

# Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime

- around £2 million to support community services that work with vulnerable women
- cross-government agreement to reduce the number of women in the Criminal Justice System
- extra investment in prison places to improve conditions for women in custody

The funding comes as the government reiterates its commitment to reduce the number of women in custody and improve conditions for those that are serving time.

Over £5 million has already been invested in services supporting women in the criminal justice system since 2018. This latest funding will help cover running costs such as wages, rent and bills at a time when many charities have additional demand for their services due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Justice has pledged to work alongside other government departments and public services such as the National Health Service and Public Health England to more effectively support vulnerable women in addressing the issues which can lead them to commit crimes, while up to 500 new prison places will be built in existing women's prisons to improve conditions.

Lucy Frazer QC MP, Minister for Prisons and Probation said:

This funding boost will allow frontline services to continue the incredible work they do with some of the most vulnerable women in our society to prevent them being drawn into crime.

Many female offenders suffer complex issues and have experienced very traumatic lives – and it's only by addressing this that we will break the costly cycle of reoffending.

The funding announced today (23 January 2021) will support organisations such as Shropshire based Willowdene, which was awarded nearly £60,000 and uses a mixture of therapy that addresses traumatic life experiences and work placements to rehabilitate women dealing with issues such as substance misuse and exploitation. A grant of £60,000 will allow Cheshire Without Abuse to continue its vital work with domestic abuse victims, as cases continue to rise during lockdown. These services play a crucial part in preventing women being drawn into crime and help reduce rates of reoffending for those that are.

Dr Matthew Home, CEO of Willowdene Rehabilitation Ltd said:

Referrals to our service have increased during lockdown, particularly for women leaving custody and aiming to complete a period of rehabilitation prior to going home. This funding will allow us to maximise the number of women we can help at any one time, as our core costs are covered through the grant.

While women who commit the most serious crimes will always be sent to prison, custody should always be a last resort. The number of women in custody has fallen by 10% since 2010 and government investment in community services should see this trend continue in the long-term. However, the recruitment of an extra 20,000 police officers is expected to cause a temporary increase in the female prison population.

Up to 500 new places will be built in existing prisons to increase availability of single cells and improve conditions. These will include in-cell showers and will allow more women to be held in open conditions, providing greater opportunities for employment and education while completing their sentence. Some of the new places will also allow women to have overnight visits with their children to prepare for life back home. If, as expected, the female prison population falls longer-term, these modern facilities will allow the Prison Service to close old accommodation.

Around half of women in prison have a mental health issue and a similar proportion have a history of drug use. Dealing with these underlying issues can help reduce the chance of women entering the criminal justice system in the first place and reduce reoffending rates when they do.

This requires a whole host of different agencies, local and national, to work together to help each individual offender, whether that be, getting into addiction treatment, finding a stable home or escaping an abusive partner. This 'whole-system approach' gives women a better chance of turning their lives around and has been endorsed again by government today in the [National Concordat on Female Offenders](#).

The drive to cut offending by women also stands to benefit from the largest increase in drug treatment funding in fifteen years announced earlier this week. An extra £80 million is being invested in services across England to increase the number of treatment places for prison leavers and those diverted into tough and effective community sentences.