



Ministry
of Justice

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Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
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[By email]

30 November 2022

Dear Chair,

**TREASURY MINUTE RESPONSE- IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR
WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Thank you for your letter of 3 November about the Government's response to the Committee's 51st Report of Session 2021-22, 'Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system'.

I respond to your comments on the Department's response to Recommendation 2 on estimating the proportion of women that could potentially be diverted to community support and the level of funding that would be required.

On your question about the numbers of women who could potentially be in scope for diversion, in 2021, 4,221 women were sentenced to custody, and of those 66% (2,775) received custodial sentences of less than 12 months. Women sentenced for theft, summary non-motoring offences and miscellaneous crimes against society accounted for 57% (1,595) of all women given custodial sentences of less than 12 months.

The Female Offender Strategy sets out a commitment to intervene early to support women who are at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System and makes clear that we want to see fewer women sentenced to custody for low level offending where they could be better supported in the community. We, however, recognise that there will always be cases where a short custodial sentence is appropriate. Decisions on individual cases are a matter for the judiciary in line with the sentencing framework.

On your question about how we determine an appropriate level of funding, as with other expenditure Ministers take decisions through the cross-Government planning process with HM Treasury and subsequent allocations decisions within MoJ. Specific investment has been made to support the aims of the Female Offender Strategy. In September, we launched a grants competition to invest up to £24m over the next three years in community support for women to help them address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour. This includes £4m per annum to support the core costs of women's community services, based on the level of demand in previous grant funding competitions, plus £2.8m per annum to test and build our evidence base on the effectiveness of services and interventions. This provision will support those who are at risk of receiving short custodial sentences. The £24m grants competition is in addition to the almost £46m awarded to charities through probation's dynamic framework to deliver wraparound support over the next three years.

You noted that the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan has not yet been published and asked me to confirm when this will happen. The Department now expects to publish a Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan for 2022-25 and an accompanying Impact Assessment by the end of January 2023. The impact assessment will include an estimate

of the number of additional women that could be supported through women's services as a result of our funding based on the number of interventions that could be provided through the services and interventions grant funding

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Treasury Officer of Accounts, and the Chair of the Justice Select Committee.

Yours ever
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ANTONIA ROMEO