



Ministry
of Justice

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Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

[By email]

7 July 2022

Dear Meg

IMPROVING THE OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Government welcomed the Public Accounts Committee's report on the challenges facing women in contact with the criminal justice system. I am writing as Accounting Officer of HMPPS and Second Permanent Secretary, MoJ to respond to the committee's recommendations on the government's plans to implement the Female Offender Strategy over the next 3 years, Whole System Approaches, and the new governance arrangements for the Strategy.

Implementing the Strategy

Since the committee hearing in February, we have reviewed our work programme and vision. We remain committed to the three aims set out in the Strategy, but have concluded a fourth should be added, focussed on effective resettlement in the community. This will be set out in a forthcoming Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan, due for publication in Summer 2022.

The Delivery Plan will take into account the recommendations from both the National Audit Office's report on Improving the Outcomes for Female Offenders and the Committee's report. The Plan will include clear commitments with milestones, an outcomes framework and metrics for success. It will also promote a gender-specific and trauma-responsive approach as the default for the delivery of services involved in the rehabilitation of women in contact with the criminal justice system.

Whole System Approaches

In its report the Committee asked that MoJ write with an assessment of any barriers to local areas implementing Whole System Approaches (WSAs) and how it plans to work with other government departments and organisations to address these barriers.

Alongside the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan, we will publish a One Year On Report. This will demonstrate progress made since publication of the Concordat on women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System and setting out what more can be done to improve joined up working. MoJ is working with other government departments and those areas where WSAs are already embedded to gather best practice. This will focus on many of the barriers highlighted in the Concordat, including funding, data sharing and local governance. Our focus over the coming months will be to provide forums for sharing this best practice with those areas that are looking to develop better integration at the local level.

Governance Arrangements

The Committee also asked that MoJ set out the new governance arrangements, including how it will improve transparency for specialist providers, experts and other external stakeholders.

The Women in the Criminal Justice System (WCJS) Board, chaired by the Prisons Minister, and attended by Ministers from the Home Office, DWP, DfE, DLUHC, DHSC and DCMS, as well NHS England, has met twice so far in 2022 and has progressed the Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan. Below this, the cross-Whitehall official-level

WCJS Delivery Board, chaired by the Director, Youth Justice and Offender Policy, began meeting regularly in November 2021 with a refreshed membership. The Delivery Board has enabled better join up across government than had been in place previously. The WCJS Expert Group (formally Advisory Board on Female Offenders) enables stakeholders to hold Government to account for delivery and has met three times in 2022 to help shape the contents of the Delivery Plan.

I hope this response provides the Committee with appropriate assurance that we have taken, and will continue to take, all steps necessary to address these important issues.

We will continue to engage the Committee, and further updates will follow on the remaining recommendations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Farrar', followed by a period.

JO FARRAR

Second Permanent Secretary, MoJ and CEO, HMPPS