

Funding boost to steer more women away from crime

- £2.5 million to be awarded to community services which divert women away from crime
- Wales chosen for government's first Residential Women's Centre

The funding, which will be awarded later this year, will help cover core costs such as wages, rent and bills. At the same time, Wales has been chosen for the Government's first Residential Women's Centre – an alternative to custody that is focused on rehabilitation for women convicted of low-level crime.

It builds on investment already awarded under the government's Female Offender Strategy.

By tackling the root causes of offending these services will help divert women away from criminality and out of prison wherever possible.

Justice Minister Lucy Frazer said:

The first £5 million awarded under our Female Offender Strategy has enabled some truly inspirational organisations to expand what they do and support more women in need.

These services have shown great creativity and resilience to continue their support through the lockdown, and I want to reassure them this extra £2.5 million will be available when those measures can be safely relaxed.

I am also delighted to be able to start working with the Welsh Government and our partners to develop the first of our innovative Residential Women's Centres.

The first Residential Women's Centre in Wales will provide accommodation for women with complex needs who would otherwise be sentenced to custody.

It will offer services which tackle the underlying causes of offending, such as substance misuse and mental health problems, and enable Welsh women to stay closer to home, benefitting their children and wider family ties – which are known to be key to reducing reoffending.

The service will also provide support for women as they transition from the centre to life back in their communities.

The Ministry of Justice will now work with the Welsh Government and partners in Wales to identify a provider and site, with the aim of opening the centre by the end of next year.

Allocation of the £2.5 million funding will involve the directors of each regional probation area – who best know their local communities, organisations and challenges. They will assess which types of service are most needed.

This could include services focusing on domestic abuse support, drug and alcohol rehabilitation or which work with a particular group such as women from ethnic minorities or in a specific age range.

The regional probation directors will evaluate bids and make funding recommendations to the Ministry of Justice.

This additional support comes after Chancellor Rishi Sunak last month announced a £750 million package of support to ensure charities across the UK can continue their vital work during the coronavirus outbreak.

Under the government's Female Offender Strategy, £5.1 million of grants have previously been awarded to 30 different organisations across England and Wales. These have funded the creation of six new women's centres, specialist domestic abuse workers and essential items for offenders upon leaving prison.

Case Studies of organisations previously awarded funding under the Female Offender Strategy

Trevi, Plymouth

Funding awarded to Trevi enabled it to relocate The Sunflower Women's Centre in Plymouth into larger premises. The move was completed in March 2019 and within 6 months the number of women using the service increased from around 100 to more than 450.

The centre offers a range of interventions, such as one-to-one support, counselling and therapeutic courses. Offender managers are also located at the centre, enabling women to meet the requirements of their licence while accessing programmes and support.

Tina, an ex-offender who has battled drug-addiction and now attends the centre, said it has given her a place where she feels safe.

She said: "A women's-only space is so empowering. It helps me to be the best I can be. I had people believe in me when I didn't believe in myself."

Willowdene Rehabilitation Centre, West Mercia

Willowdene Rehabilitation Centre delivers programmes that address issues including abuse, exploitation, offending and substance misuse.

It used its funding to increase its residential spaces and expand its reach beyond West Mercia to the West Midlands. As a result, 92% of women using the centre successfully complete their programme and are actively engaging in society.

Jane entered Willowdene homeless, addicted to heroin and had 15 previous

offences. She had been a victim of domestic abuse for 10 years and had attempted suicide several times. The centre supported her in gaining new skills and qualifications and she left clean from drugs and with a job.

She said: "It has given me the opportunity to live a healthy and happy life, building a foundation to get better, and better myself in life and work."

The Good Loaf Bakery, Northamptonshire

Good Loaf Bakery used its funding to open an additional café in Kettering where women can gain practical skills and experience in a real work environment, get domestic abuse support and be diverted from the criminal justice system through conditional cautions.

The centre has supported close to 100 women in its first year.

Claire was referred to the centre by her probation manager.

She said: "I was on the road to nowhere but have grown in confidence and my behaviour has changed for the better. I work in the café almost every day and I am able to help others who join and feel like I did when I started."

Women Out West, Cumbria

MOJ funding supported the creation of West Cumbria's first Women's Centre, Women Out West.

In its opening months it saw hundreds of women through its doors. The centre has adapted its service to social distancing measures, meaning it is still able to support nearly 100 women.

Anne spent almost her entire childhood moving between different care placements. She suffered abuse, which led her to drugs and then crime. She was ultimately referred to Women Out West.

She said:

There is always someone to talk to, it's like our own little community. I don't think I could get through things without the support and help from the services.

I have come so far, they tell me that they are proud of me, that makes me cry happy tears as I have never had that before. I am proud of myself and I am moving forward.

Note to Editors

- The complete [Female Offender Strategy](#) can be accessed on GOV.UK
- Details of how services can apply for grants will be made available in due course.
- This Residential Women's Centre announcement comes after the Welsh and UK governments launched a [joint Female Offending blueprint](#) last summer

which promotes a holistic and rehabilitative approach to divert women away from crime.