</sup> It has long been recognised that women benefit from a distinct approach if reoffending rates are to be reduced – particularly given the multiple and complex needs faced by many women involved in offending.<sup>v</sup>

- 71% of female prisoners suffer two or more mental disorders
- 70% of women entering prison require clinical detoxification
- 53% of women in prison experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse as a child
- More than half of women in prison report having suffered domestic violence
- Six out of ten women in prison have at least one dependent child

The briefing argues that local leadership is crucial to developing a more effective approach, and that police and crime commissioners (PCCs) have an important role to play as an advocate for a women-specific approach in their area. [This briefing is the third in a series of ‘PCC spotlights’ by Revolving Doors Agency and the Transition to Adulthood Alliance \(T2A\)](#), highlighting promising practice among police and crime commissioners (PCCs) on challenging partnership issues.<sup>vi</sup> Areas highlighted include:

- **Northumbria** – where the PCC has prioritised prevention and earlier intervention, piloting schemes such as the Voluntary Intervention Project to encourage early diversion into women-specific support (where appropriate), and targeting improved support for vulnerable women including young adults (18-24) and women who are victims of domestic and sexual abuse.
- **Cumbria** – where the PCC has supported Women’s Community Matters programme to provide a gender-specific programme of support for women in contact with the criminal justice system, whether as victims, offenders, or both.
- **Greater Manchester** - Where the PCC has worked with partners to develop a ‘whole system’ approach for women offenders as part of wider public service reform agenda in the region. Key features of the model include police triage and diversion; delivery of women-specific community orders (including via a problem solving court); and resettlement services.

Many other PCCs are also supporting targeted work to promote a more effective response to women’s offending. Key themes identified include: the importance of local women’s centres; a focus on diversion and earlier intervention; targeted support for at risk groups such as young adults and women involved in prostitution; supporting community-based alternatives to custody; and the need for strong local partnerships at a strategic level.

Christina Marriott, Chief Executive at Revolving Doors Agency, said:<sup>vii</sup>

*“We know that women involved in offending often face multiple and complex needs, including poor mental health, substance misuse issues, past trauma, and repeat victimisation and abuse. The evidence shows that they benefit from a women-specific approach, which takes account of these distinct needs and places an emphasis on diversion into support and community-based rehabilitation.*

*Local leadership is crucial to achieving this, and we are pleased to see that a number of police and crime commissioners have prioritised this agenda in their area. With their strategic role, PCCs have an important role to play in championing a women-specific approach and working with a range of partners to ensure effective diversionary options and alternatives to custody are available for women in their area.”*

The briefing is available here: <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/pcc-spotlight-womens-offending/>

## Notes to Editors

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<sup>i</sup> See House of Commons Justice Committee (2015) *Women offenders: follow-up: Government response to the Committee’s Thirteenth Report of Session 2014–15*, p. 1.

<sup>ii</sup> **Revolving Doors Agency** is a charity working across England to change systems and improve services for people who face multiple and complex needs and come into repeated contact with the police and criminal justice system. Further information at [www.revolving-doors.org.uk](http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk)

<sup>iii</sup> **The Transition to Adulthood Alliance** is a coalition of 13 criminal justice, health, and youth organisations, which identifies and promotes more effective ways of working with young adults throughout the criminal justice process. Convened by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, its membership encompasses Addaction, the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG), Catch 22, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Clinks, the Criminal Justice Alliance, the Howard League for Penal Reform, Nacro, the Prince’s Trust, the Prison Reform Trust, Revolving Doors Agency, the Young Foundation, and Young Minds. Further information at [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

<sup>iv</sup> Prison Reform Trust (2015) *Why Focus on Reducing Women’s Imprisonment* London: Prison Reform Trust, p 4.

<sup>v</sup> See Prison Reform Trust (2014) *Brighter Futures: Working together to reduce women’s offending*, p. 7-8 for further statistics on the health and social care needs faced by female offenders.

<sup>vi</sup> **‘PCC spotlights’** are being produced as part of the First Generation Project, and are available online here: <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/policy--research/policy-projects/first-generation-project/>. The First Generation Project aims to raise awareness of the problems faced by repeat offenders with complex needs and young adults in contact with the criminal justice system, highlighting evidence of promising practice and effective solutions, and working directly with PCCs and their staff to help implement these solutions. The project is supported by the Barrow Cadbury Trust ([www.barrowcadbury.org.uk](http://www.barrowcadbury.org.uk))

<sup>vii</sup> For further information or comment, please contact **Shane Britton, Policy Manager, Revolving Doors Agency**. Email: [shane.britton@revolving-doors.org.uk](mailto:shane.britton@revolving-doors.org.uk) , Tel: 020 7940 9743